Welcome to the August 2025 Issue!

This issue of *Church and Life* joins students and teachers and learners of all kinds who preparing for a return to school communities whether they be elementary, high school, college, or folk school gatherings like Danebod in Minnesota, the Highlander Homecoming in Tennessee, or John C. Campbell 100th Anniversary Celebration in North Carolina. The issue opens with one of N.F.S. Grundtvig's most famous songs about enlightenment "Er lyset for de lærde blot" (Is the light only for the learned) in a translation by Edward Broadbridge. Then, Marie Præst-Holm tells about her experiences as a teacher in Denmark and about the differences between Danish and American high schools, and Peter Burhmann recounts his visit to John C. Campbell and the basic principles of education that he was reminded of. In his regular "Dateline Denmark" column, Edward Broadbridge offers a perspective of Hans Christian Andersen on the 150th anniversary of the writer's death. Andrés Albertsen shares a homily for August 17th, and we introduce Madison Morrison, the first of three student guest editors who will be working on Church and Life for the next three issues. (The other two student editors will be introduced in October). The Postscript by the editor offers an introduction to the newly available archive of *Church and Life*.

For the October issue, we will be focusing on Autumn and the changing of the seasons-- of culture and memorable events of the church and community calendar and of life and milestones in individual experience. We welcome submissions all kinds about about Fall. You may send them directly to the editor at either mbusbee@samford.edu or churchandlife1952@gmail.com.

As always, we want to thank our supporters, particularly <u>The National Foundation for Danish America</u>, which generously shares information about this publication in its own newsletter. We also appreciate those who generously offer financial support, as well as who those submit articles for publication. We look forward to hearing from you!

"Is spelling right or wrong a light?"

A translation by Edward Broadbridge of N.F.S. Grundtvig's song "Er lyset for de lærde blot" (1839)

1.

Is spelling right or wrong a light

alone to scholars given?

O no, God grants this good to most,

His light a gift of heaven.*

The sunrise on the peasant shines,**
but on the scholar never,
enlightenment the agile man
in all his bright endeavor.

2.

Is light alone in planets set,
which have no sight or tongue?
Is not the Word within our mouth
for each the light that sprung? †
It lights the spirit-world for us
and feels like sunshine bright'ning
it touches bodies from above,
and strikes the soul like lightning.

3.

Is light sometimes in certain ways worth less than full-blown praises?

O no, it cannot be life's eye ††
unless on all it blazes!

Should we, the spirit to abuse,
forsake the vault of heaven,
prefer to see but murk and gloom
than summer sunshine redden?

4.

No, never shall the North be said to wish the light be darkling!

Aurora-like in free-born words
we saw the heavens sparkling;
and at the North Pole we shall see
- not just for all that's mortal the summer sun refuse to yield
to midnight's darkest portal.

5.

Enlightenment must be our joy,
regard to small things giving,
but always with the people's voice
enlightenment for living;
It springs from people's greatest feats,
it waxes full when aided!
Long may it burn as councils meet
till Venus' love has faded.¶

Notes: * Genesis 1:3ff; **because the peasant wakes with the sunrise; † John 1:11ff; †† from a Danish proverb: "Light is good as eye"; ¶ Venus, the "evening star," is the goddess of love.

Source: Broadbridge, Edward. "Is spelling right or wrong a right," in Living Wellsprings: The Hymns, Songs, and Poems of N.F.S. Grundtvig. Aarhus UP, 2015, pages 175-76.

Read further about the song here (and choose the English translation option).

Notes from a Teacher in Denmark

By Marie Præst-Holm, Roskilde, Denmark

A year of teaching in Denmark and the US – differences and similarities Around Midsummer's Day, this year's students graduated from Himmelev Gymnasium in Roskilde, Denmark, where I am a high school teacher. Graduation is a time filled with both joy and sadness. Teachers feel proud that another group of young people has completed their high school education and that they may have played a small role in their academic and personal development. At the same time, it is also a little sad to say goodbye to students you have followed closely for three years and who are now going out into the world – in all sorts of directions.

