

HISTORY OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Window of Our History

Our church has a traceable history to 1883, when a Swedish pastor started a congregation in Bismarck and in Braddock (35 miles east of here). The Swedish language was used in the services as the congregation held services at various locations in Bismarck. In 1913 the first sanctuary was built, facing to the south.



The window on display was over the entrance door of our 1913 church and if one looks closely one can see Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church. The word Swedish may be difficult to see because when they changed the name to First Evangelical, someone painted out the word Swedish. This name change officially took place July 1944. Services were being conducted in English also. The congregation had some difficulty converting to the new name as indicated by the minutes still referring to the First Swedish Evangelical Church. Legal contracts were signed by the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church into the early 1940's. This old interesting window was stored under the stairs until the new educational unit was built in 1961.

A History of Our Church

The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in January 1883 and received its charter granted by the Dakota Territorial government October 18, 1883.

The Rev. J. O. Cavallin, resident pastor at Moorhead, Minnesota served the large Lutheran mission field of Dakota Territory and presided at the first meeting, frequently visiting the congregation.

The Rev. Magnus Spangberg became its first resident pastor in 1889. He instructed the first confirmation class in 1890. The



Rev. A.G. Olson arrived in 1897 to serve the growing congregation and organized the first Sunday School. The Rev. G.W. Gulstrom served the parish from 1900 to 1907. In 1908 a parsonage was built.

In 1910, the Rev. E.F. Alfson began a 15-year ministry. An early project was the construction of a small brick church on Avenue D between Sixth and Seventh Streets, and services were held every other Sunday.

From 1925 to 1929 the Rev. A.J. Malmquist served as pastor and during that time the Women's Missionary Society was organized. The Rev. Emil Benzon served from 1929 to 1932, a period when membership doubled and services were held every Sunday.

Pastor Adolph Johns arrived in 1933 and served the church for 23 years. A basement addition, attached to the original church, was built in 1938 and became the foundation for the present church structure completed in 1949 and dedicated September 19, 1949. In July 1944 the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church officially became First Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1938 a South Side Sunday School was organized and a chapel built. This was the beginning of Prayer Lutheran Church.

The congregation was served by Pastor Warren Johnson for 21 years beginning in 1955. A parsonage at 920 North Washington was purchased. In 1956 the Rev. N.H.

Pearson served as assistant pastor. An educational addition was built and dedicated in 1961. The Rev. Harold Bostrom served the church from 1977 to 1978. The congregation installed and dedicated a pipe organ that year. Pastor Neal Engbloom was pastor from August 1979 to December 1980.

Pastor Mel Soderberg arrived in the summer of 1981. During his time here there was a renovation of the sanctuary and chancel and a lift for the handicapped was installed.

In 1992 Helen Hanson celebrated 52 years as a Sunday School teacher. Church records were recorded at the State Historical Society.

Pastor Ron Gladen was installed in 1993. During his tenure, First Lutheran participated in the Bismarck Festival of Lights Parade by entering a float in recognition of our 110th anniversary. In 1994 Koinonia Fellowship was organized and the Mission Endowment Fund was established. First Lutheran Forward set a goal of \$20,000 for use for building and pipe organ renovation and provision for an

Outreach Worker. Casual Dress Sunday to provide donations to various local charities was organized. In 1996 Steve Rustand was hired as Outreach Worker and the church began organizing for a Sister Parish affiliation. An updated cookbook was issued in 1996.

Pastor Sam Ismir served as interim pastor upon the retirement of Pastor Gladen until Pastor Tom Dunham accepted the call to First Lutheran Church and began his duties in March 1998. More sanctuary renovation took place including the removal of a wall in the Narthex and replacing carpet there and in the library lounge. The organ renovation was completed and chimes, which were donated to the church years ago, were restored and placed in the choir loft. A lapel speaker system was installed. Taping services for the shut-ins was also initiated. The house at 822 North 7th street was purchased for future parking area.

