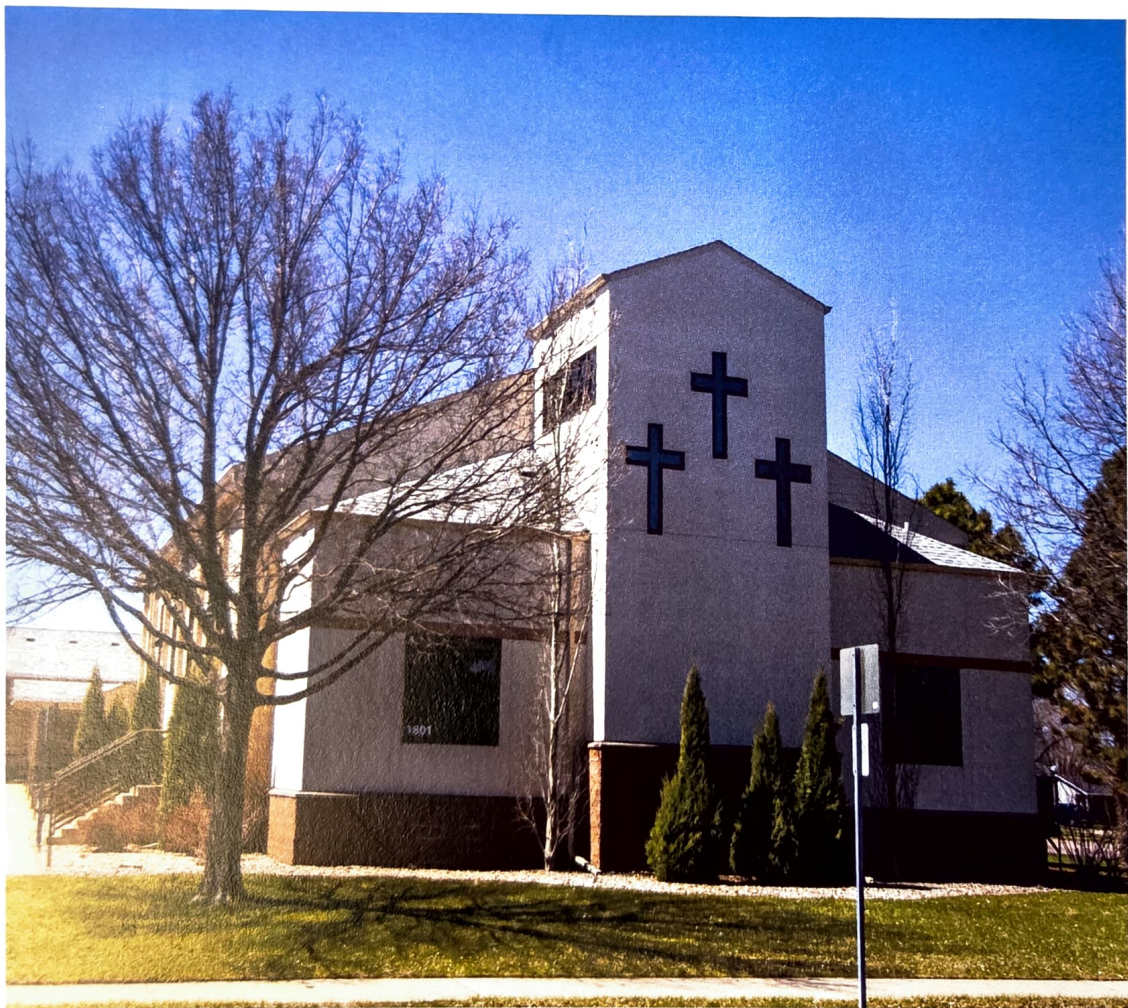


Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School

25th Anniversary Celebration
September 15, 2019



1801 Valley View Road
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

A Message from the Pastor

Since St. Paul's and Bethel merged a lot has happened. We started a pre-school. We built and started a school. We carted away our old church. We built a larger church. Now we're planting a mission in Brandon! Three pastors, three vicars, seventeen teachers, and countless councils, committees, leaders, and volunteers have served us.

Sioux Falls has changed. From just over 110,000 people in 1994, we've exploded to over 187,000! Look around the neighborhood. See the changes. See the opportunities.

But we don't always like change. Not all changes are good. As Sioux Falls grows, people cry out for and celebrate so-called "diversity" that often runs counter to biblical teachings. Big cities come with big city problems: more traffic, more crime, more things need repair.