Fortunately, the summer holidays are just around the corner, bringing a little peace and quiet after the hectic June activities of exam preparation, grading, graduation parties, and farewell speeches. When the holidays are over and August approaches, however, teachers prepare to welcome a new group of young people who are about to begin their high school education. Life as a high school teacher is thus a cycle – you welcome, teach, support, and finally say goodbye before it all starts over again. It is meaningful work that, despite the repetitions, is never quite the same because it always involves young people in development.

This teaching cycle is not unique to Denmark – teachers in the US will probably recognize it too. The basic purpose is the same: to equip young people academically while supporting their personal development. But how we do it varies. I have never taught in the US myself, but my three children all attended high school there – in both Alabama and Illinois – and this has given me an interesting insight into both the differences and similarities between the Danish and American school systems. In the following, I will share some of my most striking impressions.

The school year and daily teaching

First and foremost, the school year follows roughly the same rhythm in both countries: it begins in August. In Denmark, however, the school year does not end until around Midsummer, while American students often go on summer vacation as early as late May or early June. American students therefore have longer vacations, while the distribution of shorter vacations throughout the year is quite similar—with fall break, Christmas break, and spring break (known as Easter break in Denmark) being the most common.

One of the most obvious differences is the way in which students' education is organized. In Denmark, high school students are divided into fixed classes of approximately 25-30 students, with whom they take all subjects for all three years – with the exception of a few elective subjects. This organization creates strong social bonds and a fixed point of reference in everyday life. My children say that it is very different in the US, where students have individual timetables and take different subjects with different groups of students.

This means that you don't get the same class spirit as in Denmark. On the other hand, you get to know more of your classmates in the US.

There are also differences in the daily structure. In the US, you typically have the same schedule and the same subjects every day throughout the semester. In Denmark, the schedule often changes – both in terms of subjects and the number of modules per day. This arrangement requires students to check their schedule every day, pack their bags accordingly, and prepare for the right subjects. It also provides flexibility and variety, but it can also be confusing– and result in forgotten books.

However, the advantage of the Danish model is that all subjects and teachers can be scheduled at different times of the day, so that some teachers do not always have to teach tired students in the late afternoon.

Teaching methods and learning environment

In Denmark, students usually have their own classroom, which they use for most subjects. They can personalize the space and create an environment where they feel at home. Teachers, on the other hand, "visit" the classroom for lessons and leave when the module is over. Only for science subjects and physical education do students change classrooms.

At Himmelev Gymnasium, where I teach History and Geography, a module lasts 90 minutes. A typical module is varied and consists of several sequences. These can be short teacher presentations (rarely longer than 10 minutes), individual assignments, group work, and presentations. Students often leave the classroom during the module to use group rooms or workspaces around the school, which requires self-discipline and responsibility—but also gives them ownership and shared ownership of their own learning. As a result, the teacher becomes more of a guide who supports the process than someone who "stands and talks."

Teacher-student relationships

Finally, there is the social tone that distinguishes Denmark's educational system from that of many other countries. In Denmark, the relationship between teachers and students is characterized by a high degree of informality. Students address us teachers by our first names and often have opinions about both teaching methods and content. This encourages engagement and participation, but it can also mean that we sometimes have to spend time discussing topics that the students do not always have a full understanding of. And yes, it can be a bit tedious in the fourth module on a Friday afternoon.

Now it is August again, and in a few days the school year will begin anew—both in Denmark and in the US. And just like the students, I am excited to be a teacher. I wonder: Which

young people will I get to know? What challenges and joys will this school year bring? Because even though the cycle repeats itself year after year, nothing is quite the same as before – because it's all about people. And that is precisely what makes teaching so meaningful.

A Visit to John C. Campbell Folk School

By Peter Burhmann, Berlin, Germany and Aabenraa, Denmark

Note: Dr. Peter Buhrmann is the director of the Association of Folk Schools in Germany. His office is in Berlin and, being that he is a Danish citizen, he travels regularly between Denmark and Germany. In the following piece, Buhrmann recounts his visit to John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, in September of 2024.