In 1999 Youth Education and Ministry Director Tara Ulrich and Outreach Director Suzy Volk were hired part time. Air conditioning was installed in the chapel and office area and the quilting ladies provided 150



HISTORY OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

quilts for the needy.

Informal worship services on the last Sunday of each month were begun in 2000, and in October a monthly coffee party at the Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center for First Lutheran residents was organized. Barb Price was hired as the new Youth Ministry Director. Three humidity controls for pianos were purchased as well as copies of "The Other Songbooks" for informal worship services. This year the quilting ladies made 210 quilts.



In 2001 the Board of Directors added a Parish Nurse to the staff and Ellen Forderer began her duties in that capacity. First Lutheran Church created its own Internet Web Page. Marcia Peterson resigned as Church Treasurer and Mary Nelson took the position.

Pastor Tom accepted a new call in 2002 and Interim Pastor Verle Reinicke served for almost a year. The Knotty Pine Room was updated, the office computer system was upgraded and security safeguards were installed in that system. Kevin Nelson represented North Dakota West Synod on a mission to Africa.



In September 2003 Pastor Allen Wagner and his wife Robyn accepted the call for First Lutheran and Missy Kopp was hired as Youth Education and Ministry Director.

In early 2004 the bell which had called parishioners to worship in the original First Lutheran Church was once again put to use after over 50 years of being in storage.



Our bell was found under the old hallway steps where it has been resting since 1948 when our old church building was partially removed to construct our current church building. So far, looking through some old church

minutes it has not been discovered when our bell was acquired, some guess it must be about 1913.

First Lutheran members saw 2005 through 2007 as years of growth and improvement. Membership and worship attendance has steadily increased and there were numerous property improvement projects and a variety of fundraising events. Most of the improvements to the physical building have been in preparation for the 125th Anniversary celebration.

We started by upgrading the Sound System, refurbished the Pipe Organ, added some very nice Landscaping, and brightened up Mary's office. It's very inviting for all the visitors she receives everyday.

First Lutheran received a very generous donation of new furniture for the Library/ Lounge area. Both the Men's and Women's Restrooms upstairs have been remodeled and

are great. There is still work being done on the Kitchen Upgrade Project. The new stove and convection oven and the new refrigerator/freezer combination are wonderful additions. The new flooring was installed and currently the new counter tops are in the works. The Furnace Upgrade is our latest project and will probably be an ongoing fundraiser.

First

Lutheran has some new additions to staff too. Missy Kopp our Youth and Education Director left in August to pursue other avenues and we added Michelle Busch as our

Sunday School Coordinator and Rose

Trenbeath as our Youth Coordinator. Rose is also a Seminary student and soon will be helping Pastor Wagner with his pastoral duties as she begins her internship. Ron Kopp and Mike Nickel took over for Clyde Shepersky as the new custodians.



First Lutheran added a very special program in the past two years. It's called Lunch At First or L.A.F. It's a free lunch to the High School students in the area. The men have been crafting beautiful Faith Chests for all our littlest new members. The Faith

Chests are such a wonderful Ministry that it was featured in The Lutheran Magazine. The Quilting Ladies also received accolades for their hard work in the same magazine. The only thing that has changed in quilting is instead of sending the quilts over seas they are being distributed to very worthy causes in the Bismarck-Mandan area. All the families still involved with the Seasoner's Apple Pie and Craft Sale are still going strong. It's a very fun and worthwhile fund-raiser.

New programs added to the church are new family events. First Lutheran has had a float in the Folkfest Parade for the past three years. There is an annual Car Show, Camping Trip, and First Family events that include going



to see theatrical performances and going to special events at the Civic Center.

All in all First Lutheran Church has had a lot of positive

change in the last few years. Together we can accomplish anything.

Congratulations on 125 years of strong Faith, Family ties and Fellowship.

*"Generations of Sharing,
A Tradition of Caring"*