

*Celebrating
150 Years
1848-1998*



Au Sable Grove Presbyterian Church

Program Schedule

Open House to View the Historical Display

Photo of Everyone Present on the Church's Front Lawn

Prayer Rev. Dr. Paul Salansky

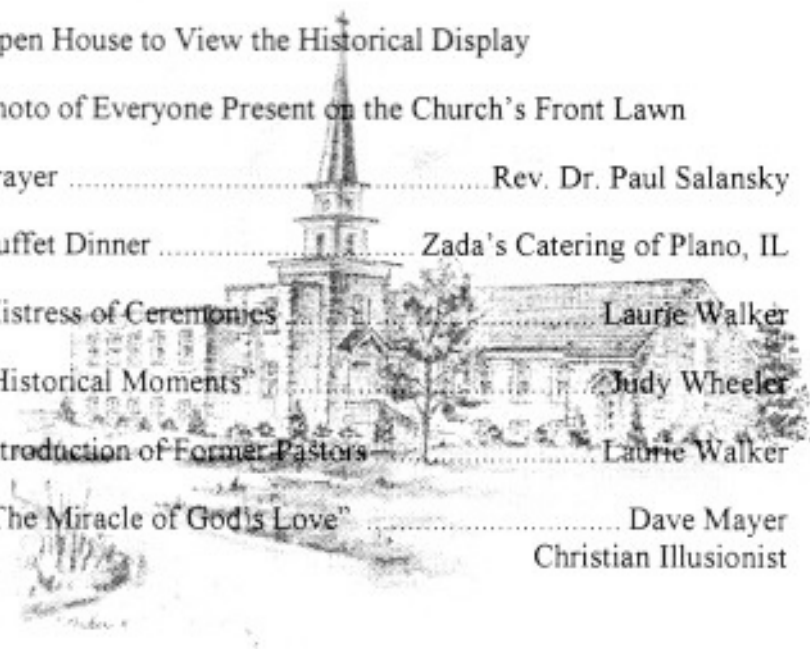
Buffet Dinner Zada's Catering of Plano, IL

Mistress of Ceremonies Laurie Walker

"Historical Moments" Judy Wheeler

Introduction of Former Pastors Laurie Walker

"The Miracle of God's Love" Dave Mayer
Christian Illusionist



Au Sable Grove Presbyterian Church History

1848-1998

This brief church history is based on a combination of past written accounts and personal memories past on to current members. The first church history was written by Dr. Townsend Seely. Dr. Seely was one of the charter members and it was in his house that the first church services were held. According to the first history document, there had not been any religious meetings near this area at the time. Feeling there was a need for a church, the original members obtained the services of the Rev. Daniel Chapman, who was then living in Plainfield. Rev. Chapman preached every other Sunday, still serving in Plainfield on alternate weeks. The history notes that the Seely log house being used for services soon became crowded when the weather was fair. The church services were shortly there after moved to the Union Schoolhouse which was at the time located one-half mile west of the church current church. The first church group called themselves the Church of Kendall.

Dr. Seely mentions there were few families on the Prairie, besides his own, in that April of 1846, when he settled here, only the Jeremiah Shepherds' and the Robert Gates' to his west and the O.C. and Daniel Johnsons' to the east.

The minutes for February 26th, 1848 state that a Congregational Church was formed by the Rev. David Chapman, consisting of Mr. And Mrs. A. K. Wheeler, Mr. And Mrs. Noble Graves, Mr. And Mrs. Rollin Wheeler, and Mr. And Mrs. Townsend Seely and son, Edmund.

The Church remained Congregational until September 2nd, 1854, when it was changed to Presbyterian because a large number of families had moved into the vicinity, from the east, who were Presbyterian and preferred its government.

The Congregation met on May 12th 1857 at the Union Schoolhouse to choose trustees. The minutes record: "We chose trustees and there-by became a corporate body and it was deemed expedient to change the name of the church to the Presbyterian Church of Au Sable Grove and that it should be known and distinguished by the above name hereafter." We find in the minutes of January 11, 1922 at the 60th annual business meeting a motion was made and seconded to change the name to the Na-Au-Say-Church but the motion was lost.

Along in the latter part of 1857 we find the session meeting in the new "Parsonage House." There is a list of the donors, and the amount they gave toward this "Parsonage House," in an old account book. Total Cost: \$625.15. The wood shed was built next and the fence followed. Some of the expenditures may be of interest.

