

1

We are here today to celebrate the burning of the mortgage on this building a mortgage that was established over 30 years ago.

But this church is much older than 30 years.

A lifetime ago, on March 30, 1914 a group of 25 people gathered to sign a charter for the "Blind Slough Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church".

Joyce Smith's mother, whose name was Lucy Carlson then, was treasurer and her father Jalmer Gerttula was the secretary. Jalmer and Lucy were voted lifetime honorary members of the council of Immanuel in 1954 and I believe Lucy was still treasurer at that time.

The first pastor to serve the congregation was D.J. Elm and he traveled by boat from Astoria.

In 1917 the congregation became a member of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Suomi Synod.

For 10 years this group met in homes of the members. The only expenses in those days were to pay the pastor so at the 1924 annual meeting there was \$1,637.19 in the bank. I don't need to tell you that that is considerably more than has been in there in some years since!

During 1922 and 1923, the Methodist church building in Knappa was purchased for \$125.00 from Miss Keene. The building was dismantled at Knappa and Jalmar Gerttula hauled it by truck loads to the Brownsmead site. With some new materials, much labor and much more faith, the church was completed on land donated by Elias Michelson. One spring Sunday in 1925 the new church was dedicated and the name was changed to the Brownsmead Evangelical Lutheran Church. Even a representative from Hancock Michigan came for the dedication.

Several Pastors from Astoria served the small congregation at the once-a-month services. Pastor F. W. Kaaskinen served from 1942 to 1947, while he was pastor of Zion Lutheran in Astoria.

2

A new era was entered into during this period!! One of the members, John Polso, passed away and while Pastor Kaaskinen was conducting the service, he noted that many of those attending did not understand the Finnish language. So he used both English and Finnish.

This was the time I began attending services and I remember falling asleep during the Finnish part of the service!

The first wedding at the church was that of Joyce Gerttula and Verne Vinson in 1948.

In the spring of 1944, the first regular Sunday School was started. Fred Hirn and Hilda Leino were the first promoters. -- I'm told that Mr. Hirn was so anxious to get the Sunday School started that he bought pop for all the kids on opening day. When the word got around about this treat, the teachers were not lacking for students

Some of the early Sunday School teachers were: Esther Keister, Eve Hedges, Dora Bersagel, Hilma Lumijarvi and Virginia Estoos. Leonard Allen was the first Sunday School Superintendent. His wife Jean was always there, too, providing treats and help wherever needed.

In 1948, the church acquired a Sunday School bus, which Howard Keister and Don Bartlett drove about the country each Sunday morning gathering children for Sunday School. The bus soon developed many ills and was sold. But the Sunday School enrollment climbed to 150 children in 1955. Great productions were held that packed the Brownsmead Hall at Christmas time.

In 1944, 12 women met and organized the "Ladies Aid". Several years' efforts holding bazaars, dinners, food sales and mother-daughter dinners went into the purchase of an electric organ. Pie socials were very popular, involving the whole community. The Ladies Aid also served at the Lutheran Service Center in Astoria for servicemen stationed at Tongue Point.

In 1946 the church was redecorated and renamed Immanuel Lutheran Church of Brownsmead. In November that year, Pastor Kaaskinen held instruction classes and a group of adults joined the church. In 1951 the first confirmation classes were held. Jim Allen, Melvin Lampi, Eleanor and Louise Olson, Larry and Jimmy Tufts and Eileen Barendse were in that class.

At this time there were two English services a month and only one in Finnish.

To have our very own resident pastor was the utmost desire of many. One lady who had some money of her own would have used it to guarantee the support of one. As it turned out, she didn't need to use her money. It was the money the Immanuel Guild (the new name of the Ladies Aid) placed in the church treasury that made it possible for calling our first pastor. There were 40 members and 55 Sunday School students. Immanuel was blooming.

Our first pastor arrived on May 1, 1952. Under the direction of Marvin Pekkala, a junior and senior choir was active, Vacation Bible School was held, Luther League began, the Sunday School grew and a building fund was started.

The first project to come out of the building fund was the restrooms! How nice that was, especially for those of us who still didn't have the inside luxury at home!

