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## Editorial Statement

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## Editorial Statement

Despite the increasing secularism of modern Danish society, religion has played a central role in Danish American culture for more than a century and a half. Each of the articles in this issue explores different aspects of the religious dimensions of Danish American life. We begin with an original poem by Finn Bille about a memorable experience climbing a church staircase, followed by the second part of Jakob Jakobsen's story about his Danish immigrant ancestors in Dagmar, Montana. (Part I appeared in volume 40, number 1 of *The Bridge*). While the first part of the story dealt primarily with Jakob's ancestors' interest in acquiring farmland in the United States, this second part, subtitled "Salvation," explores the nature of the community they found in the settlement they joined in Dagmar. Their experiences illuminate the ways in which religious belief and practice can divide as well as unite, even within otherwise largely homogenous communities.

The second article, co-written by Krister Strandkov and Russell Lackey, documents the outcome of Krister's Bodtker Grant to visit and photograph Danish American churches throughout the Midwest and in California. While the photographs document the buildings themselves, the accompanying article explores the significance of these churches for the lives of the Danish Americans who frequented them.

The last three articles belong together: the centerpiece is Pastor Peter D. Thomsen's recollections of his friend and mentor, Pastor S. D. Rodholm. To frame these recollections, we asked descendants of both pastors to provide some biographical information about each man, which resulted in Kathy Thomsen's thoughts about her father and Renee Showalter-Hanson's biographical sketch of her grandfather. Both men were alumni of Grand View College Seminary and pillars of the Danish American Lutheran community, to which they provided practical, spiritual, and cultural support throughout their lives.