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## A Tribute to Otto A. Olson, 1920-1976

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A TRIBUTE TO  
OTTO A. OLSON  
1920 - 1976

Two and one-half years after the sudden and tragic death of Otto A. Olson, some might well ask 'who was Otto Olson?' Some readers will not have met Otto Olson, some probably not even heard of him. This may reflect our self-centeredness — that we can so soon forget persons, their contributions to the community where they worked and lived, or events in which they played a large part. Yet it also reflects the wisdom and graciousness of God, who permits us to put the past behind us, not so that we forget, but that we may move forward; God, who raises up new leaders to carry on His will in this earthly life.

It can be said that this issue of CONSENSUS, to honour the memory of the late Rev. Dr. Otto A. Olson, is rather late, anti-climactic, of little relevance. But then again, perhaps it is appropriate. Two and one-half years after his death, or any number of years, it is good to remember a man of God, a man of faith.

We may not be able to readily identify major structures or institutions that Otto Olson 'built'. We do not have 'one Lutheran Church in Canada' as his legacy. History may not accord him a niche labelled 'the greatest.' However, Otto Olson did affect the lives of many people.

For Otto's life was most significant in terms of his concern for 'persons'; of his positive influence on 'persons'; of his love, perhaps shown shyly, for 'persons'. I deliberately use the term 'persons' instead of the more general 'people'. That is a significant distinction for me. Although many may have perceived Otto as an 'organization man', I believe he was, in the vernacular, a 'people person'.

His influence was felt in the arena of Lutheran identity, with active involvement in bringing the Lutheran Church in America into being, and mighty investment of himself in Lutheran unity in Canada. His counsel was sought in inter-church circles and in the struggles there for a united Christian witness. Closest to his heart I believe was the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ through congregations, pastors and everyday Christians. This is how I experienced Otto most. I know that the pastors under his jurisdiction were always Otto's concern. He tried to give them the counsel he believed right, though perhaps it was not always perceived that way. He always had time to listen to a person who had some concerns, be they personal or having to do with the church. There was always a load of work that was never finished, but he was ever ready to bear someone else's burdens. Here was a deeply Christian person.

Otto Olson — those who knew him or were in some way touched by his life will occasionally be reminded of him — and will remember. We will remember a man of God, a person who *has* left his mark on this world, in some larger ways and in many smaller ways.

— Walter A. Schultz, Executive Director  
Lutheran Council in Canada