

Immanuel Lutheran Church



*125 years of
serving the Lord*



Immanuel Lutheran Church in 1896

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

FINDING A HOME

Settlers making their way to the Midwest had an arduous journey, traveling by train or wagon through rain, snow and hot spells. Each was given a map noting where immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds were settling. For the Norwegian settlers, the Midwest was a hotspot.

Lien Township became home to many of the Scandinavian settlers. Their days were long and filled with the hard work of building a home, breaking ground and establishing a farm.

The settlers prospered. The crops were bountiful and the animals strong. Their children thrived in the richness of friendships forged in the township. And all knew the blessings came from God.

There was no organized church at the time. Services in those first years were held in homes. Later, their pastoral needs were met through a fellow immigrant, the Rev. Lauritz Carlson. Carlson, well versed in the doctrine, was the son of a prominent Trondhjem, Norway pastor. Norway was where Carlson graduated from the University of Oslo's Theological department.

But like many Norwegians, he felt the call to go to America. He didn't have to wait long for a pastoral call in the new country. Shortly after he arrived in Alexandria, Minn in 1871, Carlson received a call from a Holmes City congregation and also served as the Moe congregation.

Carlson didn't limit his pastoral duties to the congregations. He traveled the countryside of Grant County, bringing the "Bread of life" to the scattered settlers. They wanted to share in the fellowship of other Christians and, in 1872, established the Immanuel congregation.

Charter members of the new church were: Ole E. Lien, Ole K. Alvstad, Jens Blixrud, Herman Larson, Martin Larson, Tollef Nelson, Jens Strand, Peter Strand, Peder Iverson, Lauritz Olson, Christian Anderson, Amund Arneson, Peder Larson, Ole Bartness, Christian Israelson, Haldor Eide, Johannes



The altar at Immanuel

Hesjedahl, Ole Leraas, Knute Bakke, Ole Bjornson, Erland Anderson and Ole Hoibraaten.

The newly established church soon received others into church membership including Mons Anderson, Peter Moller, William Erlandson, Jons Jonson, Nels Person, Ole Holberg, Marcus Samuelson, Anders Erickson, Hans Endreson, Mrs. Berit Johnson Lee and her two sons, John K. and Ole K. Lee, Mrs. Inger Gran, Tollef Ekre, S.R. Lerum, Reinert Johnson and Miss Pauline Ausjon.

On Easter of 1872, the settlers who organized Immanuel established the constitution.

"We, the undersigned settlers in Town of Lien Grant county, driven by longing for good things from the church, united us into a Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran congregation and are drawing up for the same, the following decisions: (the constitution)

1. The congregation's name shall be: The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Congregation."

That was amendment number one of the constitution which eventually had 25 amendments.

Once the group officially formed, they sought a church building. Funds were scarce for building the structure but the talk was fervent. Ole K. Lien gave four acres of land to the congregation for the lot and cemetery.

Plans for the new building progressed with the building of the main auditorium in 1883. But it wasn't until 1898 that the church edifice was completed with a sacristy, pulpit and altar. Dedication ceremonies took place May 23, 1898 with the Rev. K. Bjorgo officiating.

Tosten Ostenson and Knute Waugh joined the congregation and Immanuel continued to grow. It became physically impossible for one pastor to cover the ever-expanding area. Carlson continued to keep in touch with the young congregational members until spring 1875 when he accepted a call to San Francisco, Calif.

He was remembered in the 80th anniversary book with these words:

"On this festive day, we remember with grateful hearts, this kind servant of the Lord, who helped to organize the Immanuel congregation - pronounce its birthday and upon all its activities - the Lord's blessing."

Parishioners weren't only concerned about their new church building and where they would worship, they also wanted the assurance of the "final resting place." In 1874 at a congregational meeting at Ole Lien's home, parishioners decided that every member who had paid 50 cents toward a burial place should now pay \$1. The trustees were to appoint a man to receive the money and to stake out lots for burial - or as the literal translation from Norwegian to English put it, "to show where the body should be laid." P.A. Moller was assigned to stake out the lots and would also serve as kirkesanger. The

wages to be one free-will offering according to each ones "ability and heart" to pay.

THE SWEDES

Several Swedes who had initially joined the congregation, made plans to leave the Immanuel fold and start their own church.

