

THE MISSION & MINISTRY OF TRINITY LUTHERAN

THE BEGINNING: FROM ONE MEETING CAME MULTIPLE CHURCHES

The congregations that became Trinity and Storla Lutheran Churches were founded at a meeting on Friday April 7, 1882 at the home of Mr. Janson. The Evangelical Lutheran Wessington Congregation was formed. It was named for the Wessington hills that could be seen to the west. Rev. Ole Tjomsland, a former missionary to Africa, was called to be the first pastor. The early congregation began by meeting in homes and in 1885 moved services into area schools, including the Scott, Thompson, Leet and Christopher Schools. In the beginning the Norwegian language was used almost entirely.

On February 21, 1884 a group withdrew from the congregation to form the Victor Congregation. In 1893 a group withdrew from Victor to form Immanuel. In the early 1900s Victor started services at a second site in the town of Mount Vernon. A church building was constructed in 1908. In 1916 Salem Lutheran Congregation became a separately incorporated church from Victor.

THEY BUILT TWO CHURCH BUILDINGS AND ONE CEMETERY

In 1892 the Wessington Congregation merged with a group from the West known as Norway. A cemetery was dedicated in the Elliot Township and burials had begun to be made in it by 1885. After much consideration and many special meetings in an attempt to select a spot for a centrally located church, they agreed to become East Trinity and West Trinity with each establishing its preaching place, but using the same grave place, having the same pastor and belonging to the same Synod. Thus, they would be a congregation with two churches, like the old Lisbon congregation in Illinois as a model.

This was an age where there were many small farms, thanks to the Homestead Act. People who settled to get 160 acres, a fourth of a square mile, so there was often a family on every quarter. Travel was by foot, by horse or horse drawn wagons. So the establishment of churches every 4 to 7 miles was almost a necessity. Automobiles did not start to be mass produced until the 1890's and were not commonly owned till the middle of the next century.

In 1912 discussions were held about constructing one church. Instead, both churches dug basements. On April 6, 1917, US declared war on Germany and so several young men from the community served the USA in the military. It was recorded that the flu epidemic hit the community in 1918 when 14 funerals were held in the Trinity church congregation.

WORKING TOGETHER OVER THE YEARS

In 1920 Rev. Nels Klungtvedt became pastor serving Salem, Immanuel, Victor, East and West Trinity congregations until 1923. During the 20s years, two-thirds of the worship services were conducted in English and one-third were in Norwegian.

In 1924 the West Trinity congregation moved their church building south one mile into the town of Storla and renamed it Storla Lutheran Church. Two weeks later, on June 14, 1924 a wind storm blew down both the Storla and Trinity Church buildings.

The Ladies Aid Society of West Trinity had purchased the former creamery building in 1916 for \$995. The former creamery building now called "Storla Hall" provided a place for worship and Sunday School during this relocation time for West Trinity. Since East Trinity Church was destroyed in the same June windstorm, both groups met together for Sunday School and worship at the Storla Hall. It was agreed upon to rebuild one church building, but the churches failed to specify where they would build. In time both churches were rebuilt.

During the Forties, the economic conditions improved but war clouds of World Wars II overshadowed these better times. The congregation shared the concern of each family involved supporting them with love and prayers, as the sons were called to serve in the US military. In 1944 Storla and Trinity agreed to join together as a parish under Rev. Otis M. Knudson.

SYNOD AFFILIATIONS

In 1946, the church at large voted to change its name from Norwegian Lutheran Church to Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1960 three Lutheran

Synods united to form the American Lutheran Church. In 1987 three synods joined to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS

In the Early 50's we had several members who served in the Korean War. In the '60's, the quiet, rural lifestyle was upset when the Vietnam War created unrest especially for young people of military service age. The Persian Gulf War (1990–1991) and the military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and other hot spots following the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001 has continued to keep our thoughts and prayers with our service men and women. There has been a long standing tradition for Memorial Day Observances at the Trinity Lutheran Cemetery following the Sunday Worship Service.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Over the years the ministry of the Women organization has been known by many names, the most enduring name is the Ladies Aid. They have also been known as the Trinity Charity Circle (TCC) , Women's Missionary Federation (WMF), American Lutheran Church Women (ALCW) and The Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, (WECLCA).

The Ladies Aid was organized by 6 women and 4 men at a meeting on March 15, 1888. Those present included: Ella Thorson Christopher, Caroline Sofia Vigness Hjelm, Karen Varland Hovda, Tomine Serine Rosso, Lena Nygaard Selland, and Anna Tjelle Selland Thompson. Also present were O. L. Hovda, P.M. Hjelm, and Jens Christopher who led devotions. Halvor Worra stopped by toward the end of the meeting and presented the group with a fifty cent piece, the first and only money in the treasury that day.

The ladies decided to make use of their spinning wheels and local sheep. Each woman was asked to bring a ball of homemade yarn at each meeting. They used the fifty cent piece to buy fabric to sew clothing to raise money for church work. A few balls of yarn, a fifty cent piece, buttressed by faith and vision helped the ladies aid to provide support for a parochial school. Jens Christopher was hired to teach for \$15.00.

When the construction of a church building began to be voiced, the Ladies Aid set aside part of its earnings for the building fund. When the congregation built two buildings the aid also divided, so that the work of their congregations could be properly attended to. Travel concerns were a big part of the decision to divide.