- Two hundred eighty-four and one-half pounds of wire for fence, \$19.92;
- Seventy-nine and one-half pounds of nails, \$3.26
- Three hundred ninety-seven feet of plank, \$4.37
- Carpenter's board for six weeks, \$10.50

The Rev. John Walker and his family were the first to live in the "Parsonage House."

The minutes for the annual meeting of the year 1865 record: "The eighth annual meeting of the First Presbyterian Society of the Au Sable Grove was held at the Union Schoolhouse." The minutes for

the next annual meeting state the meeting was held at the church. This is the first we find any record that a church was to be built or had been built, though Dr. Seely in his history writes that the seats in the church were first rented on the 13th of September 1866, the first parsonage house being finished at that time.

The Woman's Missionary Society, later renamed the Woman's Association was organized on March 19, 1879. For ninety -four years this organization of women, both old and young continued to work side by side for over 5 generations. They shared in the responsibility of furnishing the kitchen in the new church, and raising money through the "ice cream social." They quilted and sewed for local and foreign missions, helped with family nights and Vacation Bible School. Their most valued accomplishment was meeting their commitment to the Presbytery Missionary Boards.

Another active group was the Westminster Fellowship Organization. It was the outgrowth of the Christian Endeavor Society formed in 1887 when a committee of adults was appointed to present constitution and by-laws to the session. By their permission the young people were given a place and responsibility in their church. In the 1950's the Geneva Fellowship, a group of young adults was organized and became a very helpful group in our church, through their service and giving. In the 1970's this group was organized as the Mariners.

Now for a few miscellaneous items that might be of interest. The first songs were sung from the "Book of Psalms" and John French led them. He got the pitch by using a tuning fork. Then there was the organ, which had to be pumped by some strong man. Arthur Price and Albert Potts performed this duty for many years. The



new organ which came next was a big improvement, for if you pedaled fast enough, you could operate it by yourself. The pianos came next and in the 1970's they used the electric organ. For many years very talented ladies accompanied the congregation during hymns on this electric organ, Mrs. Evelyn Wooley; Mary Lou (Kellogg)Fitsimmons, Margaret Goudie, Grace Jones, Karen Thanepohn. Jennifer Anderson and Helen Swenson shared the position as Jennifer played the piano some Sunday's and Helen played the organ sometimes. Bonnie Henne (our current 1998 choir director) also played the organ and piano for the congregation off and on as a substitute. From 1993 to present, Carol Griesinger plays piano and accompanies the choir that was re-formed in 1995. Bonnie Henne directs this small but ever growing group of singers.

We have sent out three ministers, Rev. Henry McClain; Rev. Oliver C. Johnson, and Dr. Paul Johnson. Many of our former pastors' sons have become ministers, Billie Bingaman, son of Rev. and Mrs. S. R. Bingaman, and Donald, son of Rev. and Mrs. E. S. Martin, are two of these.

We have sent no missionaries, though we have been a mission-minded church. Our records show a steady increase in benevolent giving. Two great-great grandsons of Dr. Townsend Seely were, however, on the Foreign Mission Field in the early 1970's. Francis McClain Seely was in Chiangmai, Siam; and Merrill Seely was in Columbia, South America. Our 1997-1998 interim pastor, Rev. Dr. Paul Salansky and his wife, Betty have been missionaries in the Ukraine.

Our lighting system has no doubt come from homemade tallow candles to the electricity from the high-line. In the records, a bill appears quite often of \$4 for a can of carbide. The sale of the old Delco plant is recorded.

The linen spread for the Communion table was purchased in 1906. The liturgical cloths we use presently were made by Mary Schobert.

In 1900 the church was remodeled. New seats and the new pulpit furniture were added at that time.

The steeple was declared no longer safe and was removed in June 1931.

The new parsonage was completed January 5th, 1916, at a cost of \$3,592. The old parsonage was moved to the church for more Sunday School rooms. Rev. and Mrs. E. S. Martin were the first family to live in the new parsonage. At the time we celebrated our 100th anniversary the following challenge was given to us as we began our second century as a church.

