

## **A Brief History of Immanuel Lutheran Church**

In 1913, the efforts and interests of seventeen families in the Elk Point area resulted in the forming of a new church which provided Lutheran services in English for the community.

Prior to the forming, Rev. Olaf Lysnes of Vermillion, South Dakota, had visited Elk Point to hold an English Lutheran service on December 4, 1912. An English Lutheran service was held again on January 1, 1913. At the New Year's morning service, a committee of five men was formed to determine the need for a Lutheran Church. On February 16, 1913, at a service conducted by Rev. Olaf Lysnes, a report of the committee was presented. The report being favorable, an English Lutheran Church was organized.

On March 3, 1913, the constitution was adopted, and the name of the newly-formed congregation became Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Elk Point, South Dakota. The officers elected as deacons were A. W. Schulz, Jens Krogh, and Henry Johnson. Edward Holden, S. E. Sorenson, and Paul Lange were elected as trustees. Elected as secretary was Peter Simonson, treasurer, Oluf Johnson and auditors, A. O. Ringsrud and John A. Clementson. Pastor Luther M. Roseland was extended a call to serve this new congregation and was installed on June 29, 1913. Pastor Roseland served the congregation through 1915. Soon after his arrival, ministries of the new church began to be organized. On July 17, 1913, Immanuel Ladies Aid held its first meeting under the linden tree in the parsonage yard, and after Pastor Roseland's installation, the Luther League and Sunday School were also organized.

Initially, Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church did not have a church building in which to meet. The Episcopal Church members permitted the new Lutheran Church members to use their building on certain Sunday afternoons or evenings. Later, for a brief period the Florence Theater was used for Sunday worship. In the spring of 1915, lots were purchased east of the Union County Courthouse and a roofed basement was built. Rev. Jersing Thompson (1916-1917) and Rev. N. O. Peterson (1917-1924) served the congregation at this location along with Rev. A. J. Bergsaker (1920-1924). In 1917, the United Lutheran Church, with which Immanuel was affiliated, joined with other synods to form the Norwegian Church of America. In April of 1920, Rev. A. J. Bergsaker was serving the congregations of St. Paul and Brule Creek Lutheran Church when Immanuel requested his services. Rev. Bergsaker served from 1920-1924.

During the summer of 1922, the congregation purchased a church building belonging to Our Savior Episcopal congregation (formerly St. Andrew). Built in 1895, this 15th century English-gothic-style building had been a gift to the Episcopalians by Mrs. William (Zinn) DuPont in memory of her daughter Mary Roger Zinn. After remodeling, the dedication was held on October 15, 1922.

In 1924, Immanuel Lutheran Church requested permanent status with St. Paul Lutheran Church and Brule Creek Lutheran Church. This was approved, and the three-point parish was formed. On August 30, 1924, Rev. C. B. Runsvold (1924-1930) accepted a call to serve the newly-formed three-point parish.

Next, Rev. Walter Aamoth (1930-1941) served the three-point parish. In 1931, women were granted the right to vote on issues presented at the annual meetings. During 1940-41, Rev. Aamoth aided in the construction of a new parsonage built on the lot east of the church. A dedication service for the parsonage was held on July 20, 1941. In 1941, St. Paul voted to withdraw from the three-point parish, leaving Immanuel and Brule Creek as a two-point parish.

Rev. Douglas Jacobson (1941-1946) began to serve Immanuel Lutheran Church in the fall of 1941. On April 28, 1946, the congregation held a mortgage-burning ceremony to retire the debt of the parsonage.

Rev. I. G. Hastad (1946-1956) was called to serve the two-point parish of Immanuel and Brule Creek in August of 1946. Throughout his tenure, membership grew from 210 to 417 baptized members. In 1946, the synod became known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church, changing from the Norwegian Church of America. A new Hammond organ was purchased for Immanuel Lutheran Church on November 29, 1948.

Rev. Selmer J. Hilmo (1957-1962) accepted a call to serve Immanuel/Brule Creek in June of 1957. His pastorate included extensive remodeling of the church sanctuary, adding a pastor's study and enlarging the basement. The newly-remodeled church was dedicated on May 1, 1960. On January 1, 1961, Immanuel, along with the rest of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, merged with other church bodies to form the American Lutheran Church.

Pastor Kermit Rye (1963-1971) accepted a call to serve Immanuel on January 14, 1963. Highlights during his service included Immanuel's 50th Anniversary celebration on September 22, 1963, and the mortgage burning ceremony for the church building in 1971.

Pastor Marvin Ketterling (1972-1986) was instrumental in implementing an Internship Program beginning in 1977. Also during Pastor Ketterling's time, a new organ was purchased which Immanuel continues to use today.

Pastor Leslie Hernes (1986-1996) was serving Immanuel Lutheran Church when discussions began about construction of a new church building. To begin saving money for this huge endeavor, the first Turkey Dinner was held in November of 1995. On January 1, 1988, the American Lutheran Church, of which Immanuel was a member, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and Lutheran Church of America merged to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Pastor Dick and Arlene Wickert (1996-2006) were a pastoral team serving both Immanuel and Brule Creek. On May 5, 2002, the groundbreaking service was held for the new church building. The ELCA Mission Builders were called to assist with construction. The first service in the new building was held on December 25, 2002, and on April 27, 2003, the dedication service was held.

Pastor Jared Rakness (2006-2010) was called to serve the two-point parish of Immanuel and Brule Creek in October of 2006. Jesse Rakness was hired as youth program director. In 2007, the decision was made to sell the parsonage. In 2008, the congregation began hosting Friends

Feast, a monthly free community meal in Elk Point. In January 2010, Immanuel's congregation voted to become a solo congregation, moving away from the two-point parish with Brule Creek.

Pastor Erik Olson (2010-present) began serving Immanuel Lutheran Church in August 2010 and was installed in October of that year. Recent milestones include the dedication of the bell tower, a mortgage burning service for the building, and completion of the paved parking lot.

Throughout the generations, Immanuel Lutheran Church has continued to support many local and national organizations including the Boy Scouts of America, the Luther Center at the University of South Dakota, Missionaries, and Prison Congregations of America.

Members of Immanuel are grateful for its history, and we look forward to the future. Using the words of our centennial dedication: "Our eyes look back with thanksgiving. Our eyes look forward in hope. Therefore, with thanksgiving for the past and hope for the future, we dedicate ourselves and our lives to the mission which God gives us as the Church of Jesus Christ in this place."