Sometimes as churches grow – like Bethel – they struggle with change. Do we need these buildings? Do we need more? What will we do with our school? Who are all these people? Do we have enough money? Why aren't we doing this thing that we should be doing?

The hymn-writer nailed it. "Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war she waits the consummation of peace forevermore." The work of the Church in a sinful world isn't easy. It's toil and tribulation. Some comes from the devil. Some comes from the world. Some comes from us. We want to be "the Church at rest," but that day hasn't yet come.

That's why among all the things we've done (or haven't), all the changes, all the things we talk about – and sometimes argue about – there's one thing we always do. We do the work of the Church. We preach. We baptize. We deliver the sacrament. We bring people Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. We pray, "God, help me before I wreck it all!"

We go with a promise. At original Bethel, the Lord told Jacob, "I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you" (Gen 28:15). Jesus echoed that. "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20).

In our Bethel, we have Jesus. "[N]o one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11). Built on Jesus we're secure. "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built" (Lk 6:47-48).

This is why, for all the change that has happened, so much remains the same. Another hymn says, "Here stands the font before our eyes, telling how God did receive us. The altar recalls Christ's sacrifice and what the sacrament gives us. Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same, and evermore, our Redeemer!"

It has been my honor to serve you these past years and I pray for years to come. A lot will happen, but I promise this: we will not change the changeless Christ and his saving tools, tools by which "he daily and fully forgives sins," tools that promise that "he will....give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ!"

– *Pastor Benjamin Tomczak*

History of Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School Sioux Falls, SD

Bethel's history takes us back into the days just before Pearl Harbor. Faithful Lutherans organized a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Sioux Falls called Bethel. Thirty years later, families from Good Shepherd Lutheran (a Wisconsin Synod congregation) organized a new congregation named St. Paul's. Later, the two congregations saw a need to work together and merged into the congregation we know today: Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School.

Bethel and St. Paul are appropriate names. Bethel means "house of God." This reminds us whose place this is and what happens here. It is the Lord's place. He speaks through Word and Sacraments. Paul reminds us what we proclaim. We proclaim one gospel, the gospel of Jesus, because there is no other gospel. As we learn in catechism, "Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven."

Bethel Lutheran Church (ELS), 1941-1994

On August 24, 1941 a group met in the home of Mrs. Martha Steen to organize a Norwegian Synod congregation. A year later, Nils Oesleby became their first resident pastor. They built a church in 1943 and enlarged it in 1944.

Members contributed 2,500 hours of labor to finish a new church in 1953. In a brush with history, presiding over the 1951 ground-breaking was an ELS pastor from Luverne, MN: Dr. J.A.O Preus. In 1969, he became the president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and dealt with the Seminex walkout. Dr. Preus returned for the dedication in 1953.



Bethel moved the original chapel to a new site. This became the first building for a Wisconsin Synod congregation called Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. This congregation then became the origin of Bethel's future merger partner St. Paul's and remains today on the east side of Sioux Falls.

In 1961 Bethel reached a high water mark with 290 souls.

To celebrate Bethel's 25th anniversary, a sign made of Georgia marble was given in memory of one of Bethel's charter members, Constant Steen. That sign still welcomes you to the current Bethel Lutheran Church.

When Pastor John Moldstad was called to Bethel, part of his call was to be a traveling pastor and serve the congregation of Oslo Lutheran Church, located near Volga, SD. Oslo was a very small congregation and closed its doors. Oslo's bell was purchased by Bethel for \$500. One of the Bethel members donated money for the bell tower. (This bell still begins and ends worship every Sunday at Bethel.)



Bethel originally sat near Sioux Valley Hospital, now known as Sanford. Hospital expansion forced Bethel to

relocate. Sioux Valley Hospital purchased the property on 20th and Covell and also paid to move the church. After searching for possible locations, Garry Swenson worked with a developer and found the 26th and Valley View property, still a cornfield at that time. In 1990, they transported their building and the bell and tower to the 5-acre parcel on the west side of Sioux Falls, Bethel's current property. When the church relocated, the sign in front of Bethel was disassembled, the stones numbered, moved and then reassembled.

Since the church sat on granite, only a crawl space was put under the church. At the time of the move, a narthex was added to the church. There were restrooms and a kitchen upstairs and five Sunday School rooms and restrooms in the basement.

Merger talks with St. Paul's began in May 1994. On September 11, Pr. James Bolda was installed as the resident pastor for the new congregation: Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church. It retained the ELS name and joined the Wisconsin Synod.

