

# Alban Church History

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A little more than seventy-five years ago, on a Tuesday, the 30th day of April in 1878 an important meeting was held at the home of Anders J. Oas, who lived on a farm a short distance north of the Alban cross roads. The purpose of the meeting was to organize a Lutheran congregation. We do not know how many or the names of all who were present, but we do know that by-laws were drawn up and approved by those who attended the meeting.

A committee of three, namely Ole P. Olson, Ole J. Oas, and Ole A. Brekke, was elected to confer with the New Hope congregation regarding the establishment of a separate congregation in Alban. Up to that time people of Lutheran faith living in the Alban township attended the New Hope Lutheran Church now and then, but in the days of horse drawn vehicles the distance was considered too great for regular attendance.

At this first meeting a name for the new congregation was chosen. As potential members were mostly Norwegians and Danes a motion carried to name it "Den Norsk-Danske Evangelisk Lutherske Menighed i Alban." This was less than four weeks after the organization of the township, which made it possible for the new congregaton to call itself "of Alban" instead of "of New Hope".

A two acre lot for a church and cemetery was purchased from Anders J. Oas for \$5.00, and with that this first meeting was concluded.

A later meeting was held October 19th the same year in a school house in Alban. At this meeting it was decided to build a church as soon as circumstances would permit. Its dimensions were to be 50 feet long, 36 feet wide and 20 feet high, with a tower and steeple to conform to the size of the church.

At this meeting a motion carried to erect a board fence on three sides of the cemetery. Andrew A. Brekke, Anders J. Oas and Peder O. Dobbe volunteered to furnish 30 tamarack posts each. Jens Rasmussen, Jens P. Hanson, Ole A. Brekke and Thomas Lystul volunteered to furnish the necessary boards and nails. Ole J. Oas and Jens Haroldson were to build the fence as soon as possible the following spring.

The congregation was not yet legally incorporated. According to the by-laws of the constitution the annual meetings were to be held on the second Wednesday in December. The first of these meetings fell on December 11, 1878, and was held in the school house. At this meeting the congregation was legally incorporated, and the following trustees were elected: Ole J. Oas, Anders J. Oas, Jens Rasmussen and Ole P. O. Lindland. The records of this meeting were duly sworn and notar-

ized by Ole J. Oas and Jens Rasmussen. The document was certified December 17, 1878 by Andrew Brekke as the town justice of the peace and town chairman.

Ole J. Oas became the first president of the congregation, and Andrew J. Oas the first secretary. Ole P. O. Lindland and Jens Rasmussen, solicitors.

The pastor who served the New Hope and Nelsonville congregations was also to serve the new congregation in Alban. His name was Rev. N. B. Berge. He was born in Sogn, Norway, and died in New Hope May 5, 1883.

The pastor's salary was to be raised by means of voluntary subscriptions and it is recorded that he was to be satisfied with whatever sum raised in this manner. Apparently this was in accordance with his own suggestion.



1878 Rev. N. B. Berge 1883

At this first annual meeting a building committee consisting of five men was elected. The members of the committee were Andrew A. Brekke, Knut Erickson, Olve Engebretson, Jens Rasmussen and Ole A. Brekke. Several plans for a church were drawn up which, however, were not within the means of the congregation. Rev. Berge submitted one that was accepted, and he was paid \$5.00 for his architectural efforts.

Now, of course, when a church is to be built materials are necessary and the people were poor. The problem was met in part by voluntary donations of lumber, shingles, nails and spikes. Rev. Berge gave \$5.00 and Andrew Brekke was to furnish a long iron rod which was considered necessary in the building.

Much of the work was donated. Ole P. O. Lindland, Andrew Brekke and Jens Haroldson were among those who did a large share of free work. There were many others who gave time and effort to the construction of the church. Otto Halversen built the pulpit and altar on his own turning lathe for a consideration. He also built the gallery in 1888, including the railing, stairway, benches, in fact, the entire gallery for \$40.00.

Before the building of the church was well under way it was decided to add a small building to the original plan. This was to be 12 feet long, 14 feet wide and 8 feet high.

It is interesting to note from later meetings who the early officers were from time to time, how step by step the church was built, what donations were made, what free labor was given, how much money was raised annually for current expenses beginning with \$40.00 in 1879, what work was put on the cemetery and their rules regarding graves, etc., but space will not permit. In 1880 it seems the pastor's salary was set at \$60.00 annually.

