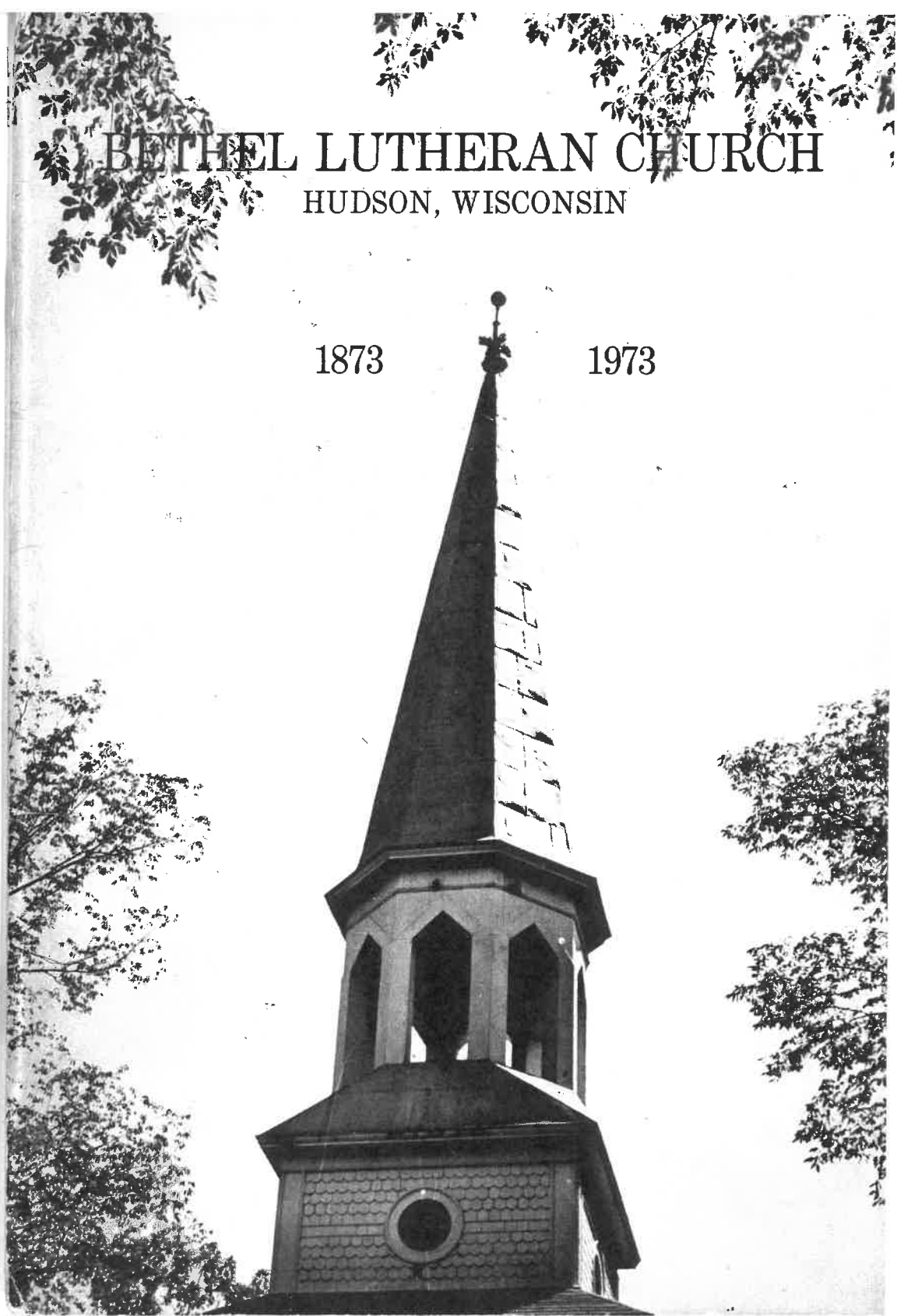


BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
HUDSON, WISCONSIN

1873

1973



*Pastor
Scheide's
Message*



Dear Friends:

It is with humility and gratitude to God that we at Bethel celebrate the congregation's 100th anniversary this year. Thankful to Him, that His grace and power has sustained and prospered the work of the church here in this Beth-El — this "place of God" — over a century. But humble too, as we think of the thousands who lived and contributed to that work, who laid the foundations, who struggled when it wasn't easy. It is to all who have helped make Bethel what it is that we dedicate this brief historical account.

I regret that through much of Bethel's history little was preserved in the way of historical records. Evidently, our people of a couple of generations ago didn't think what they did was of great significance, or perhaps they were not as conscious as they should have been of the history they were making. Consequently, some periods of Bethel's historical account are very brief.

We have deliberately left out many names, for who knows all those who should be mentioned over a period of a century? I am indebted to a former member of Bethel, Mrs. George Thompson, who wrote much of the account of the congregation's earlier history; to Mrs. Edith Sather and Mrs. Richard Franseen for their help in gathering materials for this booklet; and to the staff of the Hudson Star-Observer for their interest, help, and encouragement — all of which aided much in producing this Centennial sketch.

To all our members and friends: have a good celebration, enjoy the festivities planned, and let us as we praise the Lord for His goodness through a century, rededicate ourselves to the continued proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the days ahead — as we begin a new century!

Sincerely yours,
Norman P. Scheide

The American Lutheran Church

422 SOUTH FIFTH STREET • MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55415



Office of the PRESIDENT

April 23, 1973

Bethel Lutheran Church
The Rev. Norman P. Scheide
920 Third Street
Hudson, Wisconsin 54016

Dear Christian Friends:

Thank you for the announcement of your Centennial observance beginning in May and concluding in September. This is an historic landmark in the history of your congregation and I welcome the opportunity to note it with you.

On behalf of the congregations of The American Lutheran Church and for myself personally, I send you fraternal greetings and thank you for your partnership in the Gospel. God alone can name or number the blessings received and given through the ministry of your congregation during the past century.

This will be a season of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord of us all who is the center of our faith and the example of compassionate love. You will also remember with appreciation those who have lived and labored among you and left you a rich heritage of Christian witness and service. May you be moved to sincere recommitment to our Lord and his mission for the church.

"May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints." I Thessalonians 3: 12-13.

Sincerely,

David W. Preus
President

DWP:mah



Bethel Lutheran Church, Circa 1890

The Early Years

The first Norwegian Lutheran group in Hudson was a mission — a “preaching place” — of the Norwegian Synod, and served by the well-known pioneer Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Lauritz Larsen. A native of Kristiansand, Norway, the Rev. Mr. Larsen had come to America in 1857 with his family, settling temporarily at Koshkonong in Dane County. Here the Larsens were guests of the Rev. A. C. Preus who was president of the Norwegian Synod.

On recommendation of the Rev. Mr. Preus, Pastor Larsen was called to serve the new settlement of Rush River in Pierce County. He and his family traveled by riverboat up the Mississippi River from Prairie du Chien to the St. Croix, and landed in Hudson. The time was November, 1857. It was here in the Rush River congregation, near River Falls, that the young Norwegian pastor began his pioneering career — one which was to have far-flung effects upon the young immigrant church.

Pastor Larsen’s salary was \$300, offerings at the three festivals, parsonage, and the use of eighty acres of land — little of it under cultivation. The young pastor learned to read English early, and was a subscriber to the New York Tribune. He shortened his name to “Laur” and signed this the rest of his life.

Larsen’s large mission included counties in southeastern Minnesota, as well as several counties adjacent to Pierce, in Wisconsin. As a mission pastor he traveled extensively over this territory, organizing congregations, conducting worship services, administering the sacraments, and occasionally marrying a couple. In Hudson, Pastor Larsen conducted services once a month, stayed in the community an additional day or two, especially to instruct children preparing for confirmation.

