70th Anniversary

St. John’s United Church of Christ
Tulare, South Dakota

August 27
1961
70 Years
A Congregation

60 Years
With A Church
A MESSAGE
from
Pastor Anderson

It is with great joy and a deep sense of accomplishment that we observe the seventieth anniversary of St. John's congregation and the sixtieth anniversary of the church building.

We owe a great deal to the firm determination and abiding faith of the pioneers that nurtured our church through its infancy. It is a heritage in which we can rejoice. There are so many things, which have happened down through the years, that deserve our prayers of gratitude unto Almighty God.

As you read the pages of history that follow, you can see to some degree what contributed to make St. John's what it is today. The historical committee gathered most of the information from the minutes of the annual congregational meetings, having to translate the first twenty-eight years from German. In such a process, some things have undoubtedly been missed, but nothing was intentionally omitted. Due to the lack of space not all details could be included and many items were condensed.

Our congregation has been served by a number of pastors, five of whom are still active in the parish ministry. Rev. Alfred Rim is now serving Bethel Church in Nebraska City, Nebraska, and Rev. Elmer Broetzmann is pastor of St. John's Church, Cullman, Alabama. First Church in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, is now served by Rev. Gregor Kutz, while Rev. John Milmiltz is at St. Peter's Church, Dubois, Indiana. Rev. Gerhard Schmidt is now serving St. Paul's Church in Plato, Minnesota. We wish them God's blessing as they continue their service in His name.

As yet our congregation has not experienced the joy of sending one of its own sons into the ministry of Our Lord. Just as Christ challenged his disciples to greater service, He still challenges us. Thus while we recall with joy the accomplishments of the past, may this anniversary observance spur us to a deeper commitment and greater service to Christ.
Church History

Of St. John's United Church of Christ

The beginning of St. John's Church extends back to the late 19th century as the early settlers came to homestead the open prairies of Dakota. To these pioneers, this meant carving out a whole new way of life on the rolling plains. Along with breaking the soil and building homes, they also had a concern for education and their spiritual life. With transportation a definite problem, their schools and churches had to be located within easy access. Within the area, a small group of people sharing a common heritage of German ancestry banded together to organize a church sometime in 1891. The first meeting was held in the old schoolhouse on January 2, 1892.

The group was small and ministers were scarce on the frontier, but by yoking together with Salem Church in nearby Tulare, they could share in the support of a resident pastor. The first minister was the Rev. Conrad Schaff.

On January 5, 1895, the congregation chartered as St. John's German Lutheran Church, after functioning the first few years without any real organization. The salary paid the pastor the previous year was $87.40, and it was voted to increase their share to $100 for that year. The trustees elected at the time were Herman Binger, Barney Huehl and Herman Fliege; while John Binger, John Steinbis and Herman Otto were on the church board. Descendents of these families are still active in the church.

At the turn of the century the congregation became anxious to build a church in which to worship and move from the schoolhouse. William Roemer donated six acres of land from his farm on which the church was to be built and a building committee of August Schultz, John Steinbis, George Tasche and Mrs. Gaudig was appointed. On May 7, 1901, the congregation voted approval of the building plans which called for the church dimensions to be 28 feet wide, 40 feet long and walls 12 feet high. The foundation was to be completed before harvest and the construction to proceed as rapidly as possible. William MacNeill was the carpenter foreman for the job, assisted by Henry Roemer and Andrew MacHarry. The total cost of the final construction amounted to $1089.25.

During this time, a committee under the direction of Pastor K. Zeyber was appointed to carry out the necessary procedures for the congregation to affiliate with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This ordinance was to take effect the first of January 1902.

With the church finished, provision was made for the hiring of a janitor at the rate of fifteen cents per Sunday for his work. The Rev. L. V. Byerstorf served the church in 1904-05.

At the congregational meeting of 1906 with the Rev. Brenecke presiding, a motion was passed to buy a bell for the church steeple and Barney Huehl was appointed in charge of the purchase. The organist (August Roemer) was to receive $10 for the year, and the janitor (Martin Roemer) was to be paid twenty cents a week during the winter months and fifteen cents during the summer months.

The bell was dedicated on April 8, 1906. Barney Huehl, L. F. Roemer and George Tasche installed it in the belfry. Its total weight was 1260 pounds and cost $384.00.

Martin Roemer resigned as janitor at the congregational meeting of 1909 and it was announced that all the members would have to take turns cleaning the church. Three repair projects were approved at the meeting, including the painting of the exterior and interior of the church and
putting new tin on the steeple. However, as the year progressed, they were only able to repaint the church interior. Rev. Meiller was pastor, 1911-1912.

By 1912, the pastor's salary had climbed to $600, plus the provision that each church was to supply fifty bushels of oats and some hay to feed the pastor's horse.

After serving as organist for twenty-one years, August Roeber retired in 1915, giving as his reason, the necessity of helping to care for his growing family. The congregation now boasted 42 members, with the Rev. F. Dodzuweit as pastor.

With the coming of the first World War, many of the families of the church found themselves watched with some degree of suspicion, as German was still used in the church services and by the older folks at home. Thus as time continued its sure and steady move forward and onward, the native language of German had to be set aside and 1920 marked the final year that the notes of the congregational meeting were written in German. The change was also noted in the church, as one Sunday a month the service was to be in English, the Lord's Supper was to be observed alternately in English and German, and Sunday School was to be solely in English. The younger people, being educated in the public schools, had begun to disregard the learning of German. The Rev. G. Viehe, who came in 1918, resigned in 1922. In his final year, the congregation hired a livery for his travel.

The Rev. E. Herrmann was then called to the pastorate from Fergus Falls and served through 1926. During this time services were held every Sunday from April through October and then on alternate weeks during the winter months.

