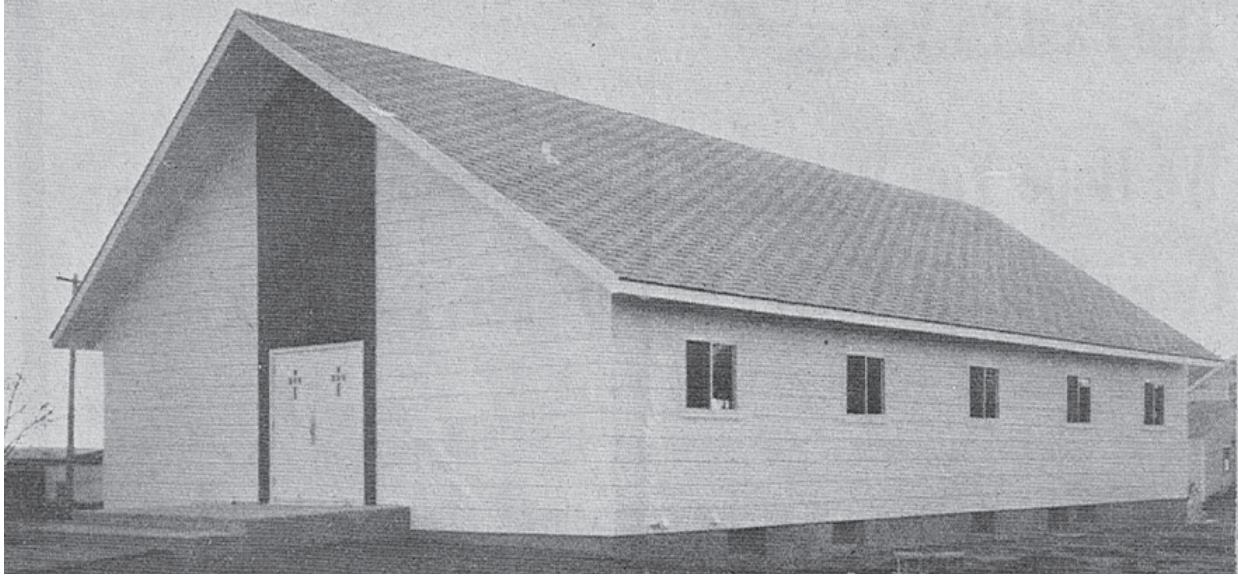


Hope Lutheran Brethren Church Celebrates 50 Years



This was the first structure that Barnesville Lutheran Brethren Church called home. It was completed in 1972. In later years the congregation added on a new sanctuary and foyer as well as adding to the basement. The church stands on the corner of Fifth Street and Ninth Avenue in Barnesville.

By: Karen Carpenter

When one speaks of their heritage it brings out a strong sense of pride. Hope Lutheran Brethren Church in Barnesville is honoring and preserving their heritage. They have pride in all they have accomplished.

To celebrate their 50 year heritage in Barnesville they will have a weekend of festivities Saturday, July 25, and Sunday, July 26, 2020.

While celebrating the past, the congregation continues to search for ways to make their church body strong and vibrant in the future.

Marlys Winkels is the chairperson of Hope's 50th anniversary celebration committee. The theme for the anniversary is "How Great Thou Art." The times and details are still in the works.

"Save-the-date notices are being sent out soon and more details will be published as we go along," said Winkels.

Plans for the weekend include a meet and greet hour in the late afternoon on Saturday followed by a catered meal for anyone who wants to attend.

"After the meal there will be testimonies, memories and greetings from former pastors and visiting people," said Winkels. "Sunday morning will be a celebration of music. Pastor Paul Larson, the president of the Lutheran Brethren Synod, will be our guest preacher."

Sunday service will be held followed by a potluck and a celebration on the lawn with games and informal fellowship.

It was in the late 1960s that some local people felt led by God to bring a new worship opportunity to Barnesville. A group of young families from the area had found what they needed spiritually at Bethel Lutheran Brethren Church in Fergus Falls.

They attended Sunday morning worship and Sunday School. But, because of the travel distance, were not able to attend any other weekly church meetings.