"We accept this and thank them for their association with us," church secretary minutes from Nov. 10, 1874 state. The vote of thanks was unanimous. Any money the individuals paid for a church fence was to be reimbursed.

IVERSON TO DROP IN AND LEE REPENTS

The secretary's minutes, as were translated from Norwegian to English by Judith Block, don't give a lot of detail in some turmoils over the years. But they do create some interesting speculation on just what took place. In 1881, Ole Lee attended a church meeting and asked the congregation to forgive him for the aggravation he had caused the congregation. His apology was accepted.

But Peder Iverson, who had considered himself "dropped out" of the congregation because of some difficulty with Pastor Carlson - a difficulty that was not made known to the congregation - asked that Iverson and his family be reinstated. He made promises of paying two installments towards the pastor's wages. The congregation accepted.

THE FIRST PASTOR

The Rev. G. Erdahl, born in Hardanger, Norway, became Immanuel's first pastor. Like many of his flock, Erdahl was also an immigrant, arriving in the U.S. with his parents when he was seven. Originally from Wisconsin, Erdahl answered the ministry call. He was among the first graduates of Luther

College in Decorah Iowa and later graduated from the Concordia theological Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He took graduate work at the University of Michigan.

When he joined the Immanuel congregation in 1875, he served an extended parish of Immanuel, Lincoln, West Elbow Lake and Pomme de Terre congregations. Erdahl was working as a pastor in Omaha, Neb. when he answered the call from the West Central Minnesota congregations.

He preached his first sermon in Sept. 26, 1875.

During his 39 year ministry, parishioners recalled him as a loving pastor who carried on his work with "an upwards look."

Immanuel's clergy

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Rev. Lauritz Carlson | 1872-1875 |
| Rev. Otto Juul (to help Rev. Erdahl) | 1899-1902 |
| Rev. Ivar Sandberg | 1914-1959 |
| Rev. James A. Lokken | 1959-1964 |
| Rev. Harold Bueide - interim | 1964 |
| Rev. George Lundquist | 1964-1966 |
| Rev. Karl Matthieson-interim | 1966-1967 |
| Rev. Herman Buenting | 1967-1972 |
| Rev. Arthur E. Wickstrom | 1972-1986 |
| Mr. Marv Abrahamson - intern | 1984-1985 |
| Mr. John Julden-intern | 1985-1986 |
| Rev. Neil Gladen | 1987-1991 |
| Rev. Scot & Kristine Ruffatto | 1992- |
| --Elwood Hall, vice pastor | 1986-1987 |
| --Roger Claxton, vice pastor | 1991-1992 |

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and ready by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.
2 Corinth. 3:2-4

CONGREGATIONAL SPLITS

His ministerial area was large and, at a parish meeting in Elbow Lake in 1899, the congregations decided to call a "helping pastor." Pastor Otto G. Juul accepted and, when the congregations eventually split in 1901, Juul accepted the call from Elbow Lake and adjoining congregations - congregations which had earlier formed the northern part of Pastor Erdahl's parish.

There was talk that year of building a church in Barrett which would mean two churches in the congregation. The pastor spoke in favor of moving the Immanuel church to Barrett and then gathering the whole congregation into one church. He said that two places of worship was not good for good church attendance and that many around Barrett would like to have a church there. The talk of moving the church was dropped and it was decided to make Immanuel church in good repair and later, consider building a church in Barrett. People thought it would make better church attendance with two pulpits as neither group would have a great distance to travel.

A subscription was taken for a new church in Barrett.

That new church came a reality in 1907 when the east part of the parishes "severed its membership" to form its own church. Immanuel gave its sanction to the step. The newly formed congregation remained in "call ties" with Immanuel and called itself "Our Savior's Congregation."

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

In October 1876, at a congregational meeting at Ole Lien's home, it was noted that at no congregational meeting had separate name for the congregation been approved. Together, with Lincoln, the two churches were called "Grant Norwegian Evangelistic Lutheran Congregation," and the name "Lien Congregation," was used without the church body making any

decision on the name. They chose the name "The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Congregation of Grant County." Obviously, when talking about their church, parishioners found it easier to say, "Immanuel."

THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Parishioners discussed starting a school and decided that "if a teacher could be found, to conduct Norwegian religious school, and if enough money can be gathered, this will be done as the congregation is willing." The approximate wage was set at \$25 per month. At that meeting in the late 1870s, \$27 was subscribed or pledged. Ole Barness's secretary minutes concluded that, "a teacher is to be hired as soon as possible."

Lauritz Olson's home became the school headquarters and a Mr. Hoaas hired as schoolmaster.

Funding that school was as difficult as educational funding is today. Secretary minutes who that wages for the winter were short of meeting is needs by \$7.50. Through pledges, another \$60 was announced towards the funds. The congregation had then assured the school of three more months of operation. The congregation, it was decided, would be divided into four districts according to the number of children in each district. But the children would also be free and welcome to be sent from one district to another. The school was to take place one week at a time in each district.

In 1883, parishioners discussed whether to hire more than one teacher. But they decided to have only one teacher for the entire congregation, electing Johannes Leraas for the duty.

By 1896, during the teaching term of John Leraas, the teacher, himself, proposed a school building of sorts that meant an addition to his home. His plan called for each person in the congregation, having an interest in the religious school and who has the "financial means" to pay him \$10. If at least \$300 could be collected, Leraas would build the addition.

"The house (room) shall be my own, but as compensation for

the \$10 I will in return promise if God gives me life and health that I will for 5 years give the children six weeks annually of school for \$11. for every child for every year. This concerns only the children of those who have helped furnish money for the building ... the fee for each child shall not be more than \$2 for six weeks. All this concerns only the first five years of the school.

"In order to carry out the suggested plan, at least 5 of the present districts must join together. The children in these districts should they number over 70 shall be divided into 3 separate groups and graded according to the different abilities of each. These should take turns of one week each."

For those children who came from a distance, Leraas offered free board and lodging for at least 10 in his home.

The parochial school conducted classes from two to seven months each year. It's teachers were Nels Hoass, 1878-1883; John J. Leraas, 1883-1884; Lars J. Jauge, 1884-1887; Knute Brorvig, 1887-1891; and John J. Leraas, 1891-1918.

CHANGE OF SALARIES

When John Leraas was no longer able to be the school instructor and suggested that the organist receive two offerings which had, before, been his. The organist had three offerings annually instead of only one, which she had had in the past.

TOP OF THE CHURCH

Should the church have a tower? Church members decided to wait on the issue in 1883 "until we can see what the difference in cost would be" in not having one. And, although parishioners decided to nix plans to install lightening rods, they did agree to purchase insurance on the building.

THE SPITTOONS

The church had pews, stoves for heat but, according to some, was in need of spittoons. In 1895, \$1.05 was collected to purchase the spittoons with one of the parishioners given the responsibility to actually buy them. Later, during the same meeting, it was decided that those who used tobacco in the church should furnish their own spittoons. And those who donated the money to the spittoon-purchase-fund found their hard earned cash was now part of the church treasury.

INDEBTEDNESS

The church records talk about a debt at one time totalling more than \$750 - the result of building the structure.

At times, when money was needed, pledges were sought or special offerings taken. Sometimes the records mention the donation of wheat to help pay bills.

CHURCH IS INCORPORATED

Although Immanuel Lutheran Church had a strong and growing membership, it wasn't incorporated until June 18, 1900. Signing the incorporation papers were Ole K. Alvstad, Herman Larson, Ole J. Leraas, Andrew Johnson and Peder O. Langhaug. Ole Lien posted the notice. His name is signed and there is an x and after that it says "his mark".

THE LODGE AND THE SALOON

The churches minutes reported that John Lindem was a member of a lodge (secret society) he was "put out" of the congregation. A note was sent saying the congregation had nothing to do with him being "put out" and that it still considered him a member. However, the congregation said it didn't

approve of lodges. They asked him \$2 less in payment for the coming year.

Another member was reportedly a saloon keeper in Barrett and, in spite of the pastor's reminder and warning, continued with the business. The pastor asked the congregation to let the man understand that it didn't approve of "this new occupation of his in hopes that it might bring him to quit this new occupation."

ERDAHL'S DEATH

"And on March 25, 1914, (Erdahl) fell asleep, pillowing his head upon the blessed promises of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

"For these many years of blessed services to the membership of the Immanuel congregation, we of the younger generation will on this eightieth anniversary re-dedicate and re-consecrate our lives and our talents to the furtherance of the great work which our pioneer pastor and our pioneer fathers and mothers - through sacrifices and prayers - have so graciously begun."

passage printed from the 80th anniversary booklet.

