

A H I S T O R Y O F
N O R T H N E W H O P E L U T H E R A N C H U R C H

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THE BEGINNING

The New Hope Township was organized November 11, 1856 by settlers who arrived in the early years of the 1850's. Especially during the years 1853 and 1854 many Scandinavians immigrated and settled here. The first white child born in our community was a daughter, Grete, born September 8, 1854, to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kjaer.

The early settlers, who were concerned about their spiritual welfare, wanted to hear the preaching of God's Word and to have the Holy Sacraments administered. They became members of the Scandinavia congregation which had been organized and had its own pastor, the Reverend Olaus Fredrik Duus. He officiated at his first wedding in the township when Gunder O. Wimme and Bertha Helene Rambeck were married in the newly erected cabin on the groom's farm, two miles north of Nelsonville, December 13, 1856.

Because the long journey over poor roads, with slow oxen, often kept people from the house of God, the early settlers called a meeting to organize their own congregation. The meeting was held October 15, 1857 at the home of Hans Pederson Kankrud and the New Hope Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Portage County, Wisconsin, was incorporated. The incorporation document was completed the same day and was notarized by Justice of the Peace Ole O. Wogslund. Pastor Olaus F. Duus and Gunder O. Wimme were elected as incorporators. For the Board of Trustees the following were elected: Ole Olson Wrolstad, Hellig Foss, Hans Olson Rambeck, and Amund Holtehaugen.

During its first years, the congregation held its services at the homes of its members and did not have its own pastor. Pastor Duus left Scandinavia a year after the New Hope congregation was formed. Pastor Nils Olsen Brandt, pastor at Rock River near Oconomowoc, is considered to be New Hope's next pastor. Though his visits were rare events, people walked for miles to be present at his meetings. The congregation was then served by Amund Mikkelsen, pastor at Scandinavia from 1863 to 1874.

In 1870, N. B. Berge came as an assistant pastor in the Scandinavia-New Hope parish. The next year he moved to New Hope to become the congregation's first resident pastor. A parsonage was built about this time on Minister Lake. Pastor Berge's regular salary was set at \$380, though, as was customary at the time, he also received special offerings and gifts.

The congregation grew rapidly in its early years. Immigration from Norway was the main factor in increasing New Hope's population in the 1850's and 1860's. Though immigration continued into the 1870's and 1880's, by that time the greatest increase came from growing families. In 1880 the membership of New Hope Lutheran Church was approximately 1200, making it second in size only to the Scandinavia Church of all Norwegian Lutheran congregations in America.

A CHURCH IS BUILT

On November 9, 1863, the congregation met at Ole G. Saerkeland's home and voted to build a church. The first building committee, Nils Stianson and Christian Johanson, was chosen. A new committee was chosen December 28, consisting of Nils Stianson and Peter Kjaer. Ole O. Wrolstad became a member of the committee some time later. Construction began in 1864 on the ground where our cemetery now is located.

The new church had been used for several years before it was dedicated, November 1, 1874. The dedication service was opened with prayer by Rev. Berge. Pastor Even Johnson Homme of Winchester, who later founded the Hoame Home in Wittenberg, gave the Festival Sermon. Pastor Mikkelsen gave the Dedication Address. Pastor Kittil Olson Eidahl of Wautoma, who would become New Hope's next pastor, gave the closing prayer.

In 1901 the congregation decided to move the church to its present location and use its former site as a cemetery. Hans P. Johnson, O. G. Faldet and Gunder O. Winne were selected as a committee in charge of the moving. Gudbrand J. Reton, Ole C. Faldet and Peter Brubakken were put in charge of repairing and redecorating. In 1913 a basement was added at a cost of \$1769.42, with some labor being donated. J. M. Rambeck, L. F. Peterson, O. C. Faldet, M. K. Hanson and Carl Anderson were in charge of these plans.

A description of the church, before and after remodeling, was written by Mrs. Inez Hanson for the pictorial history in the back of our sanctuary.

"The church had two left galleries, one in each end. Stairways led to them, in the front hall and in the sacristy. The latter was a room the entire width of the church, which the stairway partially divided. One end of this room served as the minister's study, while the north end contained benches and was used for confirmation instruction and also by mothers and little children during the services.

"There was a wood-burning heater and a short stairway leading to the pulpit, which was in the center of the church, directly below the Altar Picture. The first

Altar Picture was of a flying dove and beneath was the following inscription in Norwegian: "If anyone wants to do God's will he should determine whether the teachings are from God or merely my own." "Dersom nogen vil gjøre Gud's vilje han skal kjende om laerdommen er av Gud eller om jeg taler av mig selv."

"After the church was redecorated the Altar Picture was of "The Ascension" and the arched ceiling was painted a heavenly blue with golden stars.

"There were two doors leading into the sacristy, one on each side of the altar. The one on the left (at which side the Baptismal Font stood) bore this inscription in Norwegian: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not will be condemned." "Hve som trer og bliver døbt skal blive Salig mon hve som ikke trer skal Førdomnes."

The door to the right of the altar had this inscription above it: "Hve som aeder mit kjød og drikker mit blod, han bliver i mig og jeg i ham." "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him." This side contained the Pipe organ and choir pews, a short one in front being occupied by the customary "Klekker" or deacon. The left side also had some pews, tradition being the short one in front was for the pastor's wife."

NEW CONGREGATIONS ARE STARTED

Five new congregations were founded by the pastor or by members of New Hope in a period of thirty years.