It takes me by surprise every time! At the John C. Campbell Folk School, which I was fortunate enough in September of last year, it hit me when I walked into one of several classes I visited that day. In the Broom-Making Class, a focused group of people formed a circle with their chairs. They were looking at their brooms, but also at each other. There was talking, sometimes laughing. Someone would help someone else: Maybe a finger was needed to hold down a broom straw, maybe some piece of advice was needed. Before my visit, I had no knowledge of broom-making at all – I thought a broom was something you brought at the hardware store. At John C. Campbell, I found myself looking at previously unimaginable versions of brooms of different lenghts and made of different materials. And I understood that a certain valuable and specific aspect of culture and heritage was being kept alive in that class. In the room was a shared sense of what everyone was doing. After a few minutes, I noticed that this feeling of togetherness was what the class was really all about. Everyone shared a common interest; everyone was interested in each other.

I have been working with Folk Schools for the entirety of my professional life. For 12 years I was principal of a Folk School in southern Denmark, and I have worked with Folk Schools on an international, European level. For the last 5 years, I have been the director of the Association of Folk Schools in Germany. In this position, I have seen at least a hundred Folk Schools.

Still, I was naive enough to expect a Boom-Making Class that morning at John C. Campbell to be about broom-making. It wasn't. And I remembered again that it is the internal strength of Folk Schools that they surprise you every time. What appears to be a class on brooms is actually about very basic and important inter-human relationships. The class could have been on just about any topic. Being together, focusing on a common topic, transporting knowledge—these things make up the idea of enlightenment that Nikolai

Frederik Severin Grundtvig, the founding father of the folk-school concept, was talking about way back in the middle of the 19th century.

In 1839, in one of his most famous songs, titled "Er lyset for de lærde blot" (which is translated above), Grundtvig declaired, "Oplysning være skal vor lyst, / er det så kun om sivet," which I translate as "Let enlightenment be our desire! Is it then only about the straw?" How fitting that Grundtvig's famous words came to me after visiting a broommaking class!

It definitely isn't only about the straw. John C. Campbell offers many different classes like Calligraphy, Printmaking, Basketry, Blacksmithing, Woodworking, Clay, Dance, Drawing and much more. In the Calligraphy class, I was impressed with the enthusiasm for a topic so unusual with participants so dilligent in perfecting a skill so delicate, while elsewhere people are sitting in front of computers instead of using their hands. In Blacksmithing class, I felt like I was walking right into medieval times. It was noisy, hot with intense fires, and the smell of metal was everywhere.

The most identifying theme at John C. Campbell is probably woodworking. At the History Centre, a bench is exhibited that signifies the founding of the Brass Town Carvers. One day, Olive Campbell, the wife of John C. Campbell and the founder of the folk school, had noticed a group of men "idly whittlin" with their pocket knives.

They were carving right into the bench where they sat. Mrs. Campbell thought that this skill might be refined and made useful. As a result, the Brass Town Carvers came to life and their products were sold in many places in the USA. This became a source of income for many underprivileged families. Today, arts and crafts taught at the folk school are a way of connecting the mind and the hand (which is another core idea in Grundtvig's concept of education). The folk school is celebrating the creation of beautiful things in the physical world. The mind and the hand. And in the middle is the heart.

I was lucky enough to meet many people at the Folk School. The chef, the groundskeeper, and janitor, several teachers, administrators, and members of the board. And of course we met Bethany Chaney, who is the director of the school. Everyone was very open and willing to share, not only about the school, but also about their personal lives. The janitor, an army veteran, has been to 120 countries. And he told me about his experiences. Talk about having perspective! Right when I arrived, I met the Rap-teacher. While we were walking across campus, she created a rap in my honor. I´ve never had that happen to me before. In the evening, we were invited for wine and bread at the beautiful, nearby home of an instrument maker who is very involved in the school. We saw beautiful viola da gambas, violins, guitars, and woodwind instruments.

There were many people with interesting stories to tell. All of them not only contribute and teach, they also give something of themselves. All the time. And yet I am convinced, that they feel that they receive much more than they give. This is probably also the reason why we felt so welcome. Somehow there was an atmosphere of receiving every guest as a contribution to the collective effort.