REV. SANDBERG ANSWERS THE CALL

Two months after Erdahl's death, Ivar Sandberg received the call to serve Immanuel while he was a senior at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul. He accepted and Sandberg was ordained at Our Savior's Church in Barrett on June 7, 1914 by Prof. O.E. Brandt of the seminary in St. Paul.

During his 45 years of service at Immanuel, Sandberg and his wife, Marion, became active members of the community.

The couple continued to live in Barrett following their retirement from the ministry.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ORGANIZED

On May 22, 1924, discussions took place focusing on the organization of a Sunday school. The students were to meet at the school house by Hans Moen District 60 and District 14 on Sundays when there were no services in the church.

Sunday school classes were started on March 19, 1933 under the sponsorship of the Ladies Aid. Mrs. J. Albert Larson was the first superintendent with Mrs. Anton Ronhovde as her assistant. The first teachers were: Mrs. Larson -primary class; Mrs. Norman Endreson-first grade; Josie Ronhovde-second grade; Jeannette Leraas-third grade; Dorothy Ronhovde-fourth grade; Lorna Ronhovde-fifth grade; Mrs. Adolph Johnson-seventh and eighth grades; Mrs. Henry Waugh-confirmation class and Johannes J. Leraas -bible class. The Bible class was taught in the Norwegian language.

SUNDAY SERVICES

Services were conducted on two Sundays, with none on the third Sunday.

Some talked about an occasional English worship but nothing was decided. Almost a year later, in 1925, however, the congregation decided to have four services in English annually.

THANKS FOR THE YOUTH, A BASEMENT

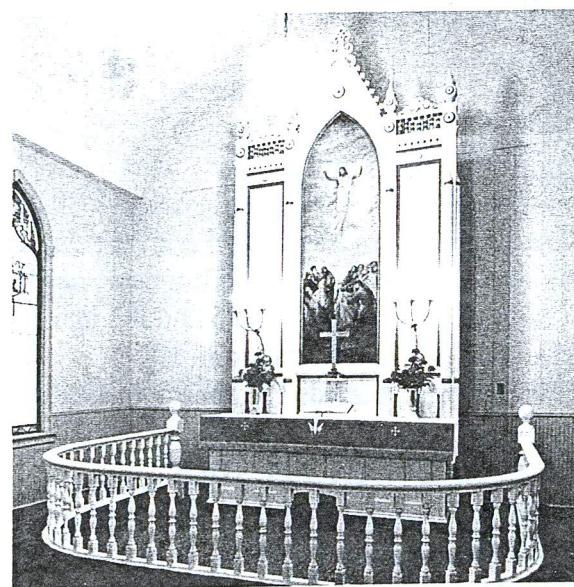
The young people of the congregation in May 1927, asked permission to build a basement under the church. Permission was granted with the cost to be between \$3,000 to \$3,700.

CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

In June of 1970 a cemetery association was formed to assure that the cemetery would always be maintained. Funds are accepted and memorials appreciated for this fund.



Sunday school classes ended at Immanuel in the 1974-1975 term. Since that time, the Immanuel youth have attended classes at Peace Church in Barrett. Members of the final class are: Front Row-Lisa Stamness, Kim Sternhagen and Larry Stamness; Second Row-Susan Larson and Julie Larson; Back Row-Mary Blixrud, Todd Ronhovde and Clyde Ronhovde



The altar

THE DEPRESSION

Rev. Sandberg's salary, like that of many church workers, was most likely not large. Yet what he did during the depression endeared him to his parishioners. For four years straight, starting in 1933, Sandberg deducted \$100 from his wages.

LIGHTNING STRIKES

On Sunday morning, Sept. 21, 1941, lightning struck and completely destroyed the church spire. Thinking of no further danger from fire, services were conducted in the church that same day. Shortly after services, however, the strong wind fanned some hidden sparks into flames. This time, no one ever expected that the church could or would be saved. However, its noted, through the efficient work of the Barrett Fire Department, the church, "cherished landmark of the pioneer fathers" was saved. The loss was partly covered by insurance and a much smaller steeple replaced the original.

