

From the 125th Anniversary of Organization Anniversary Festival service folder
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Congregational History.

The Lime Creek Evangelical Lutheran Church, which has often been referred to as the "Mother Church" of our dear Evangelical Lutheran Synod by many pastors and laymen, is located 6 miles north of Lake Mills or three miles southwest of Emmons, MN in Norway Township.

It is rather difficult to determine the exact date or even the year of the organization of our congregation. According to records, the first settlers of Norwegian descent came originally from Muskego, WI in 1856 or 1859.

The Rev. C.L. Clausen was ordained by the German Lutheran pastor L.F. Krause of the Buffalo Synod on October 18, 1843. In 1852, the Rev. Clausen, together with two friends from Rock Prairie, Wisconsin made an expedition west, crossing the Mississippi River and following the Iowa-Minnesota State Line until they reached the Cedar River. At this point they turned to their left and came to the city of St. Ansgar. The fertile prairie, rivers and timbers of this area appealed to them. The Rev. Clausen had seen many deer gathering at the banks of a stream, so he named it Deer Creek.

The Rev. Clausen and his two friends returned to Rock Prairie; however, he returned later that year in order to make preparations for the new colony.

This colony, which was organized with a caravan of 40 families, comprised of fifty wagons, which cost \$48.00 each, arrived in the St. Ansgar area in the spring of 1853. They also brought with them about 300 head of cattle.

At this point, I may relate a story told to me many times during my boyhood by my Great Uncle P.H. Petersen, also known as "Halvor Paer". He stated that he walked from St. Ansgar to the old Petersen farm five miles northwest of Lake Mills in one day without food, because he had no money and he was ashamed to beg.

A grist mill was located at St. Ansgar and the early settlers would, in the fall, go there to grind flour for the winter supply.

The first settlers in Silver Lake and Bristol Townships had their first Norwegian service at the home of Lars L. Loberg on July 20, 1858. The following pastors served this area: A.C. Preus, V. Koren, and C.L. Clausen. Services were held four times a year.

The four congregations of Lime Creek, Shell Rock, Silver Lake, and Round Prairie were organized in 1859, but the exact date is not known. Each congregation had its own ecclesiastical corporation and therefore had full power to regulate its own affairs. Pastor Clausen wrote four articles stating the fundamental principles of the church.

One year, 1860, the congregation in the West part of the district, namely Lime Creek, withdrew and organized as an individual congregation.

On May 18 and 19, 1865 a meeting was attended by Pastors H.A. Preus, J.A. Otteson, V. Koren, and C.L. Clausen. On the first day a call was extended to Candidate of Theology T.A. Torgerson. He was installed as pastor of Lime Creek on August 21, 1865. Pastor Torgerson was involved in the slavery question of the day as was referred to as a pro-slavery man. But when the Rev. Torgerson discussed the slavery question in the light of God's Word, he spoke "as the oracles of God". 1 Peter 4,11: "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God". He enlisted as a volunteer in the army of the North and fought for the emancipation of slaves. He continued to serve the congregation until his death, January 7, 1906. Lime Creek then severed its relations with Silver Lake and Concordia and joined with the Lake Mills congregation.

At a meeting on February 24, 1869, a motion was made by H.G. Emmons to withdraw from the Synod, thus causing the first division in the Lime Creek congregation.

In 1906 the Rev. A.J. Torgerson, son of T.A. Torgerson became the pastor after his father's death.

The Rev. O. Otteson was called and installed as pastor on August 4, 1907. On January 11, 1909 he resigned and preached his farewell sermon on August 8. On September 18, Prof. J.E. Thoen of Luther Academy in Albert Lea conducted the call meeting. A call was sent to the Rev. Henry Ingebritson, but due to illness in his family, he was not installed as pastor until the fall of 1911. Prof. Thoen served in the interim.

During the Rev. Ingebritson's pastorate, the controversy of "Opgjør" occurred causing untold troubles in the congregation. It was settled by a division in the congregation on September 20, 1917. A motion to join the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America was defeated by a 38 to 19 vote. In the spring of 1918 a number of individuals also tendered their resignation. This left the congregation stripped of many members, but it also reestablished peace and unity of doctrine.

Pastor Ingebritson served the parish until 1944 when he resigned. A call was extended to his nephew, the Rev. Luther Vangen, who then served until April 1948. Candidate of Theology, Iver C. Johnson, then accepted the call and was installed on August 1, 1948. He terminated his pastorate here in June of 1957, when he accepted a professorship at Bethany Lutheran College. The Rev. G.M. F. Becker served as pastor from June 1957 until 1960. Then Paul G. Anderson served the parish from 1960 until the spring of 1966. During 1966 many meetings were held and after much deliberation the four congregations of Lime Creek, Lake Mills, Somber and First Shell Rock of Northwood formed a parish and called its present pastor, the Rev. Alf Merseth.