"We did have a neighborhood Bible study that met in the homes mid-week," wrote Darlene Johnson in her written spiritual testimony.

Norris and Darlene Johnson were among a group of young farm families that desired a Lutheran Brethren church closer to home.

They wanted to start a Lutheran Brethren Church that was Bible-centered, gospel-focused and dedicated to evangelism and support of foreign missions.

The Johnsons owned and operated a farm nine miles southeast of Barnesville.

Norris contacted the Lutheran Brethren Synod in Fergus Falls about starting a new church in the vicinity.

Pastors Omar Gjerness, the

district president, and Harland Helland, home mission director for Lutheran Brethren, were willing to help.

The choices for the new church plant were either in Pelican Rapids or Barnesville. Since most of the children of these families attended school in Barnesville, that was the preferred choice.

In 1969, there were some meetings in homes to discuss plans for a church. The name Barnesville Lutheran Brethren Church was chosen. A constitution was drawn up and order of worship was discussed.

"In January of 1970, we held a week of meetings in the Barnesville Elementary School," wrote Darlene. "In February we started meeting in the Barnesville City Hall for Sunday School, morning and Sunday evening worship services. Home Bible studies were still held during the week."

For those who don't remember, in 1970, the City Hall was located in the upstairs of what is now the police station. The space worked for services, but members had to climb the long flight of stairs to attend.

On Saturday nights, bingo and sometimes dances were held in City Hall. This meant that on Sunday morning before service members had to sweep and clean up the hall from the previous nights revelry.

"There was a lot of smoking so the place smelled terrible," reads Darlene's testimony. "We had to clean the City Hall up and set up chairs."

The first official business meeting was held April 13, 1970. Elected Elders were Alan Malingen and Norris Johnson; trustees were Alan Malingen, Curtis Holt and Norris Johnson; chairman Curtis Holt; secretary, Darlene Johnson; Sunday School superintendent, Mavis Holt; auditors, Norris Johnson and Ramona Malingen; head usher, Alan Malingen, nominating committee,



Hope Lutheran Brethren Church has gone through many changes in the past 50 years. They started out as Barnesville Lutheran Brethren Church and later dropped Barnesville and became Hope. The church building has been added to and remodeled several times. The numbers of the congregation fluctuate but the members continue to reach out to offer the words of hope and salvation to Barnesville and the surrounding community.

Alan Malingen, Mavis Holt and Darlene Johnson. The pianist was Darlene Johnson and minister of music, Ramona Malingen.

Pastor Dave Langager served the newly formed Barnesville Lutheran Brethren congregation from February through May of 1970.

Pastor Bill Colbeck pastored the fledgling church during that summer. He was principal of Hillcrest Lutheran Academy in Fergus Falls at the time.

Pastor Lester Erickson began his eight-year tenure with the tiny congregation in September 1970.

Having a pastor meant that the congregation had to find a place for him and his wife to live. There weren't many apartments in Barnesville at the time and houses for rent were hard to find.

They finally found a small house and cleaned it up and painted it for the Erickson family.

"Some people in town thought we were a cult," wrote Darlene.

A local banker was impressed and said that if a church could be started with only three families, they should have the opportunity to construct a church building.

"Even though we started with three families, several other people supported us and came quite often to worship," wrote Darlene. "The home Bible study group were among the supporters."

On November 24, 1970, a motion was made to purchase lots for building a church. The church held their first meeting of incorporation on January 12, 1971.

In June 1971, Barnesville Lutheran Brethren Church was accepted as a member congregation of Fergus Falls-based Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

Conditions with the City Hall became tiresome, so the small congregation hired a contractor. Volunteers from the church worked alongside the one hired contractor to complete the building.

Construction of Barnesville Lutheran Brethren began at its present location on the corner of Fifth Street and Ninth Avenue in Barnesville.

"The men did the carpentry and the women did the staining, varnishing and painting," wrote Darlene.

In the fall of 1971, the building was ready and the congregation moved into its new home.

Darlene recorded, "We finished the basement that winter and had our dedication service in March, 1972. We planned for 100 people. We had three large hot dishes, three large salads and buns.