THE CHURCH TODAY

Immanuel is now part of a two-point parish with Peace in Barrett which was formed in 1972 following the merger of Fridhem and Our Saviour's churches.

It's membership now, at the 125th anniversary in 1997, stands at 36. That membership has looked after the church structure installing a new chimney in 1991, a new roof in 1994, painting the outside of the church in 1995 and the inside in 1996. A new sidewalk was also installed in 1996.

A monument was erected outside the church in 1995.

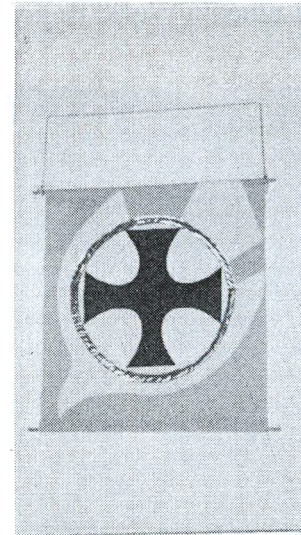
A FEW GLITCHES

There have been two reports of theft of church items in the last few years. And smoke from the furnace filled the structure on May 28, 1995. The church members lodged an extensive clean up project.

A CHANGE IN THE SERVICES

Due to the severity of Minnesota winters and the difficulty in cleaning out the church lot, members decided to close the structure during the winter months with no services conducted. The members gather again in the spring through early winter in Christian fellowship at the church.

CHURCH BANNERS



Banners made by the church women celebrate the Christian message and promises of God.

WILLING WORKERS SEWING CIRCLE

This organization was started in Feb. 1915 at the Jens Blixrud home. The main purpose of the group was to maintain the church building and add new furnishings. Some of the project the group initiated was to purchase new hymn books, alter and pulpit hangings, flags and rugs. Part of the church basement, the organ, stained glass windows and pews were paid by the circle plus re-decorating at various times.

A special project was the up-keep of the cemetery until a cemetery organization was incorporated. The first president of the sewing circle was Marie Blixrud with Mrs. Anton Ronhovde as secretary-treasurer. After 1950, the group focused on mission work, making quilts for Lutheran World Relief.

The group became inactive in 1986.



Some of the quilts made by the Willing Workers Sewing Circle.

LADIES AID

In November of 1875, a small group of women met at the farm home of Mrs. Berit Lee to organize the "Kvindeforening av Emanuels Menighed." These women saw that a ladies organization was needed to bolster the work of the men. As stated in their constitution, their aim was to "perform Christian works at home and abroad."

The women at that first meeting were: Mrs. Ole K. Alvstad, Mrs. Christian Anderson, Mrs. Jens Blixrud, Mrs. Haldor Eide, Mrs. Hans Endreson, Mrs. Reinert Johnson, and the hostess, Mrs. Lee. Mrs. Reinert Johnson was elected the first president.

The group purchased the church bell in 1893, the church pews in 1888, the later and pulpit in 1898, the first church organ in 1909 and the furnace in 1933.

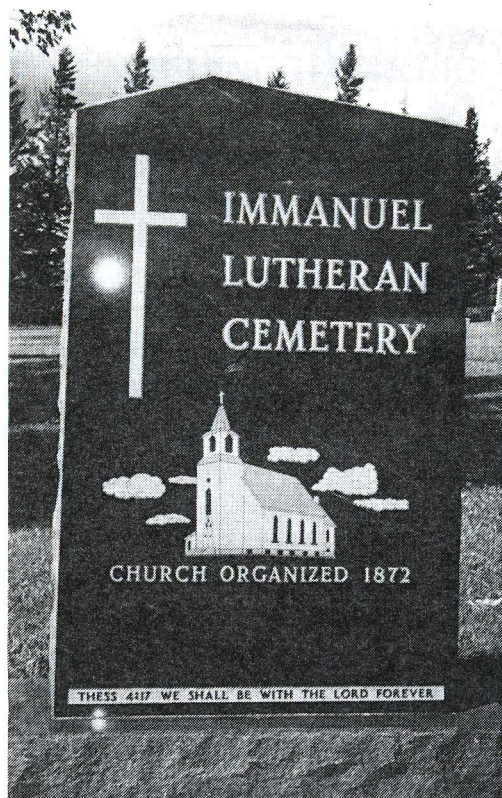
LUTHER LEAGUE

The young people of the community banded together in the early 1920's to form a Young People's Society. Meetings were first held in the homes and later at the church. The youth group performed programs and the church was often filled to over-flowing. Everyone was welcome and whole families attended. There was a 10 cent charge for lunch following the program.