Early Norwegian Lutheran services in Hudson were held in a public hall in the downtown district. An improvised altar was provided, the pastor wearing the vestments usually worn by Norwegian clergymen, and conducted the services according to the ritual of the Church of Norway.

Following the resignation of Pastor Laur Larsen in 1859, there were about three years when the Norwegian Lutherans in Hudson had no regular pastoral services. Ordained ministers were not plentiful among



Circa 1890

the Norwegian immigrants; means of transportation were slow and cumbersome. Let it be said in tribute to these pioneer folks, that the cultivation and preservation of the faith was left heavily to the home, where parents taught the elements of Christianity to their children.

During those years, other Norwegian Lutheran pastors, such as the Rev. Nils Brandt and the Rev. Bernt Muus, stopped in Hudson occasionally on their "missionary journeys." The latter was one of the founders of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.

The first Lutheran minister to preach on a more or less regular basis to Norwegians in Hudson was the Rev. O. J. K. Hagestad, who served the Rush River parish from 1863 to 1876. On March 15, 1873, a number of Norwegian families met at the home of John Lake in Hudson, for the purpose of discussing the possibilities of organizing a congregation. Those who committed themselves to the "best of their ability" were: Jens Thonneson, Ole Gunderson, Elias Baker, Ole Lake, A. D. Olson, Ole Hammer, Olaus Johnson, Nels Johnson, Hans Holbeck, Christian Amundson, Ole Thonneson, and John Lake.

The congregation was organized under the name: "Norsk Evangelisk Luthersk Menighed av Hudson og Omegnen" — the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Hudson and vicinity. The first meeting was scheduled for March 18, 1873, at the Olson Hall (Harris Hotel) on First Street. At that time A. D. Olson, Ole Lake, Ole Gunderson, and Ole Hammer were elected as officers. The new congregation was now a reality, but in its immediate future lay a great deal of hard work. But these pioneers had much faith in the future; they readily accepted responsibility and duty. Funds were scarce, but thought was soon given to the purchase of a lot, so that a church building could be erected.

On April 12, 1873, at a meeting held at the home of Ole Gunderson, a committee of three was chosen to determine the best location for a church. Two petitions asking for contributions, one in Norwegian, one in English, were posted in public places.

Meanwhile, meetings were held on the first Sunday of each month at Olson's Hall. Contributions were set at twenty-five cents per person. Before long, a decision was made to purchase a lot north of the St. Croix County Court House at a price of \$375.00, from James and Mary Sibley. The purchase price was to be paid in three years at ten percent interest. Plans for the new building were left in the hands of John Amundson and Ole Hammer.

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A Ladies' Society (Kvindeforening) was organized in April, 1874. This group met once a month at the home of one of its members. The meetings began at 2 o'clock with a devotional period, followed by sewing items that could be sold at a bazaar. A bountiful lunch was served for ten cents. It is interesting to note that when the second payment for the newly-purchased church lot was due, the kvindeforening was asked to make the payment. The group grew in membership, with meetings being in a downtown public hall.

Plans for the new church were finally drawn in February 1875. It was to be thirty by seventy-eight feet, with a steeple. Lumber was purchased at the Lakeland, Minnesota mill — 15,000 board feet at ten dollars per thousand. A Mr. Rocstraw from Lakeland was hired to oversee the construction, and he was paid three dollars per day. Several church members volunteered their services. The kvindeforening promised to pay for the plastering.

In October 1876, the congregation voted to obtain a loan of \$175.00 for two years, at ten percent interest. The new church, as it then stood, was insured for \$1,500.00.

The Rev. Hans J. Krogh preached his first sermon in the new church in October, 1876. He lived in Baldwin from 1876 to 1880, and received a salary of fifty dollars a year. Services were held every tenth Sunday.

The earliest church records go back to 1877. According to this, Agnes Burchedean was the first child to be baptized in the new church. (Miss Burchedean, by the way, lived to the ripe old age of 93, and was buried from Bethel in 1969). The first confirmand listed is Oline Lake, May 26, 1878, and the first couple to be united in marriage were Kristine Amundson and Lina Holien, on May 31, 1877.

Even though the congregation had been organized in 1873, it was not until 1879 that a constitution was adopted. Pastor Krogh presented a constitution modeled from that used in the Baldwin church, and the name of the church was changed to "The Norwegian Evangelical Congregation in Hudson and Community." This same year a Mr. Gunderson, a theological student from St. Paul, was engaged to teach Norwegian school at a salary of twenty dollars a month, with each family contributing two dollars. Sessions ran for six hours a day, with half a day on Saturday. In July of this year, an excursion was made on the riverboat "Knapp" with tickets selling for \$1.50 per family. Ice Cream, lemonade, pop and candy were included.

The Rev. J. O. Scheie was the first resident pastor. Following graduation from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, in 1881, he came to Hudson and served the congregation through 1882. Although he stayed only two years, he provided much inspirational help in making plans for the church. When he left in 1882, Pastor Krogh resumed the pastorate, remaining until 1888, when he was succeeded by the Rev. J. H. T. Lee.

Pastor Lee had come from Norway in 1881, and graduated from Luther Seminary in 1888. He was to serve the congregation until 1894, and again from 1903 to 1918. Pastor Lee's pastorate saw the congregation affiliate with the United Norwegian Lutheran Church.

In 1901 a lot was purchased from W. E. and Mathilda Webster for the purpose of building a parsonage. It was obtained under a three-year contract, at a price of \$400. The ladies of the kvindeforening again came to the "rescue" in providing \$1,400 for the lot and building material. As far as can be ascertained, no contributions were given to missions by the ladies at this time. The ladies' financial help was needed exclusively for the support of the local work.

Under the leadership of Pastor Lee a "mandsforening" — Lutheran brotherhood, and an "ungdomsforening" — Young Peoples' Society, were organized. The former never became too active a group, but the latter became an active organization for the young confirmed members of the congregation. In the course of time, the Young Peoples' Society gave way to the Luther League — for years a potent force among the young people in so many Lutheran churches.

It was during Pastor Lee's ministry that several additions were made to the church. Reliable records are wanting, but it is believed that a chancel and steeple were added about 1890.

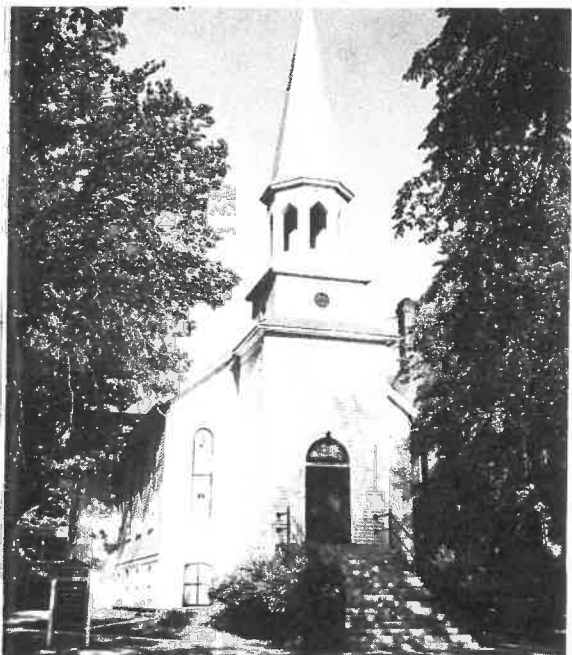
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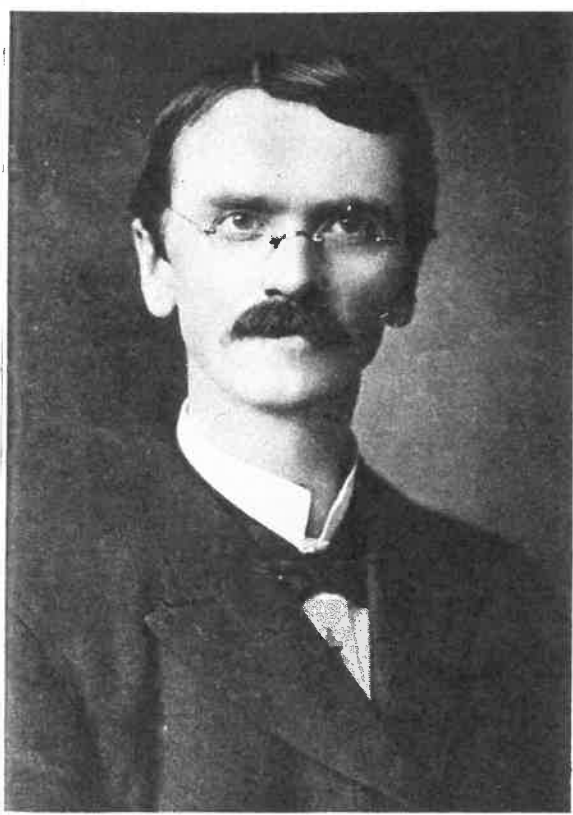


