

## ***THROUGH THE YEARS AT GARFIELD LUTHERAN CHURCH***

Garfield Lutheran Church is partly people and partly the church building. Pastors who have served remind us of the effort and the dedication present in any church. The names of the early pastors and members all echo from the fjords of Norway.

During January, February, and early March of 1892, a small group of pioneer settlers in this community met several times to discuss organizing a congregation and building a church in their midst. Committees were chosen and they met with members of other congregations that had been organized but had no building, to discuss the possibility of building together. These plans did not materialize.

Finally, on March 17, 1892, the group met at the J. P. Hanson home in Garfield Township and organized Garfield Congregation. The constitution which was adopted was signed by the following: Hans Hendrickson, Olaus Hanson, A. J. Haugen, Daniel Gilberg, Steffen Nordahl, Christian T. Hanson, Jens P. Hanson, Peter Hendrickson, Daniel E. Jacobson, Lars L. Oien, Samuel Iverson, Eleseus E. Hammer, Lars L. Nordahl, Toge Elvekrog, and Charles L. Sorby.

On March 29, 1892, a meeting was held for the purpose of incorporation of Garfield Lutheran Church under the laws of the State of Minnesota. The Articles of Incorporation were filed for record on May 26, 1892.

At a previous meeting held at the Daniel Gilberg home, a building site for the church had been chosen. Mr. Gilberg gave three acres of land on his farm for that purpose. At this meeting \$670.00 in donations and pledges were also given. In the spring of 1892 work began and cornerstone services were held in June of that year with Rev. O. Lokensgaard officiating. The church was erected at a cost of about \$1,600.00.

The congregations' joy in their church lasted only about a year. In August of 1893 the church was destroyed by a tornado leaving them not only without a church but also with a debt of \$350.00. Economic conditions were bad at that time so it was not an easy matter to rebuild a church. After several meetings it was decided to build a small chapel using mostly materials from the wreckage from the church.

Work began in the fall of 1893 and continued throughout the winter, so by the following June they had the building enclosed and furnished with homemade benches and some chairs furnished by the Ladies Aid. This chapel served the congregation for about ten years.

The congregation grew considerably larger and it was decided to enlarge the building by the addition of two wings. Work started in the summer of 1904 and on August 28, 1904, the cornerstone was laid by Rev. O. Lokensgaard. By the spring of 1906 the building was completed and the interior refurbished at an approximate cost of \$3,500.00. Among the new furnishings was an oil painting for the altar, painted and given to the church by the pastor's wife, Mrs. Tharaldsen. Dedication was held May 13, 1906. There is a picture of this church, but not of the interior. No picture is available of the first church built in 1892 or of just the chapel.

Again, the congregation was able to enjoy their church only about a year. On July 20, 1907, the church was struck by lightning and it burned to the ground. It had been insured for \$1,500.00 which was a big help in construction of a new church. The fire was on a Saturday and already on

Sunday a business meeting was held and plans laid for immediate construction. Work started that fall, and the building was completed the following year at a cost of \$3,800.00. Rev. Tharaldsen reported that every man, woman, and child, old and young, cooperated and helped in this work.

The Rev. J. O. Litsheim was a pastor of the congregation from 1892 to 1893. Rev. O. Lokensgaard served from 1893-1895 and again in 1897. Rev. J. S. Norgard was pastor from 1895-1897. He was the first pastor formally called. In 1897 he resigned to accept a position as instructor at Augustana College at Canton, South Dakota. Rev. Iver Tharaldsen served Garfield from 1897-1916. It was during his pastorate that Garfield grew to be one of the largest rural congregations in the Lac qui Parle Circuit (probably like the Conference today).

The first baptism in Garfield Church was Robert Haugen; son of Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Haugen. He was born on March 3, 1892 and baptized March 27, 1892, only ten days after the congregation was organized. He served in World War I where he lost his life in 1918.

The first confirmation was held on November 11, 1894 with four confirmed. The first marriage was that of Lars T. Jerde and Susie M. Ronneberg on February 5, 1894.

The first burial was that of Martin Andreas Syverson, who died August 24, 1894 at the age of 1-½ years. He was buried on August 26.

At the time the congregation was organized there were fifteen families enrolled. By 1908 there were fifty families. In the early 1920s there were about 400 members or 86 families. The 1932 report shows 71 families with 310 members. In 1942 at the time of the 50th Anniversary, there were 83 families with 378 members. The 1965 report shows there were 457 baptized members, and 1991 shows 341 baptized members.

The church built in 1907 was small and a schoolroom was built in connection with the church. Accordion doors were closed when there was room in the church. A pot-bellied stove sat in a dugout hole under the pulpit with a register in the floor. It was cold in the wintertime and everyone sat with overcoats and overshoes on.

Services were held every third Sunday and were often in the afternoon. The aisle ran crossways and the altar was on the east end. There was a chandelier of six or eight kerosene lamps on a wheel used only at the Christmas program. This was the only time there was light in church. Later on they used gas lamps.

For the Christmas programs the young boys went around to collect money for apples to give to everyone, also candy bags for the children.

The two small windows south of the pulpit now were in the schoolroom then. The small window all alone was used as an entrance to a hall for men to enter, as men sat on one side of the aisle and ladies and children on the other side. Double doors and steps on the west side of the narthex were used for funerals.

There was a long barn, which was used for the care of the horses. The farmers had horse blankets to cover their horses, as it was only a single wall building. Later this was torn down.