At the annual meeting in 1956 it was decided to purchase the Fowser home in Brownsmead for a parsonage. The congregation paid that mortgage off in five years and it was sold in 1965.

A few parents insisted that reluctant teenagers attend at least the first meeting of Pastor Pekkala's Luther League meeting. They soon found that these same teenagers could not have been kept home from a meeting. Social events became standing room only affairs and many young people who had known ministers only as necessary props for weddings or funerals, found that a pastor can be a real friend. Some of the young folks came only for the fun of course, but in three years time, more than 50 of these young people became confirmed members of Immanuel.

Pastor Pekkala resigned in 1956 and for several months the congregation was served much as we are today. An item in the Chapel Notes in December 1956 talked about the financial future of Immanuel. It was noted that \$5,000 would need to be raised each year to pay a minister the minimum salary of \$300 a month, keep up the building, pay off the parsonage and pay our Synod obligations. What a deal ... times have certainly changed!!

Shortly after Pastor Donald Koponen arrived in 1956, one of the Sunday School rooms was made into a study and a telephone was installed.

There was talk at this time of buying property on the highway, more centrally located, but nothing further was done.

Pastor Koponen resigned in June, 1959 and Pastor Kangas came in October that year.

In 1961 Immanuel 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. This merger became a reality on January 1, 1963.

Pastor Kangas resigned in 1961 and Pastor Anderson came in 1962. He also served Peace Lutheran in Rainier. There were anxious moments when the roads were bad in the winter and Pastor Anderson was traveling from an early morning service in Rainier to Brownsmead. Someone would stand on the porch and wait till they saw the car come around the corner by Andersons, then give the signal to begin services.

There were 159 confirmed members at the time of the 50th Anniversary of Immanuel in 1964. Four charter members attended that service, Jalmer & Lucy Gerttula, Art Erickson and Hanna Raitanen.

In the fall of 1963, study committees were appointed to study the needs of Immanuel. In May 1964, a detailed report was presented to the congregation. It stated that the site on Highway 30, donated by Francis and Eileen Bagley was very suitable for a new church building.

Pastor Anderson resigned in the spring of 1965 and Pastor Marlyn Larson was called.

The big decision to relocate was made. The first spade of earth was turned for the new building on September 29, 1967. Ceremonies were held at the bulldozed site, with lots of clergy present.

This building was dedicated on May 19, 1968. with more than 200 persons in attendance.

5

Many of you know a lot of volunteer work went into this building. Pastor & Ernestine Larson did a lot of the physical work, along with Jalmer & Lucy Gerttula, Hilda Lahti, Hans & Esther Larson and scores of others.

After Pastor Larson came the one who stayed with us the longest ... Bill Brooks. When he came, he, Wanda and Craig rented AC Dale's duplex and then decided they liked us so well, they built a home and became a permanent resident and are still providing spiritual support to us.

Other ministers serving us in this building have been:

Bud Coates, (whose drawing of all three of the buildings we have lived in is hanging in the narthex)

Lou Sneider

Lisa Dahlgren

At the risk of leaving some names out, I hesitate to name those members who have helped to keep this church and its congregation together all these years, but here are a few who have preceded us into His heaven that I haven't already mentioned:

Howard Fowser

Hilda & Herb Kallstrom

Mac & Margaret McEntire

Lila Raihala

Roy & Siv Salmi

Bob & Dora Bersagel

Hilma Lumijarvi

Buddie Vinson

Anna & Joel Sarkie

Mary Jo Rudat

Sally Rohne

1914 to 1999 85 years ... a lifetime ... and yet only a bat of an eye in the time of our Lord. We ... Immanuel have grown .. and sometimes stayed the same .. we have been high ... and sometimes low ... and yet the work of the Lord always goes on.

Thank you Lord, for this opportunity to share our heritage. Let us not forget, Lord, the folks who worked so hard these 85 years to keep your work moving. Even though a lot of the names we heard today have been called to You, may we always rejoice in the works they performed in your name. And as the generations before us rise, give us strength to continue to spread the Good News of forgiveness of our sins through your Son, Jesus Christ. Let us truly go on our way, rejoicing .. in your name we pray. AMEN

Narration by Eileen Cheuvront
December 5, 1999