Meetings during the first few years were held in the school

house. The first record of a meeting in church was July 21, 1882, and at that time the building was not completed, as the meeting was called for the purpose of deciding on siding and painting the outside of it. Olve Engebretson contracted to do that work for \$75.00.

As already stated Rev. Berge died in 1883, and Rev. K. O. Eidahl was called to serve New Hope, Alban and perhaps the Nelsonville congregation. The parsonage was located in New Hope.

In 1884 a movement was beginning to develop for a split within the Norwegian synod over certain doctrinal matters. The fight against one viewpoint was led by Rev. Eidahl and his influence on members of the congregation was noticeable, because when a vote was taken in 1887 17 members voted for a split with the Norwegian synod and 3 against. At that time the issues had become so involved in deep theory and metaphysics that few in the congregation knew what the difference was between the two sides, but the feeling was intense on both sides. One side emphasized the subjective interpretation of the doctrine on election, and the other side stressed the objective interpretation. A balanced stress on both is wholesome.

Those who withdrew from the Alban congregaton and remained in the Norwegian Synod built a church on what was once a corner on Highway 49, a few feet northwest of Melvin Nottleson's house. Rev. O. K. Ramberg became their first pastor.

The first confirmation in Alban was held in the year 1885. The following were members of that confirmation class: Soren Julius Anderson, Ole Haroldson, Peder O. Brekke, Knut Stenson, Dina O. Oas, Laurine Marie Gilbert, Andrea Theresia Ingebretson. Maren Andrea Halvorson.

The church was dedicated June 14, 1891. Two pastors were present in addition to Rev. Eidahl. They were Rev. Gjevre and Rev. Sovde. The circuit meeting was held in Alban the same day.

We first hear of the women taking an active part in church doings in the year 1887. The church at that time was not adequately equipped, and the women in the congregation felt they should do something about this. They got together and organized a Ladies' Aid for the purpose of purchasing church equipment and to help with mission work. The first meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Kristian Gilbert, who lived in the house now occupied by the Frank Knitter family. Her husband conducted a store and was the Alban postmaster.

The Ladies' Aid meetings in the early days differed in some respects from our present meetings. The pastor could be present only occasionally, but they had their short devotions. The Norwegian language was spoken exclusively at the meetings held in the various homes, even as the sermons in church were always preached in Norwegian, with the exception of a few short sermons in German for a while. Elaborate lunches were served at the table. Most of the ladies walked to the meetings—sometimes a couple of miles or more.

We know that these early women were successful in accomplishing some of their goals. For instance, in 1892 they purchased the altar painting. They also bought the baptismal

font and the first chandeliers in which kerosene lamps were used.

There was no bell in the church until 1892. Then a bell had been purchased from a bell foundry company in St. Louis, and was received by Rev. K. O. Eidahl March 10, 1892. It cost \$181.44, including freight. There is no record of the date it was installed in the church tower. On the bell are the name of the makers, the Hy. Stuckstede B. F. Co., St. Louis, Mo., the name of the congregation and its location, the date of incorporation, the name of the pastor in that year and these words "Jeg Kalder til Herrens Hus og Fred", "I call to God's House and Peace" and "Blessed are they who hear God's Word and keep it."—Luke 11:28.

In the early days Ole J. Oas acted as "klokker" or song leader. Later his son, John O. Oas, functioned as such. Mrs. John Oas became the first organist.

The church celebrated its 25th anniversary April 30, 1903. Pastor Eidahl was to call one or more guest speakers. Pastor P. J. Bugge was the guest speaker, and he preached in the forenoon. Pastor Eidahl spoke in German and Norwegian in the afternoon.

Rev. K. O. Eidahl's resignation was accepted April 25, 1904, and a joint letter signed by the trustees of New Hope and Alban was sent to Rev. O. C. Farseth of Wittenberg Oct. 4, 1904, calling him to serve these two congregations. Nelsonville had now separated from the parish.

We were still in the days of horsedrawn vehicles and some Lutherans and members of our church lived in the vicinity of Galloway. To them the distance to church was a problem. Rev. Farseth felt that no one should be deprived of hearing the Word of God because of the distance to church, and he began conducting services in the school house at Galloway. The outcome of this was that a congregation was organized at Galloway. He also conducted services in the Loberg school house in Harrison for the benefit of members of our church living in that township and a considerable distance from church.