During the 1930s the name was changed to the Luther League.

The Immanuel Luther League was a very active part of the church and has contributed much to the Christian experiences of the young and old. It has helped in the financial support of church projects - both local and others.

In 1965, after the Lincoln congregation left the parish, the Luther League was combined with Our Savior's and Fridhem's League of Barrett.

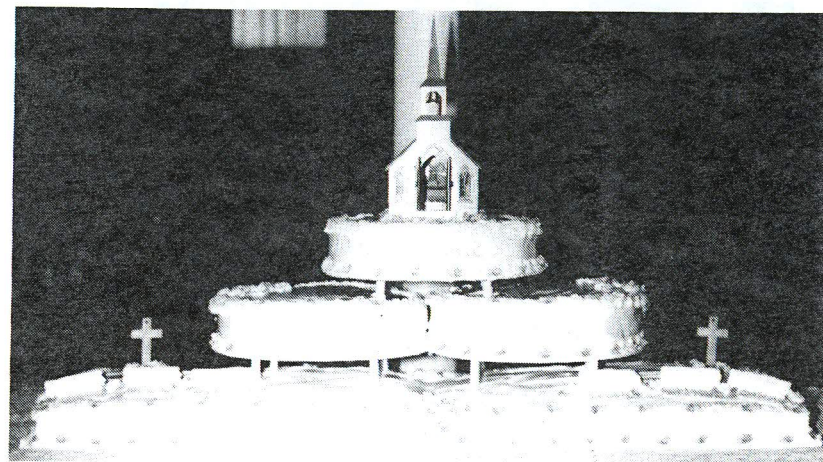


MONUMENT

A monument was erected in the churchyard in 1995. It denotes the date of Immanuel's founding and lists major organizations of the church and when they were founded. A sketch of the church graces its front with an etching of the alter on the monument back.



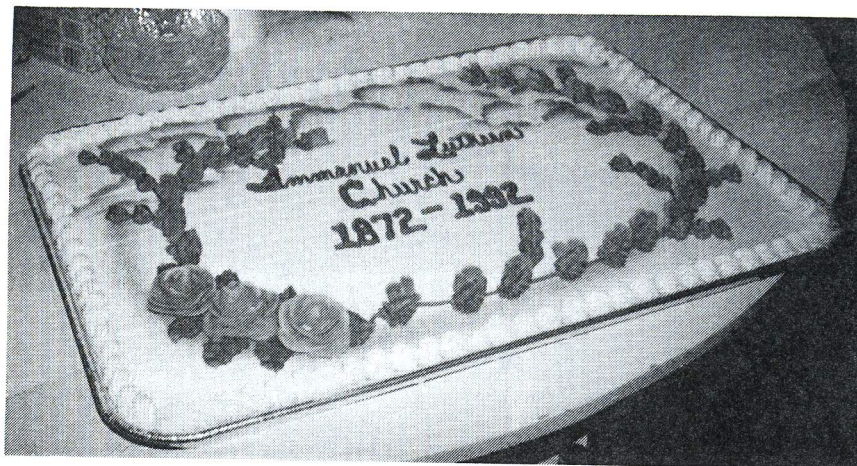
CELEBRATIONS



THE CAKE SERVED AT IMMANUEL'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY.



THE 110TH ANNIVERSARY CAKE



120TH ANNIVERSARY CAKE

WORSHIP IN SONG

Through the years, this congregation has enjoyed the excellent music. Organists, choir director and singers have given generously of their time and talents. In the earliest years of the church there was no organ or piano and the music was lead by a "kirke sanger" who would stand in front of the congregation to lead the singing. The first organ was purchased in 1909.

