

5th

Anniversary

MISSION
COVENANT
CHURCH

of Saint Cloud . Minnesota

1883  1958

DEDICATED . . .

to the Seven Charter Members, who in faith and with the love of Christ at heart, pioneered the work of the Mission Covenant Church.

TO SOME, this brief history of our church may not have much significance; to others, it may bring recollections of childhood and of the struggles and triumphs of growing up . . . of incidents deeply rooted in our church life.



☪☪☪ *Sauk Rapids . 1883 to 1921* ☪☪☪

WHATEVER MEMORY REVEALS, may we be reminded of those courageous Christians who worked so unselfishly for their church. May we keep the faith, and honor them by continued love of God and service for Him.



ORGANIZATION . . .

It began as far back as the year 1880 when a few Christians gathered in various homes for prayer, which led to the desire for a church home, to be according to biblical principles.

The organization took place in Sauk Rapids on June 23, 1883, with the following seven charter members: A. B. Anderson, Andrew Peterson, Louis Olson, Nels Larson, L. J. Hagquist, John Skoglund and A. Johnson. The Reverend F. G. Hagquist of Minneapolis acted as chairman and led the proceedings of the meeting. The organization was incorporated under the name of THE SWEDISH CHURCH OF GOD IN SAUK RAPIDS, MINNESOTA.

A building committee was appointed and a subscription started to secure the necessary funds. A lot was donated which was located on top of "Swede Hill" in Sauk Rapids, on which a church 26 x 36 feet was built. Louis Olson was given the job of building the church. Many of the people in this area were generous in making donations. One St. Cloud businessman, C. A. Gilman, donated lumber valued at one hundred dollars. The building was completed with the exception of the plastering. It was decided to use the building through the winter without plastering and to buy the lot next to it instead. When the church was completed, the cost was nine hundred dollars.

This was the beginning. During these many years, changes have taken place in many ways; even the name of the church has undergone changes. In 1883, it was organized as the SWEDISH CHURCH OF GOD. On January 1, 1927, a new constitution was adopted and the name of the church was changed to THE SWEDISH EVANGELICAL MISSION CHURCH. On January 5, 1945, the name was changed to EVANGELICAL MISSION CHURCH, dropping the word "Swedish". On January 9, 1956, a new constitution was adopted and the name was changed to MISSION COVENANT CHURCH.



MINISTRY . . .

For a number of years the congregation had no resident pastor. The ministers who served the church at the time of its organization were the Reverend Carl Anderson and the Reverend F. G. Hagquist. The Reverend Mathias Peterson visited the church and conducted services once a month for about a year. Traveling ministers of the Northwest Mission Association also made occasional visits. Ministers who were called to serve the church as resident pastors are:

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| 1887 to 1889 . . . A. G. Nelson | 1915 to 1919 Carl Olson |
| 1889 to 1891 B. Finstrom | 1920 to 1925 A. E. Olson |
| 1891 to 1892 . . . P. J. Lofven | 1925 to 1935 Isak Hoyem |
| 1892 to 1899 John Rood | 1936 to 1943 A. E. Olson |
| 1899 to 1903 . . K. E. Peterson | 1944 to 1947 L. Jackson Derby |
| 1903 to 1915 . E. V. Bjorklund | 1947 to 1954 . Daniel Bloomdahl |
| 1955 to March 1958 . . . Donald Thomas | |



PROGRESS . . .

At the time the church in Sauk Rapids was organized, there were members and others interested in the work living in St. Cloud. At Bring's Quarry, about two miles southeast of the city, a little chapel was built in 1886. Sunday School and preaching services were conducted here for a number of years. In St. Cloud proper, preaching services were conducted in an old saloon building. In June 1888, two lots in East St. Cloud were purchased and upon these lots a church and a parsonage were built.