During the time Rev. Farseth served our congregation the Northland congregation was organized, and some of our members became part of that congregation. However those who lived farthest north and northeast from the place selected for the Northland Church felt their distance problem would not be solved by joining the Northland congregation and so preferred to remain in the Alban congregation. It was for their benefit the Chapel was built. Services were held there for a time, but when automobiles came into general use that was discontinued. The Chapel is still used as a meeting place for the East Alban Ladies' Aid.

During the time that Rev. Farseth was our pastor some changes were made in the construction of the Alban Church. A concrete foundation was built under it and the small addition on the west side of the church was torn down and a 20x32 addition was erected in its place. A furnace room was constructed under the church and a furnace was installed. The chancel was also changed somewhat.

Because of these changes the church was rededicated in June 26, 1910, and documents placed in the cornerstone.

Rev. Farseth resigned in the summer of 1910 because of failing health, and his resignation was reluctantly accepted Aug. 10, 1910. The next pastor to serve the parish was Rev. L. L. Masted. He began his work the latter part of 1910. Rev. Masted resigned the latter part of the year 1916. At a special meeting in November 1916 the majority voted to retain him, but he was unwilling to recall his resignation, and so it was accepted. He continued to serve until the early part of 1917, and then Rev. Oakdale served us temporarily until a new pastor could be called. A number of candidates were suggested, but finally Rev. Kile was called and became our pastor in 1917. He remained with us until in October 1919, when he resigned and Rev. Kolste of Northland was elected to serve the Alban congregation temporarily.

At this time the question came up whether the Alban congregation should remain with the New Hope parish or join with the Rosholt congregation. A meeting was called and members of both Alban and New Hope were present and all were given voting rights. Rev. G. A. Peterson, the Rosholt pastor, had been invited to be present, and he was elected to conduct the meeting. A committee was elected to confer with the New Hope congregation in regard to this matter. The meeting was not concluded but was to be continued April 20, 1920. At that time a plan had been drawn up for severing connection with New Hope and to form a parish consisting of Rosholt, Aban, Elderon and Galloway. Rev. G. A. Peterson, who served Rosholt, was to be the pastor in the new parish. The plan was adopted July 8, 1920.

Rev. Peterson resigned in February 1922, but at a special meeting February 14th, his resignation was not accepted. He resigned again in 1923.

Rev. W. A. Johnson was called to serve the four congregations in the Rosholt parish in 1924.

For some time money had been collected for a pipe organ and in 1924 the organ we now have was installed.

A need was felt for a meeting place for the Young People's Society, and the Ladies Aid, and for informal doings. There was considerable discussion regarding purchasing the corner store then owned by Thor Stenson for a recreation hall but this idea was rejected, and instead it was decided to build a basement under the church. That was done in 1924.

The Norwegian language had been used almost exclusively in the Alban Church until 1927, but then at the annual meeting three English services during the year were authorized. As time went on more and more English was used until at the present time practically no services are conducted in Norwegian.

In 1928 the church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

A special meeting of the Boards of Trustees of all the congregations served by Rev. W. A. Johnson met in the Concordia Lutheran Church at Rosholt on emergency call on April 5, 1946. Martin Wolding was elected chairman of the meeting and Elvin Madson secretary. Rev. Johnson explained that his health had failed completely, and that he was compelled to resign. He had served the congregations for twenty-two years, during which time he had made many friends. It was therefore with considerable regret that his resignation was accepted.

Arrangements were now made whereby Elderon would be served by Wittenberg, and so would no longer be a part of the Rosholt parish.

A special meeting of the Alban congregation was held in the church basement Oct. 17, 1946, for the purpose of acting on the call committee's recommendation to call Rev. W. L. Anderson of Prairie Farm, Wisconsin to serve our congregation. A motion carried to call Rev. Anderson. He accepted the call and was installed as pastor in all three churches in the parish by the district President, Dr. Martin Anderson, on February 2nd, 1947.

A cemetery association was organized in 1948. Also a parcel of land was purchased from Fred Brekke for a parking lot for automobiles. Hearing aids have also been installed in the church. A well was drilled and the kitchen has been equipped with two electric stoves and more sinks. A new furnace, fuel bin and chimney were acquired in 1951. This year a bulletin board, a lectern, a missal stand and altar book, and vases have been given in memory of departed members.