

## ST.PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

The beginning of St.Peter's Lutheran Church dates back to 1878, when the first service was held in the home of one of the early settlers, Christ Buerkle. It was attended by seven families. The first organized meeting was held in 1879. The first church was dedicated July 17,1881, with a German service in the morning, followed by an English service in the afternoon. The singing was led by a "Vorsinger" (song leader). The back of the church was partitioned off to be used for a teacherage.

The congregation soon outgrew it's first church building, and a new one was erected in 1890. The old church was used as a parsonage.

In 1892 a band was organized to lead the congregational singing. This music was not only enjoyed during services, but could also be heard for miles during practice in the summer. They performed at services for 25 years.

An interesting note: At a meeting dated April 1,1894, it was decided to end all unnecessary walking during the church service. After the service the men were to leave first, then the women and children. To prevent crowding, no-one was to loiter in the doorway.

Two bells were purchased in 1894. These bells could be heard in Gibbon on a quiet day. 1894 also saw the building of the first school. A new parsonage was built in 1896, and a teacherage in 1899. A second school was added in 1901. (We attended school in these two schools. The salary for the pastor in 1907 was \$550 a year, plus feed for one horse and one cow.

The pipe organ, which was purchased in 1910 for \$1200, still serves the congregation. This organ was hand pumped until 1940. Yes, I remember well somebody sitting next to the organ, diligently pumping this big wooden handle up and down, forcing air into the organ. He had to know just when to start pumping in order to have enough pressure built up by the time the organist was to start playing. Small parlor organs operated on the same principle, only you used two foot pedals at the bottom of the organ.

The basement was dug in 1924, and two hot air furnaces were installed. About this time one English service a month was held on a Sunday evening.

The interior of the church was remodeled in 1929. The balconies on both the east and sides were removed, leaving only the organ loft.

It wasn't until 1940 that all congregation buildings were wired for electricity, when NSP built a line.

Following WWII further improvements were made. New art-glass windows were installed, and Nu-wood walls replaced the former tin covering. This also erased the motto "Ehre Sei Gott in der Höhe".above the altar.

The new entry was built in 1972, in honor of Otto and Annie Jaus, who had willed their entire estate to the church.

Now from facts to memories-

Men and women did not sit together in church. The right side of the church was strictly for men, with the women on the left side. How soon we would hear the word "discrimination" now. This slowly changed, and the married couples were allowed to sit together on the right side with the men. The men did NOT sit on the left side with the women. The single girls remained on the left side, along with the married women that either did not like the change, or had husbands that insisted on sitting upstairs which for some reason was for men only. There were some couples that never did make the change. The Erwin Schroeders were one such couple. He sat upstairs, while she sat in the short pew in the back of the church, which was really supposed to be for mothers with small babies. (Dad and I felt ornery one Sunday when Geraldine was a baby and sat in that back pew. I got my ears pinched when she got there. We had the nerve to sit in her "reserved" pew. But she did take the hint and moved up several pews after that.)

Couples did not attend communion together, either. All the men first, and then the ladies. This changed in the mid-forties. Auntie Marvel and Uncle Tony were, I believe, the first ones to try this. I should say they were brave enough to try it. Others soon followed suit. And in no way did unmarried couples ever sit together in church, even if about to be married.

Girls of school age usually sat in the front pews, where we made lots of "hankie-babies" during the sermon. The boys usually sat upstairs. During the school year all children, plus those two years post-confirmation, sat in the front pews. Here, too, it was girls on the left and boys on the right. This was for Christenlehre. (Christian instruction) which was conducted by the pastor. This was a question-answer discussion of the catechism, with the pastor as the instructor. What a wonderful way for the entire congregation to keep brushed up on the catechism, even though only the children participated verbally.

There was no electricity, therefore no evening services. Christmas Eve was one of very few. Then lamps were hung from the ceiling. The church was heated with two coal fired furnaces-conduction heat. Amazin how they ever got the church warm enough with no fans for force and circulate the heat. The only time I remember the church being actually warm was Christmas Eve so the children could be without coats--and long underwear.

A death in the congregation was announced by the tolling of the church bells. There would be continuous tolling for a while to alert the people, and this was followed by a single toll for each year of the persons age. This was one way of knowing who died, especially someone who had been ill. Everbody seemed to know how old the next person was. Word was also spread by telephone-if you had one-and word of mouth. Not by radio and newspaper. Viewings were not held in the funeral homes, but in the homes. The body was then taken to church where practically the entire congregation attended the funeral. The teacher was the organist, so no afternoon

classes for the children. They usually sang at funerals. A last viewing was held after the services, when everybody "marched" past the coffin to take a last look-pew by pew. The coffin remained closed during the service, ~~it~~ was opened for a last viewing after the completion of the service.

Ladies Aid meetings saw many men present. Women needed transportation. Women did not drive before our generation. The old cars had to be cranked by hand to start them, which was no job for a women. Roads also were not what they are today. It was definitely a man's field. The women held their meeting in the main part of the basement, while the men visited and smoked their cigars on the "stage" part, with the curtain dropped. This curtain was a piece of canvas attached to a big roller which could be raised and lowered with a cord. The younger children were also brought along, which we enjoyed. We had lots of fun. A big lunch was served to everyone following the meeting.

There was a bachelor in Gibbon, Bill Deppert, who was slightly retarded. He attended all Ladies Aid meetings and funerals in the area-for the lunch. He'd walk, arriving just in time for the lunch. He always had his pennies to pay for it, too. He walked out to Moltke, Winthrop, Wellington, Fairfax, etc. Can you imagine all that walking just to eat lunch? Don't know if anyone ever offered him a ride.

You did not go to church looking anything but your best. Women wore dresses at all times, and always wore hats-usually with gloves to match. Men wore suits, long sleeved shirts-usually white-and a tie, even when it was hot outside. They must have been miserable. They also wore hats. There were wire holders on the pews where the men could hang their hats. How often do you see a man with a hat on now? No one showed up with sloppy clothes, or even shorts, like they do now. From one extreme to the next. Women's hats were slowly disappearing in the late fifties. The first Sunday I went to church without one I got tapped on the shoulder and asked where my hat was by Mrs. Walter Becker. I decided not to wear them after having mine knocked off my head during the sermon by one of my "young-uns".