Denmark is flat and the highest point is 500 feet above sea level, so traveling to the mountains is always a treat for a Dane. John C. Campbell is set in the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina. We drove up from Birmingham, Alabama, which sits in the foothills of the Appalachians. As the hills grew higher and higher, I got more and more excited. The hills at Brasstown near the school are covered in trees and even though the day was hot, I thought I could feel the approaching fall. The dirt roads, the trees, the views, the small towns—it all came together as we drove across a small bridge onto the campus. The school is a cluster of many smaller buildings, or studios, as they call them. This means that you go in and out of the buildings all the time when you walk around campus. I kind of lost the sense of inside and outside. The surrounding landscape became an integral part of the school. And it was very beautiful. When I was talking with people inside, I would seize upon even a momentary change of topic to look outside to make sure the hills were still there.

Denmark may be the birth place of the Folk Schools, or "folkehøjskolen," as we call it. But the folk schools around the world are very different. And John C. Campbell is certainly different from any folk school that I have seen in Denmark or Germany. The language, the people, and the culture are obviously different. But still, the focuses on the social aspect of being together, on enlightenment, and on the connection between the mind, the hand and the heart is repeated every time. No matter how different the schools seem to be on the surface, I was once again reminded of this defining trait at John C. Campbell Folk School in September of 2024.

Sermon on Luke 12:32-40 at Iglesia Luterana Paz y Esperanza, Willmar MN

By Pastor Andrés Albertsen (andresa@vinjechurch.com)

What do we expect from the future?

And another question: What difference does what we expect from the future make in the way we live today?

Some people expect nothing good. Maybe because of the news, because of past experiences, or because of the hardness of this world, they feel that the future will only

bring more problems.

Others, on the other hand, literally expect what the first Letter to the Thessalonians says:

The voice of command will be heard, the voice of an archangel and the sound of the trumpet of God, and the Lord himself will come down from heaven. The dead in Christ will rise first; after that, those of us who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.

But today's text gives us another option—a different vision. It assures us that the Father, in his goodness, has decided to give us the Kingdom. And if the Father has already decided to give us the Kingdom, that means the Kingdom—Jesus Christ himself—is already among us.

And how does Jesus come among us?

He does not appear surrounded by armies or seated on a golden throne. He comes in another way: in the one who is hungry, in the one who is thirsty, in the stranger who seeks a place to stay, in the one who has no clothes to wear, in the sick person, in the one who is in prison.

In a story Jesus tells in the Gospel of Matthew, the King speaks to those who cared for all these people and says, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; receive the Kingdom that has been prepared for you since the creation of the world." And what is the reason? Jesus himself says, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." That is to say: Jesus comes to us in those who need help. And serving those people is serving Christ himself.

But the teaching does not end there.

If we look carefully, we will see that there are already people meeting

those needs—people caring for others, defending the weak, working for peace, protecting the planet God has given us. We are not alone in this task. And it is not foolish to try to make a difference.

Each of us can contribute our part. And when we put our efforts together, the difference will be even greater.

And something else: at this moment—or at some other moment in our lives—you or I might be the ones who need the help of others. And there is nothing wrong with that. It is part of life. In those moments, we must learn to ask for help with humility and without shame, and to receive it with gratitude.

Because there are two dangers that threaten us: To become cynical, the kind of person who no longer believes in anything and no longer cares about anything, or to fall into despair that paralyzes us and sinks us into sadness.

But today, Jesus offers us a better way. He calls us to live attentively, like those who expect something good, like those who know the Lord is present here and now. He invites us to be prepared and to keep our lamps burning, ready to recognize him in the face of the one who needs us.

Amen.

Prayers

Lord Jesus Christ,

You tell us not to be afraid of what the future holds, not to worry about tomorrow. But you know how hard it is for us to follow your words. We worry about so many things—our families, our friends, our situations. Some of our worries are big, and others are small.

We bring you our big worries: about our health, our happiness, and our safety—for ourselves and those we love. We bring you our deep concerns for the world we live in and whether it has a future. We bring you our sorrow over the way people are treated—people who are exploited, tortured, helpless, or abused. We bring you our grief over a world torn by conflict and war, and a world that lives in fear, without a clear hope for the days to come.