The Ladies aid sponsored bazaars and lutefisk suppers, hosted social events like the Fourth of July picnic, ice cream socials, and oyster suppers. When the Church was rebuilt in 1925 they gave \$500 toward new furniture. In 1930 they fed approximately 1000 people at their Lutefisk supper. In 1931 the proceeds of the Oyster supper paid the congregations light and coal bills. That same year, the ladies put in \$400 to have a floor put in the basement and the basement walls plastered.

In 1943 a tradition of Birthday Suppers were begun. Twelve tables were decorated and each had an offering bank. The money raised went to Sunday School and Parochial School (VBS) expenses.

Throughout the years the women also continued to support the work of missionaries abroad. The 75th anniversary book of the aid reported that it had raised and given away nearly \$37,000. The work of the women of the ELCA has continued to this day, providing for the equipment of the kitchen, and supporting both ELCA and local mission projects.

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

A couples club was started around 1962. It provided a time for fellowship and study and included members from both Trinity and Storla. There were a number of young people's organizations, The Gleaners was a young women's organization. The Luther League was organized in 1925 as a youth group. Later it was reorganized resulting in a parish Family Night with separate monthly meetings for the Family and Youth. LDR, Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation, was organized for the girls in the congregation. Later it was reorganized to include boys under the new name, Junior Mission Society.

A MUSICAL TRADITION

At one time the Storla Men's Chorus included several men from Trinity including Obie and Bruce Benson, Parnell Brewick, Jesse Johnson and Millard Christopher, Nancy Sonne represented Trinity in The Crossroads

singers. On November 29, 1964 the organ was dedicated with a special concert. Other members like Ernie Mathis and Ted and Pat Nelson provided solos and duets over the years.

Richard Christopher has been the organist at Trinity for over 60 years, leading us through liturgy and hymn singing along with providing concert quality musical offerings. When Richard was working in Washington D.C., Christopher (Chris) Sonne, a Letcher High School Student filled in on the organ.

A HERITAGE

Trinity celebrated its hundredth anniversary in June of 1982, and its 125th anniversary Memorial Day Weekend of 2007. They enjoyed the return of many former pastors, members and friends.

Although the congregation is closing, it will leave a lasting impact on the neighborhood of Elliot Township, the parish partners and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Ten sons and daughters of the parish have served the church in a formal capacity. Many more have served on church councils, Sunday schools, as Luther league advisors and on synod committees both at Trinity and in other congregations. Seeds have been planted and the harvest will be left to others.

JUST SOME OF THE MISSIONS SUPPORTED OVER THE YEARS

A strong history of mission support was nurtured by Trinity and Storla. Some of the Lutheran charities supported by Trinity and its auxiliary organizations included: Lutheran Vespers, Lutheran Welfare Society, Lutheran Social Services, Seminary Tuition, The Zion Society for Israel, Navajo Lutheran Mission, Cameroon Roof Project, ELCA Hunger Appeal, Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Pilots and Missionaries, and Lutherans Outdoors. In 2008 Trinity was a recipient of the Holy Cow Leadership in giving award from the SD Synod Hunger Task Force. The Sunday School also supported a missionary to Madagascar.

Other ministries included Food Pantries in Sanborn, Aurora, Davison and Jerauld Counties, Mitchell Area Safe House, Abbot House, Salvation Army and the Letcher Community Vacation Bible School, Military Bible Sticks, Special Needs of the Veteran's Home in Hot Springs, and care packages to active service men.

THE PASTORS WHO HAVE LED TRINITY IN ITS 133 YEARS

▪ Rev. Ole Tjomsland	1882-1884
▪ Rev. C.K. Larsen-Helland	1894-1893
▪ Rev. Halvor Thormodsgard	1893-1904
▪ Rev. Adolph Egge	1906-1915
▪ Rev. Torger Thompson	1916-1920
▪ Rev. Nils Klungtevt	1920-1923
▪ Rev. Albert Molberg	1924-1925
▪ Rev. E.G. Burtness	1927-1933
▪ Rev. Iver G. Hasted	1933-1938
▪ Rev. Otis M. Knudson	1939-1957
▪ Rev. Harold Peterson	1957-1962
▪ Rev. Bennert O. Solberg	1963-1968
▪ Rev. A.B. Heltne	1969-1978
▪ Rev. Neale Thompson	1978-1985
▪ Rev. Richard Steffen	1985-1989
▪ Rev. Howard Stockman	1989-1998
▪ Rev. Don Torala	1999-2006
▪ Rev. Mindy Ehrke	2007-Closing



SONS AND DAUGHTER OF TRINITY WHO ENTERED MINISTRY

▪ Rev. CCA Jensen	Ordained 1909	(Died 1975)
▪ Rev. Jesse Runestad	Ordained 1919	(Died 1954)
▪ Rev. Mandus Egge	Ordained 1935	(Died 1993)
▪ Rev. Alden Hovda	Ordained 1950	
▪ Rev. Dwane Shay	Ordained 1954	(Died 2010)
▪ Rev. John Knudson	Ordained 1958	
▪ Rev. Burdell Digerness	Ordained 1959	(Died 2013)
▪ Mata Flagel Carlson	Parish Worker	1964
▪ Rev. Raymond Holter	Ordained 1965	
▪ Rev. Paul Knudson	Ordained 1968	