ORGANISTS:

Martha Samuelson
 Sophie Samuelson
 Gladys Shervey
 Gladys Johnson
 Vyonne Block
 Joan Larson
 Janet Blixrud
 Shirley Blixrud
 Mary Blixrud
 Karen Marie Block

*Sing to the Lord a new song for
 he has done marvelous things;
 his right hand and his holy arm
 have worked salvation for him
 ...Shout for joy to the Lord, all
 the earth, burst into jubilant
 song with music; make music to
 the Lord with the harp
 and the sound of singing, with
 trumpets and the blast of the
 ram's horn-shout for joy before
 the Lord, the King.
 Ps. 98:1,4-6.*

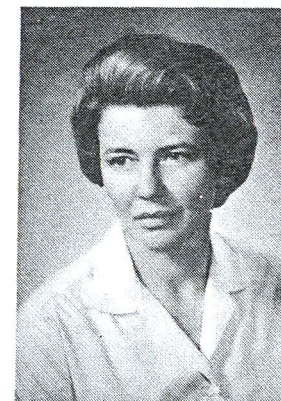
SERVING THE LORD WITH GLADNESS

The Immanuel congregation has a unique history: sending two pastors into the active ministry of the Lutheran Church - Rev. Christian Anderson and Rev. Oscar B. Endreson - and two consecrated women into the work of Foreign Mission - Miss Corrine Johnson and Mrs. Clifford Michaelson - both serving in Africa.

Many men and women - family of past and current church members - are now teaching in church colleges and universities, public schools and schools of nursing - one working with the headquarters staff of the Lutheran Church and one man who spent many years in the diplomatic service station in Norway. Others have witnessed their faith in the workplace in nursing, engineering, science and research.



Mrs. Clifford Michaelson



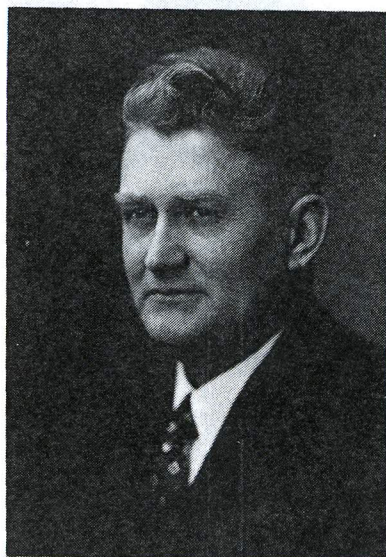
Corrine Johnson

THOSE WHO SERVE

These two men, family of church members, were sent into the ministry. Oscar Endreson was ordained into the ministry by Ivar Sandberg who also confirmed him in 1914. Endreson was a member of Sandberg's first confirmation class.



Rev. Christian Anderson



Rev. Oscar B. Endreson

A MODERN MINISTRY

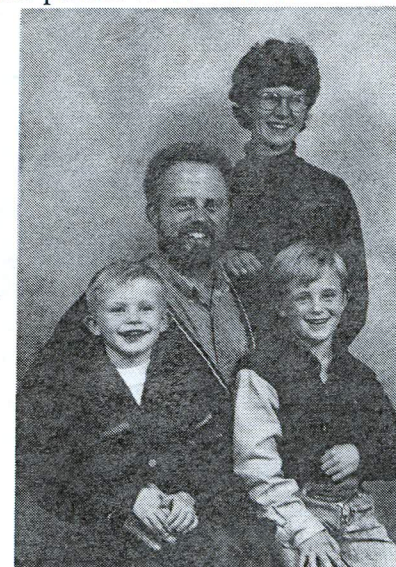
Revs. Scot and Kristine Ruffatto are presently serving the Immanuel congregation. Their shared ministry - Pastor Scot serves in a three-fourths capacity while Pastor Kristine serves a one-fourth capacity and a half-time pastoral position at Lincoln Lutheran Church of rural Hoffman- is an example of a 1990s call.

Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, women can now serve in the ministry, something that wasn't allowed when the church was formed in the late 1800s.

There is truly a shared ministry with Pastor Scot using his gifts of working with youth and people and Pastor Kristine concentrating on her strengths in Biblical studies through her work in adult education and circle Bible studies.

They discuss sermon topics together and talk about their ministries. The Ruffattos are able to do most of their work - writing sermons and researching- from their home office which allows one parent to be with their children while the other is at the office.

They met at the seminary and have both served as missionaries. Pastor Kristine served two years as missionary to Japan before



entering Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Both worked as missionaries to a central African republic before accepting Immanuel's call.



Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood. Acts 20:28