Father God,

We know that you care about every part of our lives. So we also bring the smaller things that trouble us—the things that keep us awake at night, the things that only you know. We pray for a world that often lacks joy, is too busy to enjoy what you have made, and too distracted by survival to truly live.

Living God,

Reach out to all those who face the future with fear and uncertainty. Assure them that you are with them, even when the path ahead feels dark and their lives seem out of control. Remind them that you are the one who can bring healing and hope, even in the bleakest situations.

Lord,

We need your love. We need your hope. We need your peace, your joy, and your salvation. We offer our prayers in faith, trusting that you listen and answer.

Amen.

H.C. Andersen's death

By Edward Broadbridge

The three great Danish writers of the 19th century are Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55), N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), and Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75). Their anniversaries are regularly celebrated, the latest being the 150th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen's death on the 4 August. On that day at 11.04, the precise moment of his death, the cathedral bells of Odense, his hometown, rang out for ten minutes; all the national media carried clips and articles about H.C. Andersen. Yes, in Denmark he is known by his initials, not by his Christian names, so the famous film and song about him in Danny Kaye's 1952 portrayal is only what the rest of the world calls him.

His life story must be read elsewhere. Like Grundtvig, Andersen was given a huge burial from the Church of Our Saviour, with King Christian IX himself in attendance. He lies in Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen. Already in his lifetime he was immensely popular, thanks to the widespread circulation of his novels in Germany from the mid-1830s and his fairy tales from the late 1830s onwards. His breakthrough in England and America occurred in the mid-1840s, encompassing both his novels and tales. In Denmark he is also famous for his travel writings – about Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and England. Every Dane knows the quote: "To travel is to live". And every Dane knows his song "In Denmark I was born." I beg to insert a personal anecdote into the latter, for every time I sing it, I have to insert a quiet little "not" before "born"; only then can I carry on with the next line, "and there my home is."

Privately, Andersen cut a lonely figure. He was probably bisexual, never married, never had children and, according to himself, died a virgin. He listed with a cross in his diaries how often he masturbated: "My blood is churning. Huge sensuality and struggle with myself. If it really is a sin to satisfy this powerful urge, then let me fight it. I am still innocent, but my blood is burning" (Diaries 80).

Andersen was also socially awkward, not least according to Charles Dickens, whom he visited in 1857. After a lengthy correspondence Dickens unwisely wrote that Andersen could pay him a visit, if he was ever in England. Needing no second bidding, Andersen arrived at Gad's Hill, Dickens's country home, in June of that year for a fortnight. "My visit is for you alone," he wrote. "Above all, always leave me a small corner in your heart." Andersen stayed a full five weeks, until he at last sensed that he was no longer welcome. He cried on his departure, and afterwards sent along an apology note: "Kindly forget the unfavorable aspect which our life together may have shown you of me."

Let us remember him best as the writer of immortal fairy-tales, loved in every Danish household to this day. And let us remember the wonderful apocryphal story about

Andersen's casket, namely that he wanted holes bored in it at eye-level so that he could see who attended his funeral – and who didn't!

See Andersen, Hans Christian. The Diaries of Hans Christian Andersen, translated by Patricia L. Conroy and Sven L. Rossel, Seattle and London, 1990.

Meet an editorial staff member for October, December, and February

Madison Morrison

Note: Madison Morrison is one of three Assistant Student Editors who will be serving on the staff during the fall semester. Below, she introduces herself.

I am an English major at Samford University with a special interest in Philosophy and Biblical Studies. As the author of two faith-based newsletters on Substack, I enjoy exploring how faith and culture intersect with one another in the modern day.

Having spent half of my life in the sunny state of California and the other half in Georgia, I embody a blend of two vastly different cultures. This background is, in large part, why I am eager to explore how Danish- American culture and community traditions are preserved in America through Church and Life. I have a deep appreciation for how two places can shape a unique perspective on life and the world.

I hope to tell stories that translate the vivid life and culture that exists beyond the page as I contribute to Church and Life.