In 1927, Rev. Alfred Rinne arrived and plans for a new modern parsonage (the present parsonage) were begun. The house, designed by Lewis Roeber, was built with considerable volunteer labor and personal donations at a cost of $2910.74, with the two churches sharing the expense. It was during Rev. Rinne's pastorate that the Women's Guild (then Ladies' Aid) and Youth Group were begun. Both organizations are still active today and play an important part in the teaching and action work of the church.

The Rev. A. L. Schieler became pastor in 1930, as the effects of the national depression began to be felt. Seats were to be installed in the balcony if funds permitted and the organist and janitor were to be hired at a twenty percent reduction, if they could be acquired at that price.

A Congregational minister, Rev. Miller, supplied the church from March through June 1933.

With the Rev. Elmer Broetzmann as pastor during the worst of the "Dirty 30's," this motion was made and passed at the congregational meeting of 1934: "We can't promise anything for Synodical Budget until times get better." The church also asked for and received support from the Board of National Missions from 1934-1943, to enable the church to keep going.

Then followed two short pastorates of Rev. Ronicko and Rev. Gatermann after Rev. Broetzmann resigned in late 1937. In October 1941, the Rev. Gregor Kutz was installed. During his pastorate the Churchmen's Brotherhood was organized. As the nation struggled with the Axis, Rev. Kutz resigned to enter the Army Chaplaincy in 1943.

A prolonged period of seven years followed, during which the church was without a resident minister. During this time Clyde McCone, a lay member, served as a friend to the congregation. In 1950, the Rev. Carl Gatermann was called as pastor, and a fund was started for a new church society and parsonage. This fund was completed, and the present parsonage and church were dedicated in March 1952.
preacher from Redfield, served as pastor. Rev. Reinmuth of the Redfield Congregational Church also supplied the congregation.

In spite of the absence of a home pastor, the congregation completely redecorated the sanctuary interior, giving many hours of donated labor and an expenditure of $1310.00. Through the combined effort of the Sunday School and Choir, an electric organ was purchased in 1949. A basement was also dug under the church and finished, giving additional space for Sunday School and social gatherings.

During the summer of 1951, John Milmiltz, a seminary student, served the congregation and then returned as resident pastor on July 5, 1952. The Brotherhood was reactivated and affiliated itself with the National Brotherhood.

Beginning in January of 1957, the Rev. Gerhard Schmidt of the E & R church at Alpena served as supply minister for the charge, holding a joint service on Sunday evenings. This continued through April 1958, except for the summer of 1957, when Robert Anderson of Eden Seminary, served as supply minister. During this time, the Hymnal of the E and R church was purchased through private donations and the Women’s Guild. The congregation also purchased new church furniture, pews and pulpit, which were dedicated in 1958.

Ronald Smith supplied the congregation during the summer recess of Eden Seminary in 1958, and the Rev. A. W. Gallagher, Congregational lay minister, served until June 1959, when Rev. Anderson assumed the pastorate following his graduation and ordination.

The senior and junior choirs, directed since 1962 by Mrs. Eunice Miller, dedicated their gowns with a special musical service in the fall of 1959. The gowns were purchased by personal donations.

On March 27, 1960, runoff water from melting snow washed in the west wall of the basement, but the church stood fast and the basement was restored, with the addition of a kitchen, colorfully painted walls and a tiled floor.

As we observe the seventy years of history that comprises our heritage we can rejoice in the dedication of those early pioneers who nurtured the church through its infancy. Truly God has blessed us and done great things for us. Just as we pause to honor the past, we need to turn our faces to the future and strive to provide some measure of its heritage for the future generations of St. John’s. Our prayer is that they not be content to maintain what has been accomplished, but feel challenged to even greater service for Christ and His Church.

--- Pastors Who Have Served St. John’s ---

C. Schaff 1891-1894  Alfred Rhine 1927-1929
M. Reichaufer 1894-1901  A. L. Schleier 1930-1932
K. Zeyher 1901-1904  Elmer Broetzmann 1933-1937
L. V. Byerstorf 1904-1906  G. P. Ronick 1938-1939
F. Brenneck 1905-1910  John Gatermann 1939-1940
Meiler 1911-1912  Gregor Kutz 1941-1943
F. Dodzuweit 1912-1915  Clyde McCon 1944-1951
M. Kurschat 1915-1917  John Milmiltz 1952-1956
G. Viehe 1917-1922  Gerhard Schmidt 1957-1958
E. Herrmann 1922-1926  A. W. Gallagher 1959
      Robert Anderson 1959-
70 Years of Statistics
(As of July 1, 1961)

Holy Baptisms 245  Funerals 49
Confirmations 230  Present Membership 99
Marriages 48

Members of the Senior Choir

Choir Director
Director of the St. John's choir is Mrs. Ronald Miller.

Junior Choir Members

Sunday School Teachers
Left to right: Harley Swaney, Gladys Nelson, Mrs. Earl Schultz, Mr. Gaylord Schultz, Mrs. Lloyd Ames, Martha Roeber, Forrest Sires, Mrs. LeRoy Fliehe, Mrs. Raymond Binger, Aileen MacNeill, Lavern Hague, Mrs. Melvin Roeber and Mrs. Delmar Schultz.
Church Council


St. John's Women's Guild

Sunday School Children
Historical Brochure Committee

Left to right: Leo Schultz, Mrs. Elton MacNeill, Rev. Robert Anderson, Mrs. Ronald Miller, Mrs. Paul Roeber and Herman Schultz.

Committee Members

These two women were not present when the group picture of the brochure committee was taken. They are Mrs. Mayme Meyer, on the left, who also serves as janitress of the church, and Mrs. Elsie Blume.

Youth Fellowship


St. John's Brotherhood