“We now have \$20,166.50 in our Building Fund and a plan has been adopted to raise \$10,000 a year for the next three years, and at the end of that time a committee should make definite plans to build the church.” This fund was started by the young people of the Christian Endeavor in 1926 when they presented the Trustees a gift of \$25 for the purpose of starting a Building Fund for a new church, the future of which is in the hand of our young people. “

After much planning and fund raising, the official ground breaking service for our Educational Unit was held September 26, 1954. This was the climax of a dream born by our Young People in 1926 when the first \$25 was contributed by the Christian Endeavor Society, Rev. J.C. Nansen pastor at that time. Over the years the Society fund grew, and was given a tremendous boost by many donations, including the very profitable Lord's Acre Program



which netted approximately \$40,000 towards construction. The Lord's Acre Program is still in tact in the 1990's as some of our farmers in the congregation haul grain to the elevator in the church's name.

We were faced with many problems, changes, and decisions, but the people of our community put their shoulders to the wheel of progress. Then came the moment of sad farewell when the last service was held in the 90 year-old building on Easter Morning April 1, 1956, Mr. Roper conducting.

The following week was moving week and April 8, 1956 was our first service in the Educational Unit, which had been completed and paid in full at an approximate cost of \$69,000—plus a tremendous donation of labor from all the area. On May 12, 1956 the First Family Night Potluck Supper was held. On Sunday the 13th, the Corner Stone Unveiling and Dedication service took place, with Mr. Roper, Rev. Esler, Rev. Montanas, Dr. Zuurdeeg, Dr. Paul Johnson, and Rev. Strang, participating. Elder Ralph Schlapp delivered the Keys to Rev. Stran, Moderator of Ottawa Presbytery.

Times changed a bit and donated labor was not so plentiful for the construction of the Sanctuary which began Wednesday, May 21, 1958. Dedication Service followed the completion of the building September 20, 1959. Participating in the program were Rev. Hall, Rev. Esler, Rev. Chapin, Dr. Zuurdeeg, Rev. Montanas, Dr Johnson, Mr. Roper and Chairman of the Building Committee, Elder Ralph Schlapp. The Night Burning Service followed on November 20, 1962. The stained Glass windows from the Old Church were saved, and were on display at the Stone Mill Historical Society Museum, Sandwich, IL. Through the establishment of the Memorial Fund and direct gifts, many interior furnishings were added as well as the exterior development of

landscaping, blacktop, steeple, bulletin board, and floodlights. A list of all gifts is available in the Memorial Gift Book.

The building of the current church were major accomplishments during the 1950's. We have a physical structure of which we are all proud.

Just as important as the building and maintenance of the physical structure, the church has a long history of doing God's work and building a community of faithful people.

Despite the recent residential development in the area, the membership of our church has remained relatively low. Here at our 150th Anniversary Celebration in 1998 we have 117 active members on our books. The membership of our church at both the 100th and 125th Anniversary Celebrations in 1948 and 1973 was nearly 175.

Our budget in 1948 was \$5,500; in 1973 it was \$21,000; here in 1998 it is \$66,764.

In the 1970's we welcomed our first women to leadership positions in the church. Miss Jane Goudie was an elder and Mrs. Marjorie Thurow as trustee.

The author of the 125th Celebration History writes in 1973: "For many years our church was a part of Ottawa Presbytery and Illinois Synod. Because of structural changes, we are now members of Blackhawk Presbytery, which encompasses all of Northern Illinois except the Chicago area, and includes 25% of the churches of our state. With the change, Illinois and Indiana combined to form Lincoln Trails Synod."



In 1998 at the 150th Anniversary Celebration we remain a part of the Blackhawk Presbytery and the Lincoln Trails Synod.

From February 1970 through 1971 we paid the Morris Radio Station WCSJ \$21 per month to broadcast our church services. The session records state that Phillip Aulis did the responsive reading in 1971 so that it could be better understood over the air.

On May 24, 1970, the trustees recommended that the church parking lot be covered with blacktop. The Session approved the funding of this project. In 1970 the session voted to begin lighting candles during the Christmas Eve services.

The year 1973 brought the "Mariners", a group of young married people, to be recognized as an official church organization. 1973 also brought the redecorating of the sanctuary and the use of the ball field and church facilities by 4-H groups.

In September of 1974 the session moved to develop a special organ fund, we don't see it mentioned again in the session minutes. The church building was used as a polling place for Oswego School District.

May 27, 1975 the session moved to allow the Illinois Migrant Council to use the Fellowship Hall for Special Education Classes for Spanish speaking adults.