Of the organizations within the church, the oldest is the Sunday School. In the first years there were five schools: Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, Bring's Quarry, Waite Park, and one in the country north of Sauk Rapids, where pupils and teachers met in homes. It has been related that some teachers taught in more than one school, besides attending services each Sunday. Transportation was by foot or by horse and buggy. This meant sacrificial time and effort. The Sunday Schools in the outlying districts were discontinued and centralized in one school. The chapel at Bring's Quarry was sold in 1911. The last school to be discontinued was in Sauk Rapids in 1921, when the new church was built in St. Cloud. Since then, it has been one church and one school.

Another organization which has played a most important part in the support and work within the church is the Ladies' Aid Society. The first mention of the organization is in 1885, when it is spoken of as a "Sewing Circle". At first, the church elected the leader; later, the ladies were permitted to elect their own. In 1921 there was a formal organization of the society with twenty-three members, who then elected a slate of officers.

The Young Peoples' Society is also of long standing, as is mentioned in the church record in 1889. A formal organization took place in 1906 with ten members. In 1932 it was made an open society. In the fall of 1956 the society was divided into three groups: Young Peoples' Society, Hi-League and Junior League. After the Sunday evening services the young people meet for devotion and fellowship. These are known as the "After Glow" meetings.

Two other societies were organized in the later years: the Friendship Society in 1937, and the Brotherhood in 1944.

The progress of a church is not always judged by the number of members, or the number of organizations, but by what has been accomplished according to the will of God.

There are three members of the church who have gone out and are at present in full-time service of the Lord: the Reverend Herbert Sodergren and his wife (formerly, Viola McCrea) and Mrs. Paul Ferree (Svea Gustafson). The Reverend Sodergren is superintendent of the North Central District of the Evangelical Free Church. The Reverend and Mrs. Paul Ferree are in the Missionary Field in Tunisia, North Africa.

The membership totals as indicated by the records at various times are: at the close of 1889, forty-seven; December 31, 1910, eighty-four; January 1, 1914, ninety-one; January 1922, ninety-one; January 19, 1948, one hundred

ACTIVITIES . . .

The life of a church and its organizations is made manifest through its activities. From the outset, the church has at all times had as its main purpose the spreading of glad tidings near and far. There is no written record of how many souls have been saved. The seed has been sown and eternity will reveal the harvest. One record declares that during the ministry of A. G. Nelson many souls were saved and joined the church.

In 1888 the congregation joined the American Congregational denomination and received financial aid for a number of years for the minister's salary and also a loan of five hundred dollars from their Church Building Society. The debt was paid in 1907, and in 1918 it was decided to sever all connections with that body. In 1927 the church joined the Northwest Mission Association, and in 1953 joined the Covenant.

Missionary work and support has been one of the important concerns of the church and its organizations. The Ladies' Aid Society has contributed much to missionary and benevolent causes. Since 1905, when the Reverend T. J. Bach opened mission work in Venezuela, South America, regular support has been given to that mission. It has the distinction of being the first organization to promise the Reverend T. J. Bach support, and at present is sharing in the support of Miss Linda Sveiven on that field. In 1946 the church voted to furnish sole support to Miss Mabel Cox, a missionary and trained nurse, for her work in Africa.

Since assuming missionary obligations in South Africa (a church undertaking), a monthly offering is received in the Sunday School for the missionary fund. The Sunday School has shared also in the planning and in the expense of the Daily Vacation Bible School work, as well as paying for bibles given to confirmation-class graduates.

The Friendship Society has both a social and a missionary purpose. A meeting is held once a month, when a program is given, followed by a social hour. It shares in the support of the Paul Ferree family, missionaries in Tunisia, Africa.

The Young Peoples' Society has at all times been a help and a blessing to the church. In former years various projects were sponsored and money thus received was given to missionary work. Once a year, for several years, the Society sponsored and gave a Swedish supper and a program for the older friends. On other occasions, the members of the Society have been called upon to take full charge of a devotional service, a program, or to serve at some social affair.