Remembrance is one of the foremost ways we can preserve a culture and facilitate renewed enthusiasm for it. For that reason, I am deeply grateful and excited to be a part of this work!"

Postscript: The Church and Life Archive

By Brad Busbee

Through a collaboration of DAAL (Danish American Archive and Library), MoDA (Museum of Danish America), and Grand View University, issues of Church and Life from its beginnings to 2014 (1,015 issues) are now available online in a special archive that can be accessed by anyone. Here is the link:

The paper was called Kirke og Folk from its first publication on March 10, 1952 until the change to its current title on July 15, 1983. Most articles in the 1983 issue were still Danish, though English summaries followed. It was a change apparently brought about by the death

of Johannes Knudsen late the following year and the urging of Danish Interest Conference and the new editor, Thorvald Hansen. Knudsen had been the journal's editor for the previous 12 years. In his opening remarks for the December 1982 issue, the Hansen wrote:

To contemplate replacing Johannes Knudsen as editor is alone enough to deflate the most pronounced ego. . . I do not plan any drastic changes, though there will inevitably be some changes. I can say that I do not plan to edit the paper exactly as he did. . . One change in Kirke og Folk will be evident from the very outset. The last page has been the location for two editorials, one in English and one in Danish. I do not plan to write Danish editorials. This is in no way intended deadline to minimize the Danish. I fully intend that the body of the paper shall reflect the best that is available to me in both Danish and English. (Hansen, p. 66)

The next long-serving editor was Michael Mikkelsen, who stepped into the position in 1960, and served until November of 1970. Would Kirke og Folk step into the heated discussions of Civil Rights? Not as much as modern readers might expect, but the issues were robust, typically much longer than standard 16 pages from previous years. I noticed that the letters to the editor section were engaging and thoughtful.

In the November 1970 issue, the DIC wrote:

Since the mergers, Kirke og Folk is the only Danish-American church magazine still published in this country. It has been and is a significant link between those of us who have our roots in Danish folk and congregational life. It would be a great loss if we did not have it. . . (Nov 10, 1970, page 5)

And so Johannes Knudsen was chosen to carry on the tradition until his death in 1982. One of my favorite passages in the archive appears in Knudsen's "Editor's Page" on the 10th of May, 1975, where he addresses the dreaded sexual revolution:

[The dominate view of sex has] been shaped by moralistic interpretations or Calvinism and pietistic Lutheranism, augmented by methodistic revivalism and culminating in Victorianism. Sex is a reluctantly accepted necessity that is justified only by a legally controlled monogamy.

Against this restrictive norm there has been a great revolution. . . The protest takes the form of divorces, of unlegal relations, of family life in a larger group, of public childcare, etc. What will come out of this no one can really predict. It takes several

generations to produce a new norm that will be the context of morality. But we are well under way; the first phase of reconstruction - the revolution - is almost over.

What we must do now is to work hard to make the new norm practical, positive, responsible, and with a built-in respect for basic values of individuality and community. One thing seems certain; the extreme individualism of the revolt must give way to a strong concern for the group. Otherwise it cannot be a norm. (10 May 1975, page 16)

What a rational, if not prolix, response!

Knudsen was an adroit editor with deep knowledge in many topics related directly to Church and Life. (For example, Knudsen produced a biography of N.F.S. Grundtvig, titled Danish Rebel. The Life of N. F. S. Grundtvig.) From my perspective, Hansen was right to be intimidated. But Hansen was himself a wonderful editor of Church and Life, producing approximately 250 articles over the years. (His self-published collection, titled What Does Thorvald Hansen Say? is well worth the read.)

And so are the last issues currently available in the archive. The last ones, dating to 2014, were published under Joy Ibsen's artful leadership. Ibsen tackles the political and cultural issues head-on in her Post-Scripts and therefore brings a fresh new energy to the publication.

The archive remains incomplete-- volumes from 2015 to the present have yet to be digitized--but it already provides a fascinating overview of a storied publication.

Gifts to Church and Life

**For the efforts in putting out this valuable resource which we enjoy very much, \$280 from Dan and Jean Martensen

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