Rev. S. Strand served the Garfield congregation for a short time in 1916. Rev. Otto Mostrom served from 1916-1925. Rev. E. R. Roem was here a short time in 1925. Rev. Joseph Letlie came

in 1925 and served until 1936. Garfield was affiliated with First Lutheran Church in Madison at this time. In 1928, extensive improvements were made on the church. The building was raised, a basement built, and the interior of the church proper remodeled and redecorated at a cost of about \$4,500.00, besides all of the volunteer work. The newly remodeled church was used for the first time for a Mission Festival on October 21, 1928. The men made homemade tables for the basement, which were used for many years.

Communion was usually held three times a year, Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas. That was the only time offerings were taken and these were altar offerings. The congregation was assessed for many years. There was a Klokker to lead in the singing. Peter Hendrickson served as the Klokker for many years.

In 1920 plans were made for a tree-planting program, and in 1921 this work was completed when the pastor and the men of the congregation helped plant evergreens around the churchyard. These evergreens have been a source of pride up to this day creating a beautiful setting for the church and cemetery. In 1982 land was purchased from James Connor and new evergreens planted in memory of Curtis Connor by his family. The new trees were planted just outside of the old trees. The old trees were removed in 1999. (Note: July 31, 2008 brought very strong winds to the Madison area. Many trees were broken or toppled. Evergreens in the area were hardest hit. None of the evergreens at Garfield Lutheran were damaged.)

Rural electricity came in 1947, and Garfield finally got electric lights. They were used for the first time at the Christmas program.

Pastor L. O. Onerheim came to serve Garfield in 1936 and stayed until 1943. At this time Garfield was affiliated with Minnesota Valley and Borgund Lutheran Churches. Rev. Alvin Rogen was here from 1943 to 1945. Then Garfield became affiliated with Trinity Lutheran Church of Dawson and was served by Pastor Harold Everson from 1946-1949. Pastor R. L. Otterstad was installed in March 1949 and served until January 1955. Then Rev. E. A. Fretheim, who was retired, was interim pastor until a call was accepted by S. W. Gulsvig in August 1955. He served with the help of student pastor Kenneth Peterson until August 1956.

When Garfield Church was organized all the members understood Norwegian so this language was used for all services. Beginning in 1919 every third service was conducted in the English language. In 1926 the provision was made that half of the services be in English. From 1936 to 1944, two out of three services were in English. Since that time only English services have been scheduled.

In 1941 the church was shingled and painted. The interior of the church was redecorated and two chancel chairs and new carpet purchased. In 1942 the entrance was altered and further improvements made before the 50th Anniversary of the church was held on June 7, 1942.

In 1956 it was decided to add a new part to the east end of the church and build a narthex. Other improvements added at this time were plumbing, a larger heating unit, and the digging of a well. The interior was redecorated and new pews purchased. The kitchen was enlarged and cupboards and a stove added. This was a major remodeling and much of the work was done by the men of the congregation. The newly remodeled church was dedicated in November of 1956. After the sale of the congregation's interest in the parsonage in Dawson, a home was needed for the pastor. It was decided to build one in Madison. This was ready for Pastor J. LeeRoy Eikanger when he came to serve Garfield in 1957. This was his home until he left in the middle of 1960. Upon

graduating from the seminary, Pastor Oscar B. Stene served his first call at Garfield from 1960-1966. Harry Cleven served as student pastor from July 1966 to July 1967. He then graduated from the seminary and accepted a call to be pastor at Garfield in 1967. He, stayed until 1971.

The first church wide affiliation of Garfield Lutheran was the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, followed, after the merger of 1917, by the Evangelical United Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC). In 1960 after another merger the name was changed to the American Lutheran Church (ALC). In 1987 the LCA, ALC and the ELC merged to form the present Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

In 1981 the church was redecorated and painted, and new red carpet was laid on the entire floor of the church. Red pew cushions were made.

Pastor Harry Cleven left in 1971. Pastor Carl W. Holm became the pastor from 1972-1978. Pastor William Nordmark came in 1979 and served until February of 1985. In June of 1985, Pastor Randy Freund came and he left in 1989. Pastor K. Christian Johnson came in August 1989 and served until July 1995. Interim Pastor Oavid Webster served from August to October of 1995. Pastor Eric Finsand served from October 1995 to April 1999. Pastor Tim Lindhorst served as Interim Pastor from April 1999 to February 2000. Pastor Barbara Stroud-Borth began serving in February 2000 until 2006. Pastor Robert Vedell served as Interim Pastor. Pastor Eunice Woodberry began serving in May 2008.

In 1988 a new narthex was built with washrooms and room for coats. New furnaces and air conditioning were also put in then. In 1991 new windows were put in the basement. The old ones had been there since 1928. About 1987 the stained glass windows in the church were cleaned and repaired. In 1991 the basement was repaired and redecorated.

The Centennial of the church was held in 1992. The first celebration was 100 years and 5 days after the March 17, 1892 founding date. Many Garfield members and friends of Garfield gathered for a festival service of Holy Communion and dinner. A Centennial History Book and Cookbook were published. The main celebration and reunion was held for two days, July 11 and 12. In 1996 Sunday School curtains were made by the women of the church. In 1996 and 1997 a new sound system was installed. In 1997 the kitchen floor was redone. That year Garfield shared parsonage and some other expenses with the Louisburg/Bellingham Parish while Pastor Christine Finsand was their Pastor and her husband, Pastor Eric Finsand, served Garfield. 1997 was the year of the big flood, which caused many problems in the basement of the church. After extensive work with tiling, the basement was carpeted in 1998.

In 2000 Phyllis Haugen retired after over 40 years as organist and Karissa Enger took over her duties. Work on the cemetery was begun. In 2001 a new organ was purchased. Remodeling work is being done in the room behind the altar. An elevator was installed to enable everyone to access all three levels. This book, cemetery map, display, and row markers were put into place.

*Much of this information was taken from the centennial History and Reminiscence Book published in 1992.*