Bethel Lutheran Church 1876-1959



Altar in Bethel Lutheran Church, 1948

Early Pastors



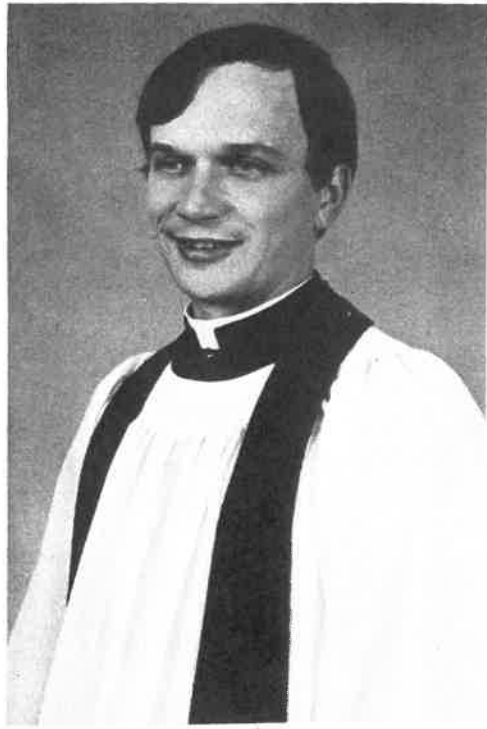
J. H. T. Lee
1888-1894 — 1903-1918



Rev. Norman P. Scheide
1948-



heide



Rev. Orrin Tietz
1970-



Gary Simpson
A son of Bethel ordained
into the Ministry May 1972.



Ordination of Gary Simpson
at Bethel Lutheran Church, Hudson, Wisconsin



CLASS OF 1895

First row, l to r: Clara Crogan, Alma Larson, Mabel Severson
 Second row: Oscar Nelson,, Hilda Thoen, Annie Broten, John
 Johnson, Ernest Michaelson
 Third row: Jessie Gilbertson, Lenore Crogan, Peter Paulson, Emma
 Johnson, Carl Olson
 Fourth row:, Ralph Burchedian,, Rev. Fosness,
 . . . Throen, Esse Anderson

Early Confirmation Classes

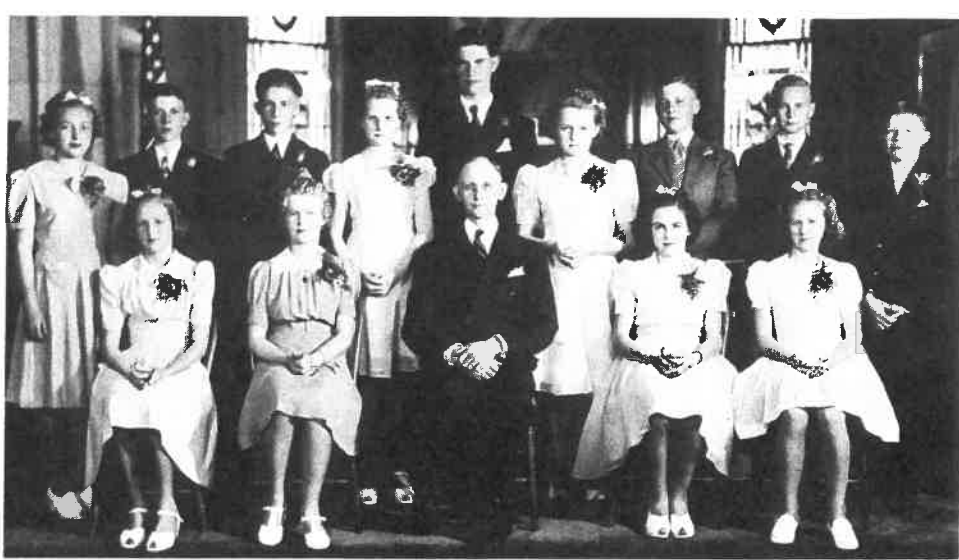


CLASS OF 1917

First row, l to r: Christine Olson, Rev. Lee, Edith Hanson
 Second row: Sigwald Staberg, Arthur Staberg, Amelia Simonson, Marvin
 Larson, Curtis Nickleby



Mabel Severson
Thoen, Annie Broten, John
in, Peter Paulson, Emma
....., Rev. Fosness,



CLASS OF 1941
First row, l to r: Jane Olson, Eleanor Simpson, Rev. Thompson, Betty Lou Loh-
man, Betty June Johnson.
Second row: Lois Brandt, Harold Olson, Norman Olson, Jane Gilbertson, Daryl
McGinley, Leila Evenson, Dean Erickson, Oliver Lyksett, Eugene Gustafson.

Early Confirmation Classes

1 Classes



ith Hanson
, Amelia Simonson, Marvin



CLASS OF 1961
First row, l to r: Allen Stendahl, Doreen Doonan, Jeanne Iverson, Pastor Scheide,
Judy Cameron, Lavonne Iverson, Paul Coleman
Second row: Randall Karow, Philip Scheide, Linda Larsen, Robert Peterson,
Charles Eastman, Sherry Peterson, Jan Svare, Kenneth Olson.



1890 CHOIR

Front row, l to r: Albert Olson, Hans Hanson

Back row: Gustfje Gunderson, Josie Christensen, Ida Everson, Cornelia Everson

Early Choirs



1917 CHOIR

First row, l to r: Ricca Nelson, Maurice Haakenstad, Myrtle Osher, Guri Thoen Lomnes, Nana Myrvik, Matt Strom

Second row: Peter Hjelseth, Anna Hauge,, Matt Haakenstad, Asta Strom, Peter Peterson, Bernt Jacobsen, Terese Osher, Emily Hansen.



en, Ida Everson, Cornelia

5



Haakenstad, Myrtle Osher, Guri
 Matt Haakenstad,
 Haakenstad, Terese Osher, Emily



SENIOR CHOIR — 1929



JUNIOR CHOIR — 1940



CHILDREN'S CHOIR — 1955



JUNIOR CHOIR — 1957

The Church Becomes Bethel

Pastor Lee was succeeded by the Rev. Hans Fosness, who remained until 1898. It was during the latter's tenure that the church basement was added in order to provide more adequate room for the growing Sunday school, as well as a modern heating plant. The ladies helped defray expenses, including the purchase of one hundred chairs for the church parlors at a cost of \$35.50. It was during Pastor Fosness' ministry too, that the name of the congregation was changed to: "Bethel Norwegian Lutheran Congregation of Hudson." The instrument affecting the change was signed on April 27, 1897. From this date on, the church was to be known as Bethel — an appropriate name, for its Old Testament meaning is "the place of God." The Rev. Holm Holmsen succeeded Pastor Fosness, remaining until 1903.