Youth Groups in the 1970's were active. They had the Stronghold camps, retreats, and lock-in's from Friday nights to Saturday mornings. The Youth Group was active in 1978 with a Boundary Waters Canoe Trip. The Group's name was "God's Country Youth Group" with John Kellogg and Rev. David Fredrick as leaders. In October this youth group used the church for a spook house with the proceeds going to the Special Olympics.

We've had several new photo directories, the first listed in the session minutes being November, 1979. Later dates were Fall 1986 and Early 1991. Jan Lauwers is listed as the photographer for some of these directories.

During the 1980's and sometimes before, our church building was used by the following organizations or activities: Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; Voting; Women's Association; Weddings; 4-H groups, and aerobic exercise groups.

During the fall of 1984 the session approved the purchase of a new furnace for the church. The congregation in 1984 also saw the reorganization of the choir under the leadership of Linda Wilson with Bonnie Henne accompanying on the organ. 1985 brought a new back door made of glass and metal. Christmas carolers in 1985 enjoyed returning to the Breitwiesers for a chili supper. We enjoyed continuing this caroling and chili supper tradition just last Christmas (1997) hosted by Craig and Diane Stewart.

Our first listed participation in C.R.O.P. Walk was Oct. 1986. Our church's team raised \$2,194 to go to the church world service to fight hunger. Our 1998 Mission Elder is putting together a team for this year's C.R.O.P. Walk as well. Our mission involvement with the Hesed House began in Oct. 1989.

The manse and church received some sprucing up in 1988 and 1989 with new vinyl siding, a new furnace, and a new kitchen and bathroom in the manse. The Fellowship Hall received new doors in 1988. The Women's Association provided new drapes and blinds for the Fellowship Hall in 1989.

Au Sable Grove Preschool ran from 1974 to 1989 with Martha Hiller as teacher. She was unable to continue her preschool in our



building because of the boiler room being located too close to the bathrooms. This did not meet the DCFS regulations.

More sprucing up took place in 1990 and 1991 with new ceiling fans for the sanctuary, a new roof on the Fellowship Hall(1990) and a new roof on the Sanctuary(1991). In 1990 we saw a brief reinstatement of the "Ice Cream Socials" even though the Women's Association was no longer an official group. October 13, 1991 was the date that our wheelchair accessible ramp, new sidewalk, and landscaping was dedicated. We also had one of the first live Nativity Christmas Programs in 1991. Sarah (Wolf) Stewart played Mary and Wes Courier (Deana Bundy Courier's husband) played Joseph.

In 1993, Mike Karol constructed the wooden sign that is in front of the church. The front entry way was remodeled and the glass front doors were added. In 1994, Louise Christian and Linda Wissmiller stenciled the walls; later that week in Dec. new carpeting was placed into the entryway. The kitchen received a new floor in 1994. In May of 1994 we dedicated the new glider rocker in the nursery. The rocker was purchased with memorial money. Memorial Money along with other donations brought new hymnals in Nov. of 1994. Diana Hester did the calligraphy for the dedication plates at the front of the hymnals.

According to the session minutes February, 1995 is the time that Diane Stewart volunteered to restart our latest choir. Later that same year, Bonnie Henne volunteered to be our choir director. Carol Griesinger, who was hired in 1993, was to be the choir's accompanist on Sunday mornings. Bonnie accompanies the choir on the Wednesday evening practices. In the session minutes, making the building handicapped accessible is a topic of great concern and mentioned very frequently. On April 6, 1995 it was moved to establish an official fund for making this happen. In

April of 1995 the sanctuary was painted and new carpeting was laid.

1996 was a year of youth revitalization in the church. Roland and Kathleen Slater, the student pastor and his wife formed a high school youth group. That fall a Jr. High Youth Group was formed with Marcia Karol leading this group. The 10-inch late summer rain in 1996 caused three inches of water to be in the basement. The big project for 1997 and 1998 has been the new central air system.

Our church has been blessed with a rich history. We cherish our memories and look to God to lead us into the future.

