

HISTORY OF IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
BROWNSMEAD, OREGON
June 21, 1964

The Brownsmead Immanuel Story started a long time ago. It was March 30, 1914 at the home of Henry and Hanna Lahti when 25 people of the Finnish descent signed the charter to form the "Blind Slough Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church". Many will remember the past charter members or their descendants:

Betta Carlson	Hanna Lahti
John Carlson	Henry Lahti
Lucy Carlson-Gerttula	Maria Harma
Hilma Erickson	Hanna Keranen - Raitanen
Sophia Heikkila	Alexandria Erickson
Sara Hillstrom	Andrew Juntilla
Axel Hillstrom	Jack Hendrickson
Albert Hillstrom	John Johnson
Mrs. John Takala	Justina Takala
Amanda Gerttula	Maria Takala
John Gerttula	Niku Jylkka
John Gerttula, Jr.	E. M. Gerttula
J. H. Gerttula	Arthur Erickson

Only a few of the 25 original charter members are here and are still members, they are: Mr. and Mrs. Jalmer Gerttula (Lucy Carlson) and Mr. Arthur Erickson.

Among those elected to the first church board were: Jalmer Gerttula, secretary, and Lucy (Carlson) Gerttula as treasurer. The Gerttula's were voted lifetime honorary members of the church council of Immanuel 10 years ago.

The first pastor, to serve the congregation was D. J. Elm, pastor in Astoria, came to hold services once a month during the years 1914 to 1919, traveling by boat to do so. In 1917 the congregation became members of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church or the Suomi Synod.

For 10 years this group met in homes of the members. Pastor Frans Kava served the congregation from fall 1919 to 1922. At that time there were but a few expenses, except to pay the pastor and the funds on hand were \$1637.19 at their 1924 annual meeting.

It was during the service of Pastor Arvo Korhonen, 1922 to 1923, another big step was taken. The Methodist church building in Knappa was purchased for \$125.00 from Miss Keene. The building was dismantled and hauled by truck loads by Jalmer Gerttula to the present location of the church. The land was donated by Elias Michelson, who lived across the road from the churchsite. New materials were added and with much labor and much faith, the church was completed. The name of the congregation was changed to the Brownsmead Evangelical Lutheran Church when the dedication took place one spring Sunday in 1925. Many came from Astoria and surrounding communities and even a representative came from Hancock, Michigan.

Through the years, the once a month service continued. Pastor Evert Torkko of Astoria served the small congregation in the fall of 1932 to 1941. In the summer of 1942 Pastor Uuras Sarnivaara served the group.

Pastor F. W. Kaskinen served from 1942 to 1947 and again 1949 to 1953 while he was pastor in Astoria. A member, John Polso passed on and noting that many did not understand the Finnish language, Pastor Kaskinen, who conducted the service, spoke in English and Finnish. This entered a new era for Immanuel. In 1948 Joyce Gerttula and Verne Vinson were married by Pastor Kaskinen in the church, being the first wedding held there.

Pastor Melvin Hagelberg served from 1948 to 1949.

In the spring of 1944 Immanuel's first regular Sunday School was started and is still continuing at the present time. It was started by Mr. Fred Hirn and Mrs. Hilda Heino. Leonard Allen was the first Sunday School superintendant. In 1948, the church acquired a Sunday school bus which Howard Keister and Donald Bartlett drove about the country each Sunday morning gathering children for Sunday school. Not very long later the bus developed many ills to be repaired so it was sold. Year after year the Sunday School enrollment climbed until 1955 there were 150 children enrolled. Sunday School still continues at Immanuel. The first Sunday School teachers were: Mrs. Dale Estoos, who still teaches, Mrs. Henry Lumijarvi and Mrs. Howard Keister.

In September of 1944 12 women met to organize a "Ladies Aid". Anna Sarkie was chosen their first president. Their first bazaar was held in the late fall. Buying equipment for the church kitchen and helping the Sunday School were their first projects. Several years efforts went into the purchase of their electric organ. It was money that Immanuel Guild (their new name changed in 1948) placed in the church treasury that made it possible for calling our first resident pastor. Much in the way of equipment for the church was obtained through money raised on bazaars, dinners, pie socials, food sales, etc. Serving at the Lutheran Service Center in Astoria for the servicemen, Mother-Daughter dinners, entertaining the older ladies of the communities, a flower fund was started to provide flowers for those who were ill, entertaining for Sunday School parents and other projects have been carried on. Each Christmas the Guild members provided gifts, cookies and candies for people at the Fairview Home in Salem, gifts were also sent to the retarded children.