At the turn of the century, the Kvindeforening became the Ladies' Aid Society. Meetings were held in the church parlors. Bazaars and church suppers were served, not to forget that delicacy of all Norsemen — "lutefisk!" Ice cream socials were held on the church lawn in summer, with the men of the church turning out the ice cream from home freezers. Proceeds from these functions helped to "pay expenses" in the congregation.

Pastor Lee returned to serve the congregation in 1903, and remained until 1918. After leaving Bethel, Pastor Lee served as interim pastor at Deer Park and Star Prairie. In the later years of his life he returned to Hudson where he enjoyed his former associates in church and community. During these later years he served as teacher of a class of high school students in Sunday school. He was frequently on hand to assist the pastor in Holy Communion as well as other special services.

Pastor Lee was succeeded by the Rev. B. M. Branford, but the latter's ministry was brief, and few records of his tenure are available. These were somewhat difficult times for the congregation, as the transition between the Norwegian and English languages was beginning to take place. So many of the members were sentimentally attached to the old language, but the times were demanding a more thoroughly American church.

The Rev. Oscar Thompson was installed as pastor of Bethel congregation on January 28, 1923, and his ministry was to cover the next quarter of a century. At this time there were a little less than seventy families belonging to Bethel. Worship services were conducted in both



- 1955



57

Norwegian and English, but as time went by the latter language became dominant. After 1923, all church records were kept in the English. In this year too, the Luther League sponsored the purchase of a new Estay two-manual reed organ with pedals.

Up to this time very little is indicated in the records regarding the growth and progress of the Sunday school. Under Pastor Thompson's direction, the school was reorganized, with attendance and stewardship records kept. The graded system was introduced, and members of the confirmation class were invited to continue in Sunday school through their high school years.

For twenty of the twenty-five years the Thompsons served in Hudson, the pastor's wife, Mrs. Thompson, acted as superintendent of the Sunday school. Much credit must be given to her and her untiring efforts for the growth of Christian education at Bethel. Mention should also be made here of the late Mrs. Matt (Asta) Strom, and Miss Tena Anderson, who served for so many years as teachers in the primary department. By 1948, the congregation had the biggest, (and many felt the best) Sunday school in the community.

In 1924 the Ladies' Aid contributed money for the installation of new furnaces in the church and parsonage. Money was also given to the current expenses of the congregation. Between 1918 and 1925, nearly \$3,000 had been given by the ladies.

Early in 1925, the decision was made to enlarge the church sanctuary. This was to be done by moving the chancel back, and building two transepts, to give the church the shape of a cross. The choirs were to be seated in the transepts; the nave would be able to accommodate more people. The total expense was estimated to be \$8,000, a rather prohibitive amount in the minds of many, but the "pros" prevailed, and by the end of the year the task was accomplished. Rededication took place in 1926.

Bethel entered the field of scouting in 1929, organizing its own troop. Later Zion Lutheran joined in this venture. For many years, Alvin Weitkamp was scoutmaster, and to numerous Bethelites he is still looked on as "Mr. Scouting."

When the Rev. Mr. Thompson came to Bethel, there was a small group of mission-minded women, the "Kvindernes Mission Forening," which was carrying on the main part of the congregation's mission support. In 1927 this group was disbanded, and mission circles were organized under the Women's Missionary Foundation, but separate and

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distinct from the ladies' aid. These five circles carried the main load for the support of home and foreign missions, Christian education, and charities, through their contributions and special offerings. These ladies worked for Lutheran Welfare, Indian missions, and various other benevolence endeavors. Occasionally money would also be contributed to much-needed local improvements.

Mrs. Thompson sought to interest young women in the work of missions, and organized the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation as an auxiliary of the local WMF. Later a Junior LDR was started for girls of confirmation age. Miss Ida Johnson contributed much in the work of the LDR for many years.

Pastor Thompson sought communication with his members through the weekly "Messenger" which went into the parish's homes every Saturday through distribution by the confirmands.

Church music was very close to Pastor Thompson's heart, as it had been an important part of the congregation's life for many years previously. Records are not available as to the date when the first church choir was organized, but there is a picture taken about 1896, showing an active choir. Pastor Thompson's musical talent certainly helped to perpetuate love of music in the congregation. He directed the Senior Choir during the entire twenty-five years in which he served Bethel Church.

A Junior Choir was begun by Miss Edith Hanson in 1938, for children grades four through nine. Later, as this group increased in number, a third choir was formed — the Children's — composed of children in grades two through four. Miss Hanson also directed this group.

1947 saw the church acquire a new electric Hammond organ, purchased at a cost of \$2,000. Mention must be made of the women who faithfully served as Bethel's organists through the years: Essie Anderson, Alma Nickleby Jones, Guri Thoen Lomnes, Elizabeth Sodal, and Miss Hanson (later Mrs. D. H. Sather). The people of the congregation have been blessed with fine music for many years.

In 1943, the remaining members of the disbanded Ebenezer Church in Hudson, presented Bethel with its replica of Thorvaldsen's "Christ," which had graced the chancel of this congregation. It was placed above the altar at Bethel, where it remained until the church gave way to the new Bethel in 1959, and where it now occupies the dominant place in the

chancel. Former members of Ebenezer were guests of honor when the statue was received.

Pastor and Mrs. Thompson marked their twenty-fifth anniversary at Bethel early in 1948. The ladies of the congregation sponsored a recognition service for the Thompsons, paying tribute to them for the many years of service to the church and community. A gift was presented by which they purchased a new car. Later this same year, Bethel celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary at special services.

1948 also saw Pastor Thompson resigning as pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church. Twenty-five years is a long time to serve a congregation. Perhaps the Thompsons felt that their work was done, and that the church needed new, younger leadership. Whatever the reason, both Pastor and Mrs. Thompson had accomplished much in the Hudson community. The congregation had "come of age" — perhaps a strange thing to say about an organization seventy-five years old. Yet we note that as late as the middle forties, Bethel had been part of a two-church parish, and in a community of more than 3,000 a church would hardly get by with such pastor-sharing. Now in 1948 Bethel stood by itself; the community showed signs of more rapid growth — something which began in earnest in the middle and later fifties.

Pastor Thompson received a call to the parish of Hustler, and moved there in the summer of 1948. Here he remained as pastor until 1957, when he became assistant in a parish at Rhinelander. Two years later, Pastor Thompson became chaplain at the Skaalen Home, a home for the retired and aged, in Stoughton. At this writing the Thompsons are living in retirement in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

If, during the foregoing pages, it appears to the reader that the history is a bit sketchy, it is because some of the years left little in the way of a written record. Some of the older pastors apparently did not believe in leaving much of history for posterity. Few documents remain from the early days of Bethel Church, and fewer publications record the contemporary happenings. If we have seemingly neglected some of the periods, as well as some of the men who labored in this place, it is because of a paucity of reliable records and information.

The fact does remain, however, that good, constructive work was accomplished. The church was established, hundreds and thousands were ministered to, through the means of grace. After all, only God knows for certain just what or how much was done to His glory and honor. A church of immigrants on American soil obviously experienced dif-

guests of honor when the

their twenty-fifth anniversary congregation sponsored a fitting tribute to them for the unity. A gift was presented for this same year, Bethel special services.