In the early 1870's Pastor Berge held services occasionally in the Alban Township. In 1878 the Alban Lutheran Church was formed. Alban remained in the same parish with New Hope until 1920.

In 1880 settlers in Hayti, South Dakota, joined together to establish a church. Some of these settlers had moved to South Dakota from New Hope. One of these, Mrs. Hans Halvorson Dokka, suggested the name which was chosen for the new congregation, New Hope Lutheran Church.

In December of 1887 the Nelsonville Lutheran Church was organized by members and the pastor of New Hope. The Nelsonville Church remained in the parish until Pastor Eidahl left in 1904. At that time the congregations could not agree on who should be the next pastor, so Nelsonville joined another parish.

In 1888 the New Hope congregation split into two groups, both of which claimed to be the genuine Lutheran Church in New Hope. The majority retained control of the church building and property, and later became known as North New Hope Lutheran Church. The minority built a new church a few miles to the

south, which eventually became known as South New Hope Lutheran Church. Later, from 1927 until 1961, North and South New Hope Lutheran Churches were served by the same pastor.

In 1890 pledges for seven hundred dollars were obtained, mostly from New Hope members, to build a church in Northland. Pastor Eidahl strongly opposed this plan, so it was dropped. In 1904 the Northland people tried again, but New Hope's Pastor Farseth opposed them. The Northland congregation was finally organized in 1907. Pastor Farseth accepted the call to be Northland's first pastor. This arrangement lasted less than a year, and in 1909 Northland joined with Hitterdal in calling a pastor.

THE NEW CHURCH

On Sunday morning, September 21, 1924, the New Hope Church was struck by lightning and totally destroyed. Services that day were held out of doors, near the smoldering ruins, where the Rev. O. O. Sovde spoke to a sorrowing congregation which mourned the loss of its sixty-year-old beloved church.

The congregation met at the South New Hope Church on October 24, 1924 and decided to erect a new church building on the same site. A committee to supervise the building was selected. The committee consisted of L. F. Peterson, Theodor Thorstenson and P. J. Hanson. Later the members of the Board of Trustees were also asked to act on the committee. During the period of building, services were held at the South New Hope Church through the courtesy of that congregation.

The cornerstone of the church was laid May 10, 1925 by the Rev. Thormod Severin Kolste, pastor of Hitterdal and Northland. The cornerstone contains the following objects: one copy of Sverdrup's Explanation, Sverdrup's Catechism and Landstad's Hymnary, a short history of the congregation prepared by Carl Anderston and E. C. Faldet, recent copies of Skandinaven, Lutheraneren, For Gammel og Ung, Stevens Point Daily Journal, and the Iola Herald, a 1911 nickel from E. C. Faldet, a 1917 nickel from John Larson, a 1920 nickel from Carl J. Anderson, a 1919 nickel from G. Johnson, and a 1924 dime from P. J. Hanson.

The Scandinavia Circuit, now known as the Central Wisconsin Circuit, held its spring meeting in the church from April 30 to May 2, 1926. And on May 2, 1926, the new church was dedicated by the President of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the Reverend Johan Arnd Aasgaard, who gave the dedication sermon and officiated at the ceremony of dedication. Pastor Harald Olav Bach of Wautoma led in the opening prayer and New Hope's Pastor Swenson led the liturgy and had the closing prayer. Pastor Jens Mathieson of Iola gave an address.

RECENT HISTORY

On November 1, 1945, lightning struck the parsonage and it burned to the ground. All the Ministerial Records of the church were destroyed, and the pastor lost nearly all his possessions. A year later a house was bought in Iola, which was used as a parsonage for thirteen years.

In his last few years as pastor of New Hope, the Rev. Olaf Olsen also served as interim pastor of the Rosholt-Alban-Galloway parish. When he retired in 1958 not long after the death of his wife Mathilda, Rev. Olsen purchased New Hope's Iola parsonage. The two parishes he had been serving then joined together in calling a pastor, the Rev. Vern Holtan. In 1961 Rosholt, Alban, and Galloway joined together to form Faith Lutheran Church. Because of agitation for a two point rather than a three point parish, services at South New Hope were discontinued in a manner that many thought was unfair. This was a cause for sorrow at North New Hope. Many remembered with gratitude the generosity of the South New Hope congregation in letting North New Hope use their building after the 1924 fire had destroyed their own church. A few South New Hope families joined North New Hope, but the majority joined the Nelsonville-Amherst parish.

New constitutions for the congregation were adopted in both 1949 and in 1967.

In 1906 the New Hope pastor was criticized for mixing English words in with his Norwegian. When J. F. Swenson was pastor the congregation started holding English services once a month. In 1946 the congregation voted to hold three services in English for every one in Norwegian. The last Norwegian service was held in 1970 by Pastor John Wogsland.

The Service Book and Hymnal ("The Red Book") was adopted around 1960. Seminarian Robert Bradley, serving during Pastor Holtan's summer vacation, introduced the new liturgy in the parish. A new liturgy was again introduced in 1978 with the Lutheran Book of Worship ("The Green Book"). Hymnals were purchased with memorial funds and donations to the hymn fund in memory of loved ones.

Since 1962, the first Sunday of each month has been designated for a communion service. For several years, members of the council assisted at communion. At present, one layman assists the pastor in serving the elements. Two women prepare the trays and care for the various communion materials each time communion is held.

A children's sermon was first used in 1973 by Pastor Dockter, but this was not a regular part of the service until 1982. For several years, until about 1962, a children's choir sang once a month at Sunday services. A ladies chorus