

# HISTORY OF BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH

A century ago, in 1914, a group of Malmö families gathered in homes to worship. Soon the Ladies Aide of Bethesda was formed. This group became the forerunner of our church. The congregation was organized in 1919, holding services twice a month in member's homes and the schoolhouse. The formal organizational meeting of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation was held on January 12, 1920, with Reverend P.O. Hanson presiding.

The Ladies Aide worked diligently on projects to raise funds for a church building. By December 1922, they had \$409.54, which soon grew to \$500.00. During that time, Reverend Gottfred Larson served the church and encouraged them to start building.



A lot was purchased in 1929 from J.P. Carlson and the first Bethesda Lutheran Church was built. The District and Mission Board provided financial assistance, as did friends in the community. All this, with a spirit of working together, helped keep the church debt free. During Reverend Grahn's pastoral, Bethesda became self-supporting. Dr. Emil Severson dedicated Bethesda Lutheran of Malmö on June 21, 1954.

In October 1954, The Board of American Missions sent student Dale Franzen, to serve as our pastor. He also served Zion Lutheran Church in Isle. The strength of the combined congregations enabled us to share a full-time pastor. Sherman Bohn was installed in 1956.

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A new affiliation with Bethesda Lutheran Church and Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Rt. 1, Aitkin, took place in 1962. The two churches were served by college and seminary students. Together they purchased the Clear Lake School in 1967 for a parish house and made an apartment for a pastor. David Everett was the first student pastor to live there. He served the two congregations for three years. Pastor Larry Johnson and Kathy served the joint churches for five years from 1975-1980.

Pastor Glenn Johnson and Karen came next. The membership was growing. Bethesda now had 181 baptized and 149 confirmed members. During this time, Lee Krueger organized a mixed voice choir with Karen Johnson and Audrey Wiebusch accompanying on the organ and piano.

After the Johnson's left in 1988, Pastor Kermit Youngdale became our interim pastor. During this time, ten acres of land were purchased from the Swedberg family. Also that year, an agreement was reached with Bethlehem and Bethesda councils to dissolve the parish agreement. The Clear Lake Parish house was sold and each became independent.

In May 1992, the parsonage and 6.5 acres were purchased for \$60,000 from Elton and Jean Jacobson, giving us a total of 15.25 acres (1.25 acres was sold for the easement to the house that is north and behind the church).

Pastor Paul Mattson and Jill answered our call in 1992 and he became our first full-time minister. Our original church was growing crowded and attendance increased. Pastor Mattson added an informal Saturday evening service that provided song and music, along with the message. A building committee was formed which led to our new brick church next to the parsonage on Highway 47.

The 75th Anniversary of Bethesda was celebrated in July 1995, the same month as the groundbreaking ceremony for the new church. Through the efforts of many members and non-members, donations of money, services and knowledge, the dream became a reality in less than a year. The final service at the original church was held August 14,

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1995 with a solemn, but, joyful procession, walking and singing hymns on their way to the new church. Dedication Sunday, June 16, 1996, was the beginning of a new commitment to further Christ's work in the community. The first new members at the Brick Church in 1996 were Jeannine & Darwin Bruesewitz, Kathy Carlson, Eileen & Harlow Dickinson, Edie & Jack Gorham, Adina Fagerstrom, Jan Phillipp, Peg & Lloyd Schaefer, and Barb & Howard Westerlund.

The church continued to grow with Pastor Paul Mattson and an active congregation. When he left in 1997, Pastor Jorge Soruco joined us. Pastor Robert Klenke serving as interim Pastor before and after Pastor Soruco's time with us.

During those years of growing and changing, we had the privilege to have Pastor Winfield Johnson helping us whenever needed. He retired in 1984 with his wife Marjorie and lived in our area. We have learned from his sermons and he has been a source of comfort and a true inspiration to our congregation.