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iculties and many an adjustment and transition. Lutherans were late in becoming Americanized, for they strove to retain their old-world identity and language. Many Scandinavians were "lost" to the Lutheran Church because of this language barrier, especially as it related to the instruction of children in the church schools. Hudson was no exception when it came to this. Then, there was also the keen Lutheran "competition" as most communities had several congregations, all of them struggling perhaps. The Hudson community had had four Lutheran churches at one time, two using the Norwegian language. In the late forties none of these three remaining Lutheran congregations were large or exceedingly active.

The next several decades were to see changes — changes in church names and synodical rearrangements — significant changes in the make-up and attitudes of communities. By 1950, Hudson was no longer the "toll bridge" town on the St. Croix, with ridiculously low taxes! In the years to come, this community too, was to "come of age!"

The next period in Bethel's history was destined to be one of solid growth and expansion. But many people, many forces and factors, had made their contributions. As always in the story of the Christian church, where some have sown, others will reap, and all this is good when the Name of Christ is glorified!



NORWEGIAN SUMMER SCHOOL — 1914

Education

PRIMARY CLASS — 1930





OOL — 1914



Mrs. Oscar Thompson
Sunday School Superintendent
for more than 20 years.

1930



Asta Strom and her Primary Class

Sunday School Primary Classes — 1946





LADIES GROUP — 1946

First row, l to r: Mrs. Jens Jensen, Mrs. Allen Beggs, Mrs. Melvin Pederson, Mrs. Harry Peterson, Mrs. Charles Eastman, Mrs. Oscar Thompson
Second row: Mrs. Alfred Arntson, Mrs. Helmer Hellum, Mrs. Laura Dixon, Mrs. Joe Florence, Mrs. Louis Beers, Rev. Oscar Thompson.

Farewell to Pastor Thompson — 1948





1946
 , Mrs. Melvin Pederson, Mrs. Harry
 rpson
 illum, Mrs. Laura Dixon, Mrs. Joe

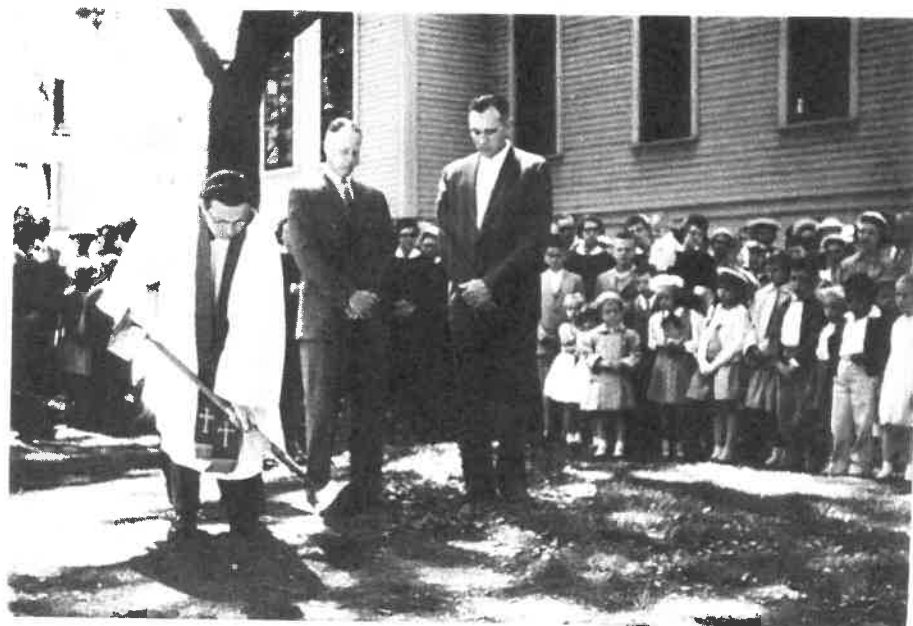
on — 1948



Rev. and Mrs. Norman P. Scheide
 and son Philip, 1948



Dedication of Parish House — 1952



**Groundbreaking for New Church — June 1958
Pastor Scheide, Ray Engstrom and James Ostby**



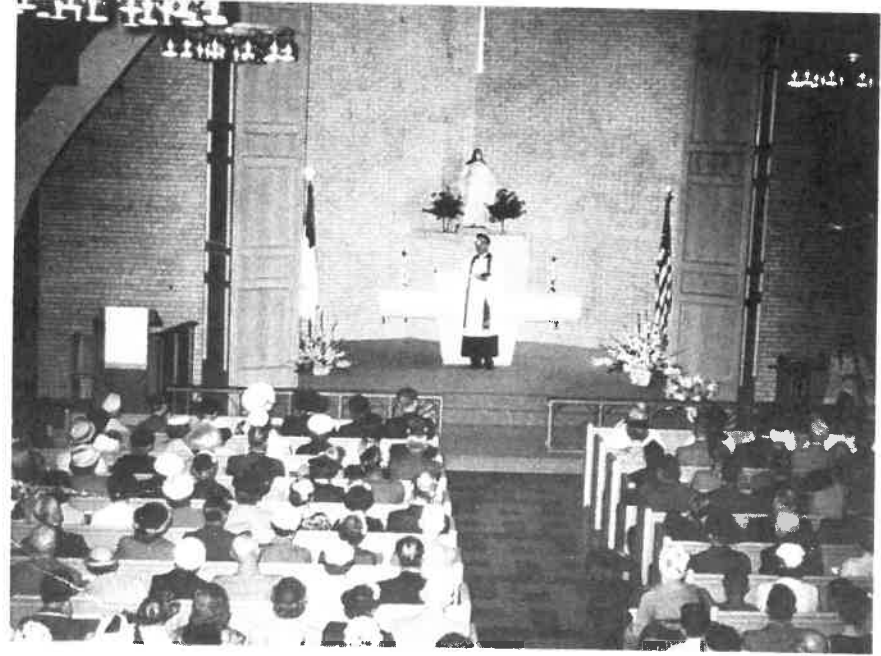
— 1952



Bethel Lutheran Church, Dedicated May 24, 1959



1 — June 1958
d James Ostby



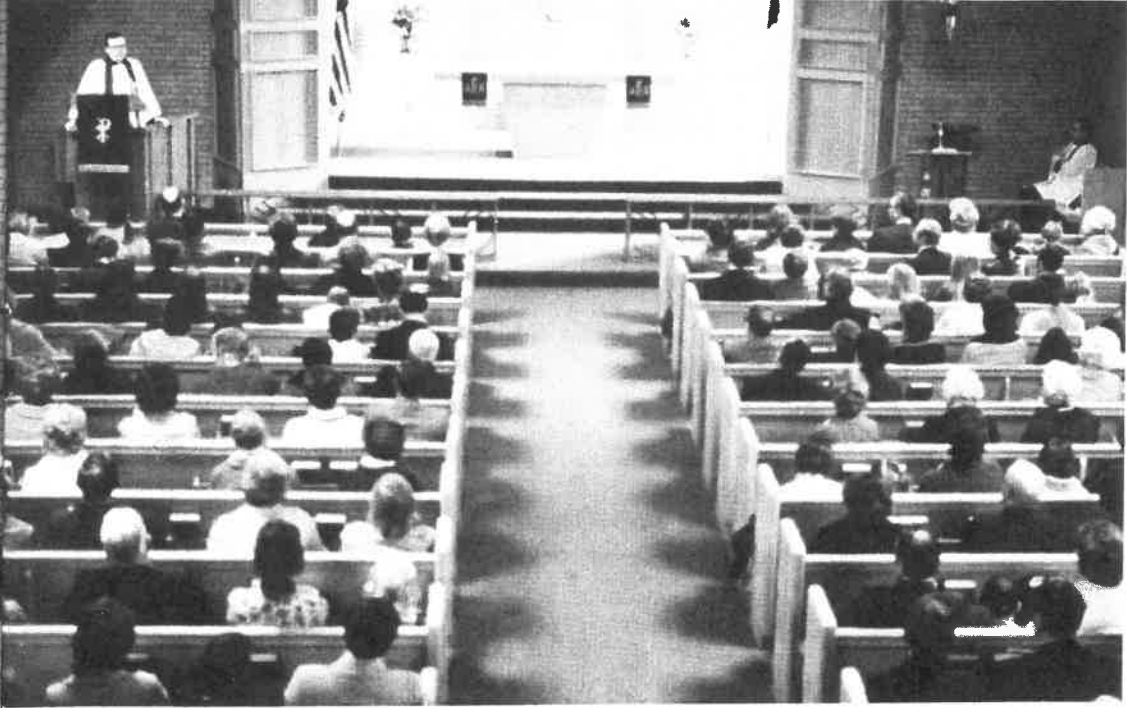
Dr. Myron Austinson dedicating New Church



Easter Festival, 1971 — He Lives!