In 1946 the church was redecorated and the church was renamed Immanuel Lutheran Church of Brownsmead. A group of adults joined the church in November, the classes were conducted by Pastor Kaskinen. In 1951 the first confirmation services were held at Immanuel. At this time there were now twice monthly services in English and only one single one in Finnish meeting.

The first resident pastor of Immanuel Lutheran arrived on May 1, 1953, Pastor Marvin Pekkala. Under his leadership, a senior and junior choir were active as they still are today, although the leadership has changed often.

Vacation Bible School was first held in 1953, and has continued through the years, always drawing a large number of children. Lutheran League was begun, and this has also continued with many young people enjoying the fellowship thus gained.

The Building Fund started with a few large and several smaller donations at their annual meeting in January 1954. The fund continued to supply the building needs of Immanuel. Their main project now was the Sunday School addition and the restrooms.

In the year of 1956 the congregation was able to add to the church building, a large wing to be used for its "Education Unit". A building that had been used as a bunkhouse on pilings on the Columbia River for a crew of seining operation, was obtained by the congregation.

Local gillnet fishermen donated their boats and labor to tow the building up to the Fishermen's Warehouse near the church and from there then by house-moving truck to its present location. People of the communities served by Immanuel donated monies, and with the help of a loan, the present Sunday School chapel came into being. Men and women of the church donated their labors to clean, repair and paint the building inside and out, as well as painting the outside of the church itself.

Introduced during the services of Pastor Pekkala, which has become a part of the church life, is the church paper, "Chapel Notes". Organizations and members and the pastor contributed articles, and some women of the congregation have been faithful in

3
assisting in the mailing of the notes throughout the years. Pastor Wilson Anderson's notes are called the "Informer".

A memorial fund was begun for those wishing to remember departed loved ones. The Sunday closest to Memorial Day, the gifts are dedicated at a special service. Gifts acquired through the fund thus far are: Sunday School picture, Communion tray, baptismal font, Lutheran service book and Hymnals, new altar rail, remodeled altar area, pulpit, guestbook, altar Bible, missal stand, cross, church flags, candelabra, and lighters and many others.

On January 11, 1956, at the meeting of the congregation, it was decided to purchase the Fowser home for a parsonage. March 15, 1956 the property was transferred to the congregation and April of 1962 the mortgage was paid off.

Pastor Pekkala resigned in August 1956, and relinquished his office October 1, 1956. After he left, the church was served by other pastors of the area and by pre-theological students from Pacific Lutheran College. Calls to pastors were sent, and in the spring of 1957 Pastor Donald Koponen accepted the call, arriving with his family in July of 1957.

Shortly after the arrival of Pastor Koponen one of the rooms in the Sunday School chapel was made into the pastor's study, with a telephone installed. There was talk about this time of buying property on the highway, more centrally located at all communities served by Immanuel, but nothing further has been done.

Mr. Earl Edmonds, teacher of music at Knappa High School, became choir director and held the position until he left Knappa for another position. The Service Book and Hymnals were ordered and the new Lutheran service introduced in May of 1958. Two services were held on Sunday now, one at the Sunday School hour and the other at 11:15A.M.

Pastor Koponen resigned and ended his service here on June 30, 1959. Pastor C. Thomas Kangas accepted the call to Immanuel Lutheran in May of 1959, arriving with his family and beginning his services here on October 1, 1959.

None of the resident pastors were able to speak Finnish but they endeavored to see that services in the Finnish language have been held occasionally at Immanuel to serve the few remaining Finnish speaking members and their friends.

In 1961 Immanuel Lutheran voted unanimously to participate in the merger of the Suomi Synod with three other Lutheran bodies in the United States, to become the Lutheran Church in America. In June 1961 the Suomi Synod in convention gave its final approval on merger to take place in June 1962 and the new church became a reality on January 1, 1963.

Pastor Kangas relinquished office as pastor of Immanuel on Nov. 26, 1963. Our present pastor, Wilton A. Anderson, arrived here with his family and was installed July 29, 1963. He also served Peace Lutheran Church in Rainier, Oregon.

Immanuel means "God With Us". May we continue to serve Him in the little church in the wildwood.

To this day, June 21, 1964, there are 159 confirmed members of the Immanuel Lutheran Church.

History based on facts written by
Mrs. Anna Sarkie in 1964