In 1936, and continuing for some years later, a Junior Choir was organized, directed first by Olga Bostrom (Mrs. Melvin Johnson), and then taken over by Mrs. A. E. Olson. The choir, averaging a membership of from twenty-five to thirty, met Saturday afternoons for song rehearsal and instruction in the scriptures. At various occasions, programs were rendered by the choir.

A Junior League was organized in 1936, and two counselors, Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Freeberg, were elected to have charge of this.

The activities of the Ladies' Aid have been varied. At first, the Society was referred to as a "Sewing Circle". This, in reality, it was, as articles were made and later disposed of at auction sales. The money thus secured was used for the church and for missions. Through its Flower Fund, the Society brings cheer to the sick, the aged, and to shut-ins. Annual trips have been made to the Ebenezer Home in Buffalo, Minnesota, bringing cheer to the elderly folk. Every other month, on the day for the Aid meeting, it is "Work Day", when the women spend the greater part of the day in making articles for hospitals, orphanages and for the general necessities for the mission field. The Society has also served the Father and Son Banquets, as well as taking care of the "feeding of the multitudes" on numerous occasions. Many of the members take part in a district-wide Covenant Women's Auxiliary, which contributes to Covenant Missionary work.

In 1955 a fund for radio broadcasts was started and on Sunday morning, August 21, 1955, the first sermon was broadcast over Radio Station WJON. The broadcasts continued until the departure of Pastor Thomas.

The ministry in song has played an important part in the spiritual uplift of the church. A choir was started in 1888, with C. A. Soderman as director. In the years following, it has continued to serve the Lord faithfully, enriching the services of the church. It has given concerts and cantatas at various times, thus adding to the glory of God.

❖❖❖ *Saint Cloud . 1889 to 1921* ❖❖❖



IMPROVEMENTS . . .

As time flows on, conditions change and material things deteriorate. There is a need for continued repair and replacement.

Some of the members living in Sauk Rapids moved to St. Cloud, thus the work became more centralized in that church. Since the old church had become inadequate and in need of extensive repair, it was decided to build a new church.

In 1921 the old church was torn down and a new church was built. A record indicates the cost of the new church building at approximately twenty-one thousand dollars. The church in Sauk Rapids was sold and the work there was discontinued.

In 1938 the church was redecorated. In the fall of 1945 an oil-burning furnace was installed in the church and an oil burner installed in the furnace of the parsonage. In 1946 six hearing aids were installed in the church. In 1953 the parsonage was insulated, stuccoed and the front porch replaced by a vestibule entrance. A telephone extension was installed in the pastor's study. A retaining wall was built on the side and front of the church property. The work was donated by Fred Freeberg of Minneapolis, a former member of the church, with the help of the men of the church. In the summer of 1952 storm windows were added to the church at a cost of eight hundred and eleven dollars. During the year 1955 a nursery was built under the balcony, and a furnace installed in the front part of the basement. The old doors separating the room under the balcony and the main auditorium were replaced by accordion-type, sliding doors. During the year 1957 the brick work of the church building was repointed, granite stone fixtures were reset, a tile floor replaced the wooden floor in the basement, and a new sidewalk was laid in front of the entire church property. The old coal bin, which had been standing empty since the oil furnace was installed, was made into a comfortable Sunday School room. Aluminum storm windows and screens were donated and installed on the second-story windows of the parsonage.

Many of these improvements and repairs were sponsored by the Ladies' Aid Society and the Brotherhood.

Improvements are not always brought about through the wear and tear of time, but are sometimes necessitated by such a catastrophe as occurred on January 27, 1952. On that Sunday morning, as the church service was being concluded, the church was rocked by an explosion of the furnace. Needless to say,

LANGUAGE . . .

From the time the church was organized in 1883, the Swedish language was used in all services and other activities as well as in recording the minutes of the business meetings. The Sunday School not only conducted its religious instruction in Swedish, but taught the children to read and write the language.