"People came from Triumph Lutheran in Moorhead, Bethel Lutheran in Fergus Falls and Inspiration Lutheran in Breckenridge. Added to that were people from Barnesville, neighbors and friends.

"There were 300 people there but the limited amount of food lasted to the end. That was truly a miracle!"

A parsonage was built in 1973. Before it could be completed, Pastor Lester Erickson and his wife, Mildred, had to move from the rental house, which had been sold.

Members of the church put up a temporary wall in the basement of the church to make an apartment. A bathtub was placed in the ladies' rest room.

The church received many comments in later years about a bathtub in the church. According to Darlene's journal, it remained in the church for many years.

The congregation borrowed \$26,000 for the original church building and \$16,000 for the parsonage.

"After 10 years, we were still a congregation of very few in number," states Darlene's faith testimony. "We made it a commitment to pray for 10 new families in a year and God answered that prayer."

In 1984, the congregation dedicated the new foyer to the church.

The Lutheran Brethren Church built again in 1990, adding a new sanctuary and basement addition. The new portion measured 60 x 60 feet. The basement would house Sunday School rooms and a fellowship hall. Again, this was done mostly by volunteers.

One April 15, 1990, the members of Barnesville LBC held Easter Sunday services for the first time in their new sanctuary.

The new part of the basement was finished and dedicated in 1995 in time for the congregation's silver anniversary.

In 2006 at their annual meeting, a name change was approved. Barnesville Lutheran Brethren became Hope Lutheran Brethren Church.

Hope Lutheran Brethren congregation held another big celebration when they reached their 40th year in 2010. They were 120 members strong by that time.

Serving the congregation was Pastor Rich Iverson. He had been leading the church for 10 years at that time. Iverson has since taken a call to be among the pastoral team at Bethel Lutheran Brethren Church in Fergus Falls.

Members of Hope are proud of the fact that they have been instrumental in leading two men toward a life serving God.

Former members Alan Shaner and Darren Shaw both went on to choose a career as pastors.

The church fosters a strong interest in mission work. They support missionaries Nathan and Carrie Szobody, who serve in the community of Budamassa located in Chad, Africa.

Hope LBC serves its members with family Bible study, held in homes. They have active fellowship and Bible study groups for men and for women.

This fall, Hope LBC began an Awana club for youth. They want to have a place where children can experience God's love.

The governing body of Hope LBC is called Elders. Those serving as Elders are Norris Johnson, Carlton Moe, Eric Swenson, Charlie Winkels, Randy Erickson and Armand Swenson.

Norris and Darlene Johnson are the only remaining charter members who began Barnesville Lutheran Brethren Church 50 years ago.

Serving Hope LBC as their spiritual leader is Pastor Kevin Skaret. He took the call to Hope LBC in 2014. He and his wife, Beth, have three children.

Throughout the past 50 years, which included many changes to the building and to the congregation, the members of Hope Lutheran Brethren Church have persevered. They continue to carry on their mission to bring hope and the good news of salvation to the greater Barnesville Community.

Pastors Who Served Hope Lutheran Brethren Church	
Rev. Lester Erickson	1970-1978
Rev. Marlin Olson	1978-1980
Rev. Jack Storry	1980-1985
Rev. Robert Wallin	1985-1986
Rev. Dennis Dorenkamp	1986-1990
Rev. Gary Nack	1991-1999
Rev. Richard Iverson	2000-2012
Rev. Kevin Skaret	2014-Present



The theme for the 50th anniversary celebration commemorating Hope Lutheran Brethren Church is "How Great Thou Art." The anniversary committee has been busy making plans for Saturday and Sunday, July 25 and 26, 2020. Committee members are, left to right, Carlton Moe, Barb Moe, Penny Wolters, Misy Palmer, Judy Friesen and Marlys Winkels, chairperson.



Before the Barnesville Lutheran Brethren built their permanent church, they met in the upstairs of the old City Hall for worship service and Sunday School. Pastor David Langager is shown preaching the sermon for the fledgling congregation in 1971. By September 1971, the congregation had called their first permanent pastor, Rev. Lester Erickson.