Pastor Jim and Karen Raisanen joined our church in July 2000. Our church has continued to grow and prosper under their leadership. Bethesda is a busy place with many activities for our members and the community. Our many Bible study groups are well attended, craft groups and quilters, summer veggie stand, Thursday afternoon fun and games day, and much more.

Music has always been Bethesda's special inspiration. Lee Krueger, who was instrumental in the organization of our choir, directed the choir, along with Ingrid Trandahl, who was the organist. Lee also directed the bell choir. Recently Darwin Bruesewitz, with his many talents, has directed the choir and bell choir — also singing many solos. Marlys Beavers is our present organist. As we move into the future, music will continue to be a mainstay of our church.

With many helping hands, friendliness and love, our church has grown and prospered. Our membership has reached almost 400 followers of Jesus. As we burn our mortgage in June of 2014, we pray our eyes are on Jesus — the cornerstone of our church and our lives. May God's guidance continue to lead us.

## NEW GROWTH

In 2006, the church members realized a need for expansion of Bethesda Lutheran Church as many new members had joined recently and many more were attending worship services each week. With this emerging growth came the lack of space in the sanctuary, fellowship hall, office area, nursery, and educational rooms.

An exploratory group visited many churches that had recently expanded. The committee was seeking guidance and advice to report back to the Bethesda congregation — which they presented at a church meeting. The members voted to enlarge our facility. However, the cost being a major hindrance, the building committee voted to expand the educational rooms, offices, and the fellowship hall first. It decided that a larger sanctuary would be added in stage two of the building project.

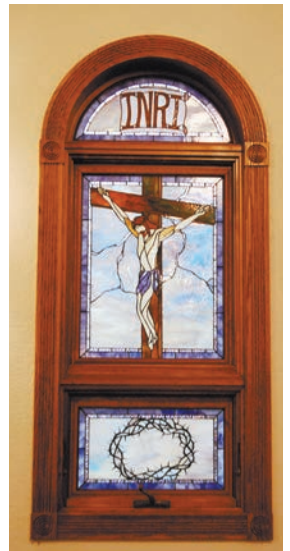
Since the building addition, we have added a Memory Garden with a fountain to remember and meditate upon our loved ones. A nature trail wanders through the back of our property. Neighborhood care groups have been formed, little churches within the big church, that we might better help each other down the road of life. Bible Study has become a part of many of our members lives. And we have a dream for a new performance-type sanctuary and a Senior High Rise that we will keep ever before us.



As we experience new growth at Bethesda Lutheran Church of Malmo, we are appreciative of all of our members old and new. We thank all of our people for their generosity, be it financial, time, or talent.

We thank our Heavenly Father, for his blessings on all of us. We are a grateful people.





*Thank you!*

**Present Church Council**  
Sandy Pullen, President  
Jerry Morris, Vice President  
Nancy Hansen, Secretary  
Steve Long, Treasurer  
Bob Carlson  
Craig Kullberg  
Ruth Hamman  
Pastor Jim Raisanen

**Building Committee 2006**

Doug Kloss, Chairman  
Mary Long  
Pat Humpreys  
Ron Hass  
Edie Gorham  
Del Swanson  
Del Lagerstrom  
Glen Dale

**Mortgage Burning Committee  
2014**

Winnie Zahradka, Chairperson  
Lee Forester  
John Iverson  
Cheri Johnson  
Sue Samuelson

*We would like to thank and acknowledge all the people who helped to build our new addition:*

Neil Westerlund, General Contractor — *Westerlund Custom Homes*  
Rich Carron — *Valley Paving*  
Hudrlick Carpet  
Eric's Insulation  
Jim Messersmith — *Electrical*  
Ron Larson — *McGuire Mechanical*  
Jeff and Marie Hammer & Randy — *Crystal Cabinets*  
Larry Liljenquist — *Liljenquist Excavating*  
Lonnie Perkins — *Perkins Stucco*  
Murray Mack and Associates — *Architects*  
Keith Larson — *Plumbing*  
Keith Kellen & Mike Buckley — *Sound and Video*