Receive the Benediction



... Lives!

Interior views of Bethel Lutheran



...ion





Receiving Communion



Confirmands before the Altar

The close of Service



Growth and Expansion

Pastor Thompson resigned early in 1948, and when he left Bethel later that summer, he had served the congregation for a little more than a quarter of a century. In June, the Rev. Norman P. Scheide accepted the call as the new pastor of Bethel. He was fresh from a year's graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, and a nine months' interim as assistant pastor at Bethel Lutheran Church in Madison. A graduate of Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, and Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Pastor Scheide arrived in Hudson on August 24, together with his wife, Martha, and fourteen-month old son, Philip. Thirty-three years of age, the new pastor had served parishes at Lodi, and at Staples, Minnesota.

Thus was to begin another quarter century at Bethel. Together, Pastors Thompson and Scheide have now served more than fifty years.

The congregation to which the Scheides came in August, 1948, was small (about 475 members), with the small frame church situated on a lot forty feet wide, right next to the St. Croix County Court House. The physical plant was anything but impressive, but there was a fine nucleus of people — one that was to help the congregation move to greater things in the next decade. Only recently established as a one-church parish, Bethel had grown little over the years. As late as the early forties, it was part of a parish including Our Savior's in Stillwater, and a church in Bayport.

Pastor Scheide recognized early, as did some of the congregational leaders, that if the church was to progress it needed ample space for its activities, especially the educational program. "Old timers" remember the times when a Sunday school class was conducted in the furnace room! The main part of the church basement was a room forty by thirty, in which there were at times as many as eleven separate classes!

The congregation had "eyed" the adjacent James Thomson property for a number of years. Late in the fall of 1948, this property was purchased for \$13,000. The property added eighty feet to the church's lot, and made possible future expansion. The Thomson house was an old "castle-like" structure, complete with turret! For nine years it was to serve as parsonage, until it was razed in 1958 to make room for the new church.



in



ds before the Altar

In the meantime, the congregation proceeded to plan for more room. Early in 1949, the decision was made to build a first unit — Sunday school addition — behind the existing church, extending north onto the newly-acquired lot. Someone suggested that the estimated cost of \$40,000 for such an addition was impossible to realize at the time, so an alternative decision was made to build the basement only. Dale Karow offered to draw up plans, and this unit was built in 1949. It was a modest beginning, but it did provide considerable space for Sunday school classes. The two-story building was completed in 1952, and was known for many years as the “parish house.” Dr. J. N. Brown, retired president of the pastor’s alma mater, dedicated the new building in October 1952. Everyone felt that the people of Bethel had made a commitment to the future; the congregation was on its way to better things!

It should be stated, in credit to Pastor Thompson and the people of Bethel, that the educational program for children and young people always received a high priority. The congregation had an excellent high school department, with classes for all grades. Most of these classes were taught by men of the congregation. The decade of the fifties was to continue this educational emphasis; this was to be the finest years in the church’s life as far as youth education is concerned.

The early fifties were years of consolidation, growth, and plans for the future. Membership growth was slow but steady. By 1951 worshippers “filled” the church at one service, and the following year a two-service schedule was begun on a regular basis, except during the summer months.

In the early fifties, too, the church building was improved in several ways, especially with a little paint, in order to make it more attractive. Pastor Scheide had convinced many of the members that a new church edifice was a necessity. As Sunday school enrollment increased, as membership grew, (by 1955 it had reached 683), and as church attendance grew with it, (346 in 1955), it became increasingly obvious that definite plans must be made for the building project. In the fall of this year, the congregation made the decision to erect a new building, beginning in 1958.

1956 saw Bethel engage architects for the new church — Armstrong and Schlichting of Minneapolis — a building committee was named, and Dr. Martin Anderson, former district president, was retained as financial consultant in a three-year pledge campaign that fall. Members of the building committee included, Raymond Engstrom, chairman, Don Bailey, Fred Evenson, Robert P. Hansen, Paul Jordan, Dale Karow,

James Ostby, Harold Thompson, Dr. Peter Tweet, Mrs. D. H. Sather, Mrs. Alvin Weitkamp, and Pastor Scheide.

Financial stewardship, which was about \$10,000 in 1948, had climbed to more than \$32,000 by 1956, with about \$20,000 in the building fund. Results of the pledge campaign were good, considering the fact that because of the imminent demise of the North Hudson car shops, the economic situation in Hudson was not deemed promising at the time. But many of our people had a goal before them; they had faith; they believed in the future of the Lord's work at Bethel. In 1957 the decision was made to construct the new church building on the site of the parsonage, connecting it to the existing parish house in an "L" shape.

The demolition of a building, especially a parsonage, was never a popular venture. How would the congregation accept such a proposal? Pastor Scheide and some of the officers were not so sure. But these were changing times. Many members went to work in the Cities every day, where they frequently saw large structures demolished in order to make room for new and more imposing ones. Bethelites were progressive and charitable, as the old mansion "yielded to progress" in early 1958. Actually, criticism was at a minimum.

Another parsonage was obtained at 1227 Second Street in the winter of 1958.

Contracts for the new church were let in late spring of 1958, with the figure of \$183,000 given as the projected cost of the building. \$115,000 had to be borrowed, \$95,000 from Lutheran Brotherhood, to some members a "staggering sum!" Yet in a little more than half the allotted time of twenty years, all loans were to be repaid. In financial stewardship, Bethel was indeed "coming of age."

Ground was broken for the new church on June 15, 1958, with construction under way in early autumn. With a comparatively open winter, the project proceeded rapidly, and by spring the building was complete. The cornerstone was laid April 26, 1959.

This was a time of reflection and anticipation for the members of Bethel. The old church held memories for so many of them — times of rejoicing and sorrow, of fellowship and work, the times without number when through Word and Sacrament, the Living Christ had spoken His words of life. There were especially the memories of Christmases past, of Easter celebrations, and Confirmation. An old church does not die easily, but the white frame "Beth-El" (the place of God), had done its work. A new day was beginning for its membership, as well as for the community.

First services in the beautiful new house of the Lord were on May 10. Prominent on the new altar was the same replica of Thorvaldsen's "Christ" as had graced the old. Pastor Scheide based his message on the words from Hebrews: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." The gospel was the same, the message was unchanged. Christ was the same. The transition had been made. The people were happy!

May 24, 1959 was a festival day at Bethel — a day of rejoicing. The president of the Eastern District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dr. Myron C. Austinson, performed the dedicatory rite. Pastor Thompson too was present to bring a greeting. A ten-year project had been completed. Members of Bethel saw great possibilities for growth and progress in its witness for Christ.