The following Ministers have served as Pastors, Student pastors, or Stated Supplies:

Rev. Mr. Chapman	1848-1850
Rev. Royal Reed	1853-1856
Rev. John Walker	1856-1859
Rev. James H. Board	1860-1861
Rev. L.N. Loss	1861
Rev. Daniel Bassett	1861-1864
Rev. A. K. Wood	1864-1866
Rev. E. J. Stewart	1866-1870
Rev. A. W. Colver	1871-1873
Rev. Theodore F. Jessup	1873-1887
Rev. Robert Carson	1888-1891
Rev. J.H. Read	1892-1893
Rev. Henry Arlen	1893-1898
Rev. James A. Smith	1898-1900



Rev. M. E. Todd	1900-1903
Rev. D. T. Robertson	1903-1905
Rev. Robert McCain	1906-1908
Rev. George H. Harris	1909-1912
Rev. W. H. Liggett	1912-1915
Rev. E. S. Martin	1915-1920
Rev. S. R. Bingaman	1920-1924
Rev. J. C. Nansen	1924-1935
Rev. Wesley L. Kosin	1936-1940
Rev. H. C. Chapin	1941-1947
Rev. Ed Essler	1948-1954
Rev. Dr. Zuurdeeg	Summer 1954
Rev. Don Roper	1954-1961
Rev. Albert Ossentijck	1961-1966
Rev. A. McLaughlin of Scotland	Summer 1966
Rev. Eddie Welles	1966-1968
Rev. Dr. John DiGiacomo	1968-1976
Rev. Gerald Johnson	1976-1977
Rev. Ed Esler	Occasional
Rev. Dale Brubaker	Occasional 1979
Rev. Francis Seely	Occasional 1979
Rev. David Fredrick	1977-1982
Rev. Ed Houck	Interim 1982
Rev. Gerald Johnson	Interim 1982-83
Rev. Martha Ross-Mockaitis	1984-1987
Rev. Gary Peluso	Interim 1987
Rev. Gerald Johnson	Interim
Rev. Robert McQuilkin	Interim 87-88
Rev. Kathy Keener-Han	1989-1994
Mr. Roland Slater	1995-1997
Rev. Dr. Paul Salansky	Interim 1997-Present

Current Members of Session

- 1998 Linda Fitzgerald, Clerk of Session
- 1998 Louis Thurow, Mission
- 1999 Marcia Karol, Finance & Stewardship
- 1999 Joe Rogers, Family & Social Life & Evangelism
- 2000 Bonnie Henne, Christian Education
- 2000 Robert K. Stewart, Worship & Memorial

Current Members of the Board of Trustees

- 1998 David Schlapp
- 1998 Linda Wissmiller, Chairperson
- 1999 Jim Garbelman
- 1999 Rod Schobert
- 2000 Jeff Schobert
- 2000 Dave Kellogg

Current Church Staff

- Rev. Dr. Paul Salansky, Stated Supply Pastor
- Shirley Schobert, Treasurer
- Ruth Schobert, Office Secretary
- Carol Griesinger, Pianist
- Bonnie Henne, Choir Director
- Marcia Karol, Financial Secretary
- Mary Kellogg, Assistant Financial Secretary



Au Sable Grove Presbyterian Church

150th Anniversary Celebration

1848-1998

This has been a year of Celebration for us here at Au Sable Grove Presbyterian Church. The year began with Joe Rogers, Family and Social Life Elder, forming a committee called the *150th Celebration Committee*. He solicited help from his wife, Marcee Rogers in addition to Diana Hester, Gordon Schobert, Diane Stewart, Sue Schlapp, Carol Matlock, and Sarah Stewart.

We have had several special events that we hosted in honor of our 150th Anniversary Celebration. The first activity took place on Sunday, February 22, 1998 at the preserved Union School located on the grounds of the Lyon Historical Farm on Route 71 east of Yorkville. We held an "old fashioned" worship service in the building our founding members first used as their church. As a part of the service, several members of the congregation reenacted the signing of the charter.

Next the committee hosted a picnic in the church's front yard on July 12, 1998. This fun family day followed a patriotic musical performed by the choir and members of the congregation.

Our "Big Event" this year is this Celebration on Saturday, August 15, 1998. We selected Dave Mayer to present "The Magic of God's Love" as he comes highly recommended to entertain folks of all ages. We have also asked Judy Wheeler to share a "Moment for Remembering" as she has been doing throughout this Celebration year during our church services.

Please write one of your favorite church memories on the special cards on your table. These items will accompany a snapshot of your table in the church's scrapbook.

We are looking to wrap up this year of Celebration with a Potluck Supper and program this fall. Dick Anderson will present "America's Heroes" at a date in November yet to be determined. Wheatland Presbyterian Church and Prairie Methodist Church, also celebrating 150 years, will join us for this final event.

Au Sable Grove Presbyterian Church



150th Celebration
1848-1998