As time progressed, more and more of the young people were unfamiliar with the Swedish language. This presented a problem. The Sunday School and the Young People's Society discontinued the use of the Swedish language in their activities in the earlier years of the church. The church services continued in the Swedish language. Attempts were made to combine the two languages at special meetings and to set aside certain Sundays for services in English. This presented difficulties because the older people failed to get full benefit from the services in English and the young people could not understand the services in Swedish. Church-goers became confused as to which Sunday service would be in English and which in Swedish.

At a meeting held January 14, 1936, the secretary was authorized to write the minutes of the business meetings in English. Gradually, English became the language most used, and at a business meeting held March 27, 1940, the decision was made to have all Sunday services in the English language.



Saint Cloud . 1958



FFICERS . . .

CHURCH BOARD . Archie Johnson, chairman; Morland Grundahl, vice chairman; Marvin Stearns, secretary; Mrs. Bernard Fagerman, vice secretary; Elmer Youngberg, Mrs. George Larson, Joseph Larson and Alfred Johnson, trustees; John Olson, Ernest Skoog and Ernest Sodergren, deacons; Mrs. Hulda Johnson, Mrs. Alfred Johnson and Mrs. Rueben Styrlund, deaconesses; Rueben Styrlund, Sunday School superintendent.

SUNDAY SCHOOL . Rueben Styrlund, superintendent; Mrs. Ruth Moran, assistant superintendent; Miss Ellen Olson, secretary; Yvonne Johnson, vice secretary, and a staff of twelve teachers.

LADIES' AID SOCIETY . Mrs. Lloyd Hedlund, president; Mrs. Gunnard Larson, vice president; Mrs. Joseph Larson, secretary; Mrs. George Larson, treasurer.

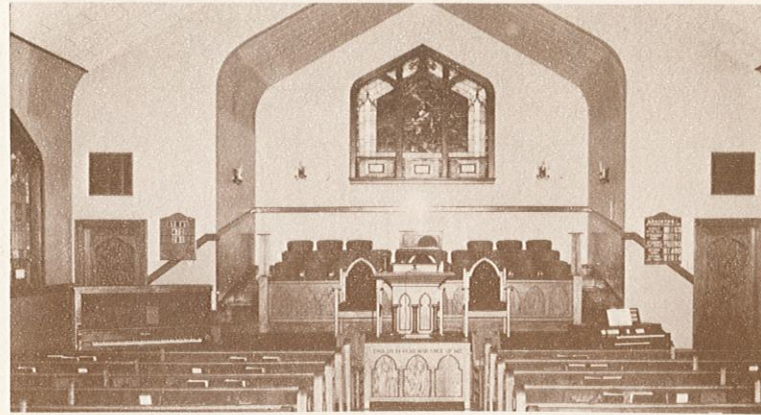
YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETY . Curtis Bostrom, president; Miss Erma Johnson, counselor for the Hi-League.

FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY . Marvin Stearns, president; Lloyd Hedlund, vice president; Patricia Johnson, secretary, and Allen Skoog, treasurer.

BROTHERHOOD . Armond Bracken, president; Bernard Fagerman, vice president; Curtis Bostrom, secretary and treasurer.

Saint Cloud

1958



GOD . . .

with His watchful eye and mighty hand, has guided the church through these seventy-five years and has kept the spiritual light burning. Like a beacon light along the shore, it has cast its light out to sea, to guide the seafarer to a calm and peaceful harbor. May the same faith it took to begin and carry on the work prevail through the coming years, until the coming of our Lord.

Thanks to God for my redeemer,
Thanks for all Thou dost provide!
Thanks for times now but a mem'ry
Thanks for Jesus by my side!

Thanks for pleasant, balmy springtime,
Thanks for dark and dreary fall!
Thanks for tears by now forgotten,
Thanks for peace within my soul!