Baptized membership at the end of 1959 stood at 827, with congregational income at more than \$53,000. There were 230 children and youth in the Sunday school. Because of the increasing demands on the pastor's time, a Seminary student was engaged to come to Hudson on Sundays, to assist with the worship services and the youth work. Mr. Paul Hjelle was the first of three such assistants. Congregational leadership, too, was developing. Men and Women took more active roles in the work of the organizations, the Sunday school, as well as in the Church Council. Women were Bible Study and devotional leaders in the circles. We note that the first lay-chairman of the Council, as well as of the congregation, was elected in 1960.

While the fifties had been years of establishment and physical planning, the sixties were to become a period of expansion. Membership grew more rapidly after Bethel attained its adequate physical plant. The community too, was changing, with more and more new people moving into the community, to join the "commuter" crowd. Baptized membership, church attendance, Sunday school enrollment, increased with each year.

Thus it was, that in early 1963 the congregation voted to call a parish worker to assist the pastor in parish education and youth work. Miss Murial Kvale, a recent Concordia College graduate, came, and was to serve until mid-1965. She was succeeded by Miss Sharon Blowers, who served for a year. Following these assistants, the congregation was privileged to have three student interns from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, each serving a year. Douglas Tuve, Richard DeBenedetto, Paul Wolff worked at Bethel from 1967 to 1970, assisting Pastor Scheide in pastoral work, especially Confirmation instruction and youth work.

Usually they preached once a month. It was good for the congregation to have these "future pastors" in its midst.

Expansion at Bethel took on other aspects. Many of its members were vitally interested in the foreign mission program of the Church. They wished to become more personally involved in this venture, beyond the usual giving to the synodical budget. So, in 1963, the congregation voted to sponsor the Rev. Richard Hueter, serving in New Guinea, the initial amount of the sponsorship being \$3,000. The Hueters have been Bethel's "special missionaries" ever since. Several times while on furlough they have visited our congregation. This venture has helped to maintain a high interest in benevolence giving by our people.

The following year, 1964, saw expansion along another line — communication. Bethel voted to broadcast a Sunday service weekly over neighboring station WAVN at Stillwater. Taped at first, these broadcasts have been "live" for many years. We believe this has become a vital part of Bethel's witness for Jesus Christ, not only for the aged, the sick and shut-ins, but to people of all denominations in a wide area. Response to this program has been reassuring year after year. Bethel is proud of its role as Hudson's "church of the air."

Much can be said about Bethel's musical life. Pastor Thompson did much to encourage and promote good church music, himself being a soloist and choir director. Bethel has been a better-than-average "singing congregation" for many years. A great deal of credit too, is due to Mrs. Edith Sather, (she was Edith Hanson prior to 1948), who served as organist for more than four decades, retiring at the end of 1972. Edith began playing the organ back in 1919, was off for college and teaching, and assumed the position again in 1934. Not only did she serve as organist, but at various times directed the Junior and Children's Choirs. Mrs. Dale Willi, the present head organist, has directed the Children's or Junior Choirs for a number of years. Mrs. Ronald Lein is at present director of the Intermediate (formerly Children's) Choir.

For many years Bethel has been fortunate to have an excellent Senior Choir. The past twenty-five years, this group has been directed by Mrs. Norman Scheide, an accomplished musician, who has worked tirelessly at achieving and maintaining a high standard of quality in this choir. Some of these groups have been excellent; all have been good. Much credit is due some men and women who have given their voices to praise God over many years, notably among these, Mr. Helmer Hellum, whose singing years in the Senior Choir number more than four decades.

In keeping with this love for the church's musical heritage, the congregation voted in 1965 to purchase a pipe organ — a dream of music lovers for a number of years. Actual purchase and installation of the new instrument was postponed for a time, due to a new "crisis" which presented itself. Property adjacent to the church on the north was available. What should the growing congregation do? Did we really need another house and lot? Apparently most members thought so, and voted to purchase the Jensch house for future expansion. Acquisition of the property gave Bethel possession of a quarter block — a far cry from 1948! The house was named "Bethel House", and served as an annex for church activities for five years.

The new Cassavant pipe organ was installed and dedicated in 1967. \$25,000 was borrowed in order to pay for the \$35,000 instrument. The congregation had indeed come a long way since its earlier building days!

Depicting the life and progress of a Christian congregation in the pages of a history proves difficult, for there is so much that does not, and cannot appear. A centennial record cannot possibly contain all the names that should be listed, the men and women who gave of themselves and their gifts in order that the work of Christ could go forward in this community: leaders of organizations, teachers in the congregation's educational program, church officers, singers, ushers — these and others would compose too large a role-call for the scope of this brief historical sketch. Suffice it to list the men who have served as congregational chairmen since that office began: William Hale, Raymond Engstrom, Cardell Miller, Malcolm Tuve, Bjarne Svare, Robert Fulton, Joseph H. Larson, Frederic Johnson, Ralph Swanson, Douglas Peterson, Don Bailey, as well as the incumbent, Walter Olson. Listed must be the men who have served as Sunday school superintendents during the past twenty-five years: Wallace Clapp, Robert P. Hansen, Howard Norvold, and Richard Potratz. Can we forget to mention "Mr. Usher," James Gilbertson, who has headed this staff for more than a decade?

Important in the life of any congregation is the work of the women, especially in their tireless efforts in behalf of the benevolence work of the church. With the advent of the American Lutheran Church in 1961, the term "ladies aid" has gradually given way to "American Lutheran Church Women," or as here in Bethel, the "Women of the Church." But the energy and the purposefulness of these servants of the Lord has not diminished. Perhaps the kind of endeavors have changed; proportionately the number of women active in this auxiliary may be less. But the work and dedication on the part of many still remains.

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Over the past twenty-five years the Bethel women have been divided into smaller groups: the Circles and the Bethellettes. For years the Church-sponsored devotional and Bible studies have been the main part of the monthly meetings. Members have stood ready to serve at various functions, such as wedding receptions, and coffee following a funeral. The last several years has seen a small group of ladies serving as the church's altar guild.

Some of the ladies who have been leaders in the women's work at Bethel since 1948 are: Mrs. Louis Beers, Mrs. Eckel Cole, Mrs. Elmer Olson, Mrs. Robert Hansen, Mrs. Gust Flattum, Mrs. Elmer Dahm, Mrs. Arne Austad, Mrs. Fred Johnson, Mrs. Donald Evenson, Mrs. Lyle Iverson, Mrs. Cardell Miller, Mrs. Charles Paulson, Mrs. Dale Hendricks, Mrs. Earl Phillips, Mrs. Bjarne Svare, and Mrs. James Gilbertson.

June 1966 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pastor Scheide's ordination, and at a congregational open house, the Scheides were presented with a color television set, in order that "Pastor Scheide could watch the Packers in color!"

The last several years have witnessed a deeper and more intensive growth in Bethel's membership. In 1968 the congregation voted to participate in the well-known Bethel Series adult education program. A teachers' class was organized that winter, with Pastor Scheide as teacher. The congregational phase of the program was begun in 1970, and has continued since, with more than 120 men and women completing the course in the Old and New Testaments. Many others have taken part of the course. With that many adults in a church studying their Bibles, something is bound to happen, for the "word does not return void." Some have continued in the New Dimensions courses; others participate in a congregational Bible Study.

With the growth of Bethel's size and work full-time assistance in the ministry was needed. So, in 1970, an associate pastor was called, with special areas in parish education and youth activity assigned to him. The Rev. Orrin Tietz, Renville, Minnesota, accepted the call, and was installed in October. He became only the second pastor installed at Bethel in twenty-two years. The pastors now share preaching and general pastoral work.

Of invaluable assistance in the work of the congregation has been the secretary, Mrs. LeRoy Jackman, who has served since 1966.