On June 9, 1968, a 50th Anniversary Festival commemorating the reorganization of the Synod at Lime Creek in June of 1918, took place. The sainted Rev. Paul Ylvisaker was the festival speaker. Former pastors Paul Anderson and Iver Johnson, as well as a son of the congregation, Prof. Rudolph Honsey, took part in the service.

In 1971 the Immanuel Lutheran congregation, Riceville Iowa, joined the parish making it a five congregation parish. During these years our relationship has been a very harmonious one.

In the year 1973 the interior of the church was completely redecorated and in 1974 the church exterior was painted. In that same year new windows were installed in the parish hall, and some interior and exterior painting was done.

In 1976 the church pews were refinished and restained, thus greatly improving the appearance of the interior of the church. In 1984 the organ was replaced.

Other improvements that should be mentioned are: new front steps, new exterior lights on the front of the church, new fence, new altar and pulpit paraments, interior and exterior improvements in the parish hall, and evergreen trees have been planted by the boundary of the property.

A monument to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod's place of reorganization, erected at the Lime Creek Church reads as follows:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." John 8,13.

"Here in June 1918, a number of pastors and laymen of the Norwegian Synod, who for scriptural reasons could not, in good conscience, consent to their Synod's merger with two other Lutheran bodies, met to reorganize the Norwegian Synod of the American Lutheran Church. (Evangelical Lutheran Synod since 1957)."

"Erected by the youth of the Iowa-Southern Minnesota Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, October 1969."

Since the pastor serves a five congregation parish and is also the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the parish has, since 1976, been a part of the vicarage program of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The vicars are assigned to serve in the parish for one year as a part of their training and thus assist with the work of the parish. The following vicars have served the parish: Charles Keeler, 1976 - 77; Gaylin Schmeling, 1977 - 78; Daniel Metzger, 1979 - 80; Daniel Faugstad, 1980 - 81; Gregory Haugen, 1981 - 82; Glenn Obenberger, 1982 - 83; Steven Sparley, 1983 - 84; Timothy Bartels, 1984 - 85. David Hoyord is our present vicar. These young men have been dedicated servants, preaching the Word of God in its truth and purity.

It is stated that these words taken from the book of Revelation 22, 20, are inscribed on our church bell, "Jeg kommer snart, Amen, Ja kom Herre Jesus, Halleluja!" (" Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus") Certainly these words should serve us all as a reminder to be ever thankful to our God who has given us and has preserved for us the true Word of God in the parish. May this be our most treasured heritage for time and eternity.

As the congregation, today, commemorates 125 years of the preaching and teaching of the grace of God in Christ, the words of Thomas Kingo are appropriate words of thanksgiving.

Praise to Thee and adoration,
Blessed Jesus, Son of God,
Who, to serve thine own creation,
Didst partake of flesh and blood;
Teach me that I never may
From Thy fold or pasture stray,
But with zeal and joy exceeding
Follow where Thy steps are leading.

“Jeg Kommer Snart, Amen. Ja Kom Herre Jesus!”

INTERESTING HISTORICAL DATA

On May 4, 1868 a five man committee consisting of H.E. Emmons, Hellek Knudson, Haakon Rasmusson, Johannes Sene, Knud Singlestad, with The Rev. T.A. Torgerson as an advisory member, was elected to serve as the Church Building Committee.

The Lime Creek Congregation was incorporated and recorded on October 24, 1869.

On May 7, 1870 at a meeting, discussion was held on where to build a church and have a cemetery. Two parcels of land were considered, one on the State Line and the other belonging to A. Herfendal, the latter being more desirable as it was more centrally located. Three acres were purchased at \$12.00 per acre. January 31, 1871 the \$36.00 were paid and a deed was received.

On December 12, 1872 the church building plans were discussed. It was decided to build as soon as possible.

February 2, 1874 final plans for the building were given. The dimensions of the church were to be 36x60x22; the tower to be 12x14 and the height of the steeple to be 92 feet from the ground. The Building Committee at this time consisted of the Rev. T.A. Torgerson, Ingebrit M. Fole, Ole M. Dahle and John I. Sime.

March 5 1875 the committee was authorized to borrow \$250.00 to pay a contractor even if they had to pay 24% interest.

March 27, 1888 the church interior was completed. The Building Committee at that time was composed of the Rev. T.A. Torgerson, Johann Ludvig, I. Martinson, Ole Fole, P.H. Petersen, Ole M. Dale and John Brudvig.

December 2, 1895 the Young Peoples' Society was thanked for the large chandelier. It cost \$67.95 and came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 1900 the first Parochial School was started with Ragnhild Landsrud the teacher.

August 5, 1906 it was decided to build a parsonage near the church. Minnie Teslo was to be the teacher in the school for the coming school year.

March 12, 1918 the building of a parsonage became a reality on five acres of land donated by Mr. Tom Severson.

March 19, 1929 a Building Committee was elected consisting of Peter Dymbe, Peter Dahle, John Fole to rebuild the school house because the other one had burned down the previous winter.

In 1964 our Parochial School was closed due to lack of students.

Compiled by
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