

## Bethesda Lutheran Church

The second church founded in Marsh Gove Township, Bethesda was organized on March 16, 1904 and built on section 7 of Marsh Grove Township. Norwegian was the language of the church for several years. In 1964 the members voted to discontinue the services and dissolve. The cemetery and the church bell are all that remain.



Laura Goplin taught Parochial School in Marsh Grove for many years and was a charter member of Bethesda Church

Elias Haarstad was born in 1861 at Svatssem, in Vestre Gausdal Norway. At the age of 17, he left there for America. He was organizer of the township church, and was very interested in community affairs. He was the bell ringer for as long as I can remember in the Bethesda Church. Every Christmas Eve he would ring the bell for one hour between six and seven o'clock. This was a custom he brought with him from Norway.

*Submitted to Marsh Grove Centennial Book*

*by Orville and Lenora Harstad*

The Bethesda Evangelical Lutheran church of Marsh Grove and West Valley ws located on the northeast corner of Section 7 in Marsh Grove Township, Marshall County, Minnesota.



The congregation was organized March 16, 1904. They belonged to the United Norwegian Lutheran denomination until 1917, when it automatically became affiliated with the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America.

The membership at the time of organization included the following: Elias A. Haarstad, Edward A. Haarstad, Ewen J. Sagnes, Edward Sagnes, Jens Webjornsonk Sam E. Gopin, Ole P. Dyrud, Ole A. Windahl, Ole H. Lind, John J. Skaaran and August A. Rokke.

Before a church was built meetings were held in the homes of the members or at the school house. A neat frame church building was erected in 1905 on a one acre lot donated for this purpose by Ole A. Windahl.

No record of the dedication of the church has been found.

The Norwegian language was used in the beginning. The first officers of the church were as follows: Ole P. Dyrud, president; Edward Sagnes, secretary; Sam E Goplin, treasurer; Edward A. Haarstad, August A. Rokkey and Ole G. Lind, trustees; Jens Webjornson and Ewen J. Sagnes, deacons.

The congregation established its own cemetery in 1904 on the same lot where the church was erected the following year. The first interment was that of Edward Haarstad one of the charter members, who died October 30, 1904 at the age of 41 years.

A Ladies Aid society has functioned since the beginning of the congregation. It was organized in 1904 at the home of Mrs. Ewen Sagnes. In the summer, the ladies would get together in groups and walk along the peaceful country roads to their Ladies Aid meetings, knitting and chatting along the way. Their first auction sale consisted of fancy work and knitted articles.

A Young People Society was organized under the direction of Reverend M. B. Ordal on November 28, 1926.

Two members of this church were ordained into the ministry, which were Arnold Windahl on June 13, 1937 and E. Delano Lind on June 14, 1964.

On November 10, 1964 it was voted on by the members to discontinue the services and dissolve. Following the dissolving of the church a cemetery association was formed. The church bell was erected on the spot where the church stood as a memorial to their Christian belief.

The following pastors have served the Bethesda Congregation: Reverend N. F. Kile, 1904; Reverend C. UJ. Nolstad, 1905-1908; Reverend J. A. Lofthus, 1909-1913; Reverend J. A. Gravdall, 1914-1915; Reverend N. H. Lind, 1915-1917; Reverend Reverend M. B. Ordahl, 1918-1926; Reverend T. L. Lassesson, 1927-1932; Reverend H. O. Peterson, 1932-1942; Reverend Bratlie, 1934-1944; Reverend C. T. Thompson, 1945-1951; Reverend A. N. Grorud, 1952-1954; Reverend T. J. Welzin, 1954-1964

*From the Self Portrait of Marshall County*

*Submitted by Helmer Link and Mrs. Alvin Broten*

**Les Bakke remembers:**

I remember going to this church on Sundays for Sunday School and services. My favorite Sunday School teacher was Anita Rokke. As you can see from my personal story, I enjoyed reading and I read every assignment for Sunday School and was able to answer the questions Anita asked. One Sunday, I remember telling me that I could not answer any of the questions; that I had to give others a chance.

Reverend T. J. Welzin conducted our confirmation classes and officiated at our confirmation ceremony. Below is a photo from that ceremony that took place in Viking, Minnesota. Rev. Weltzin served both churches.