For a number of years many felt that Bethel ought to have more space for its expanding program in education and other activities. Bethel House was not a permanent solution, and never was intended to be. In 1971 the decision was made to complete the educational unit by extending the present wing to the north, in order to provide more class-rooms, office and working space, youth room, and a large lounge for small meetings and receptions. Robert Lee headed the building committee, and the addition was built in 1971-72 at a cost of about \$125,000. Hirsch, Stevens, and Samuelson, local architects, designed the building. The new unit was dedicated on May 21, 1972, with Dr. Gerhard Frost of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, performing the rite of dedication.

The new unit provides adequate additional facilities to carry out Bethel's work. Ours is an active congregation. During the week there are frequently as many as eighteen and twenty events taking place between Sundays — anything from a Boys' Scout troop to a Bible Study. We believe the church should continue to be a community center for Christian and constructive activity.

May 28, 1972, was a happy day for Bethel, for on that day the congregation's first son, Gary Simpson was ordained into the holy ministry, with Pastor Scheide acting as ordinand. It had taken a long time — much too long — for this fine congregation to send one of its own into the holy ministry. We hope and pray that others will follow. Another son, Dennis Paulson, is at present a student at Luther Seminary.

The yearly report for 1972 indicates that baptized membership then stood at 1304, with 890 confirmed members. 758 members had communed, (at least once), and average Sunday attendance was 477. Financial stewardship reached its highest figure: \$86,000, of which more than \$21,000 was given to benevolence.

While church work in the seventies does not promise "church work as usual," not to mention ease, we at Bethel believe that this is a day of great opportunity for the proclamation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. While there are the antagonistic and indifferent, there remains a deep spiritual hunger in many. The church must proclaim with conviction an evangelical message, conscious of the incomparable power of the Holy Spirit to touch and make new the hearts of men. The ministry of teaching and preaching must be more earnest and aggressive than ever before, with lay-people prepared more effectively to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bethel ought to have more and other activities. Bethel was intended to be. In the educational unit by extending the more class-rooms, office lounge for small meetings, dining committee, and the \$125,000. Hirsch, Stevens, building. The new unit was Frost of Luther Seminary,

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An assuring statistic at Bethel has been a growing church attendance during the past several months, especially after the reestablishment of a single Sunday school session. More children are worshipping than before. A source of concern, on the other hand, must be the decreasing church school attendance across so much of the American church scene. This can bode ill for the future of the Christian church if the trend is not reversed.

It has been stated often enough: these are critical times. But to paraphrase Charles Dickens: these are the "best of times, and the worst of times." The worst when we consider the worldliness, the power of Satan and evil at work in our society. The best of times when we reflect that the Lord of the church may soon return, that He has given us a job to do, that He has promised us His presence to the end of the age!

Over the past century thousands of people, men, women and children, have been touched by the Lord in Bethel Church. Thousands have been brought into the family of God at the baptismal font: thousands have promised loyalty to Christ at the altar on Confirmation Day; thousands — tens of thousands — have received Him in the Holy Communion. Men and women have been joined here in holy wedlock; many have been carried in the last time, on days when sadness and tears clouded the sunlight of God's heaven.

Yet as we look back, and as we look forward, we praise God for His blessings, for the privilege of the gospel over a century! At this significant anniversary — one hundred years of proclaiming the good news of Christ in this Beth-El — this "place of God" — we confess our faith and hope in the words of the hymn:

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come!"

Bethel
Serves





Sunday School Staff — 1973



Primary class in session

Youth Group Meets





**Boy Scout Troop No. 140 Committee
Sponsored by Bethel Church**



**Adult Education
A Bethel Series class in session**



**Pastor Richard Hueter and family
A Lutheran missionary in New Guinea sponsored by Bethel Church since 1963.**



Adult Education
A Bethel Series class in session



nd family
by Bethel Church since 1963.



Past Presidents of Women of the Church
First row; l to r: Mrs. Charles Eastman, Mrs. Joe Florence, Mrs. Fred Johnson, Mrs. Eckel Cole, Mrs. Bjarne Svare
Second row: Mrs. James Gilbertson, Mrs. Dale Hendricks, Mrs. Helmer Hellum, Mrs. Elmer Dahm, Mrs. Earl Phillips, Mrs. Elmer Olson, Mrs. Robert Hansen, Mrs. Cardell Miller



ALCW Board
L to r: Mrs. Ralph Swenson, Mrs. Donald Cahoy, Mrs. Bjarne Svare, Mrs. John Breault, Mrs. Virgil Federenko, Mrs. Eugene Halvorson, Mrs. Roger Frank.



**Mrs. Delbert (Edith) Sather
Organist 1934-1972**



**Mrs. Norman Scheide
Senior Choir Director since 1948**



Mrs. Ronald Lein
Intermediate Choir Director
Substitute Organist

Mrs. Dale Willi
Junior Choir Director
Head Organist 1972

ner



James Gilbertson
Head Usher

Helmer Hellum
Senior Choir Member since 1928

1948



Senior Choir 1972-73



Junior Choir 1972-73



Intermediate Choir 1972-73

Senior Choir 1972-73



CHURCH COUNCIL 1973

First row, l to r: Mrs. John Breault, Don Bailey, Cardell Miller, Walter Olson, Kenneth Michaelson, Mrs. Donald Waalen
Second row: James Gilbertson, Richard Inlow, Earl Phillips, Ronald Rimer, Dennis Hatfield, Roger Dahl, Curtis Nickleby, Clifford Ahlquist

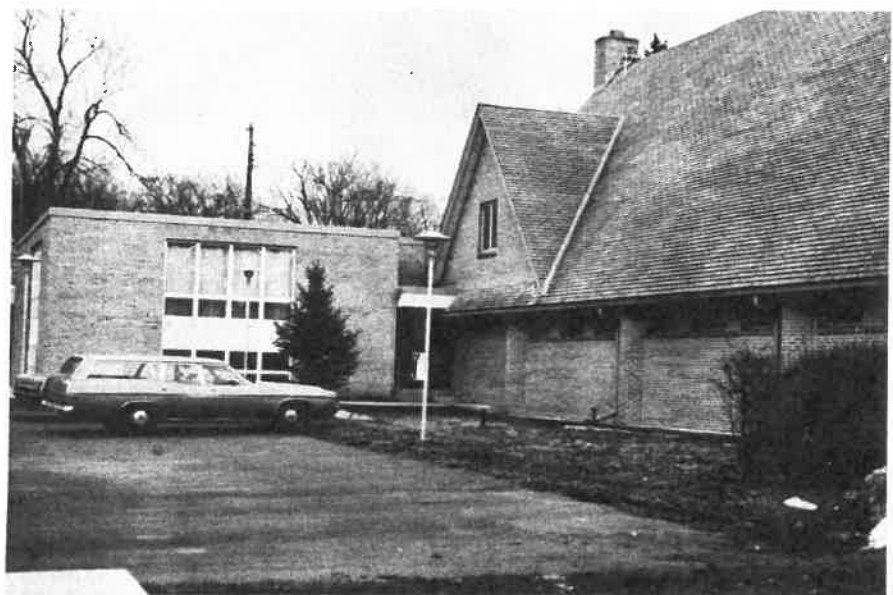


**Mrs. LeRoy Jackman
Church Secretary**





**Dr. Gerhard Frost presiding at the dedication
of the new education unit, May 1972**



View of a portion of the Education Unit

Bethel Parsonages Through the Years



Until 1949



1949-1958

Razed in 1958 — Church stands on this site



Present Parsonage
1227 Second Street



dedication
day 1972



ation Unit

Centennial Committee



Seated L to R: Mrs. Roger Frank, Pastor Scheide, Mrs. Delbert Sather, Arlo Peterson
Standing: Mrs. Richard Franseen, Kenneth Michaelson, Mrs. Howard Norvold, Bjarne Svare, Mrs. Eckel Cole, Don Bailey