The Lord of the Church blessed Bethel with seven resident pastors: Nils Oesleby (1942-1947), T.N. Teigen (1947-1958), Victor Thieste (1959-1972), Walter Gullixson (1972-1980), John Moldstad (1980-1984), Russell Halvorson (1984-1988), and Paul Madson (1988-1994).

St. Paul's Lutheran Church (WELS), 1971-1994

On October 24, 1971, eight families organized a daughter congregation of Good Shepherd Lutheran. A week later they organized their Sunday School and were teaching the children about Jesus. This group became a self-supporting congregation called St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The congregation began with 21 members and had 226 by the early 1990s.



Less than a year after organizing, St. Paul's received its first resident pastor, Robert Krueger. He stayed for a year and was succeeded in 1974 by Pr. Thomas Schmidt. Pr. Schmidt helped create the stained glass windows of St. Paul's that came along in the merger and now adorn Bethel's sanctuary. These windows confess the faith we learn in the catechism, with each window depicting a chief part.

After meeting in rented spaces for three years, the congregation purchased a building in 1974 in central Sioux Falls. That was home until 1994. The members devoted time and energy to improving their church. The building remains a church, an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Pr. Schmidt left in 1983. Pr. Doug Free succeeded him and stayed until 1989. Pr. James Bolda arrived in 1989 and became the pastor to bridge the history of the two congregations.

When Bethel and St. Paul's merged, they decided to locate in Bethel's building, on the current property. This proved to be fortuitous. Bethel's neighborhood has exploded since that time.

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, 1994-present

Lloyd Lunde (Bethel Chairman) and Tim Raasch (St. Paul's Treasurer) became acquainted as they waited in the parking lot of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church to pick up their kids from



Pastor James Bolda
1989-1996

school. They visited and eventually the conversation came around to their own congregations. St. Paul's was a growing congregation in a small building, practically bursting at the seams. They did not have parking at their location and no place to expand. Bethel was a small congregation with plenty of space, but they were not growing and had a pastor nearing retirement. What would happen if the two were to get together?

Later, Lloyd Lunde and Jeff Knowlton (Bethel Treasurer) and Kerry Berg (St. Paul's President) and Tim Raasch met at the Fryin' Pan for breakfast. They talked about the opportunity for both congregations if they were to combine. They all agreed it would be advantageous so they went back to their own congregations and talked to the pastors and the members.

Within a few months, the two congregations would become one. The decision was made to sell the St. Paul's property and use the Bethel property. They merged in to one congregation, having their opening service on September 11, 1994. Pastor Bolda remained at Bethel as the Pastor. Interestingly, since there was a Church Council from each congregation and the terms ended in January, the councils met jointly for a few months.

There were many suggestions for a name when the two congregations merged. Everyone had an idea and all suggestions were discussed. In the end, the congregation voted and the new congregation was given the name Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The congregation sold the parsonage that was at 813 S. Willow for about \$60,000. In 1995, the congregation decided to build a parsonage on the property near the church. They hired Fick Construction for about the same price. Many of the members helped out with painting and finishing to help keep the cost down. Just this past year, some of the windows were replaced, and a new deck was added to the parsonage.



Pastor James Janke
1996-2012

In 1996, Pastor Bolda took a call to Weslaco, Texas. Pastor James Janke was called. He was installed on July 7, 1996.

Early on, Bethel determined that it wanted to dedicate resources to the Christian education of children. From 1997-2001, Bethel operated a preschool. The congregation broke ground for a school and multi-purpose room on April 22, 2001. Dick Fuoss was the general contractor. Bud Swenson and his company did the concrete. S and S Constuction (Skip Freiberg) did the framing and roof. Dale and Gloria Schmidt, along with Mark Froelich worked on painting the outside. Garry and Jan Swenson laid all the tile in the kitchen and restrooms. Many members put in a lot of sweat equity with sheet rock, siding, painting, and staining to help out with costs. Lynn Toben made the sound board banners for the multi-purpose area. A Lutheran School in Johnson, MN, was closing

and donated teacher and student desks, an entire library, water fountains, pianos, and many other items. Many worked hard to restore and refinish the desks. The total cost of the project was \$577,000. Bethel Lutheran School had its opening service on August 26, 2002. The first year, the school had 22 students with two teachers educating them, Mr. Kyle Bender and Mrs. Ann Janke.



Over the course of the years, Bethel Lutheran School has had an enrollment as high as 30 and as low as 15. Today, Mrs. Glenda Knuth is the lower grade teacher and principal, Mrs. Kjersti Jakober is the upper grade teacher, and Mrs. Kristen Tomczak is the half-time departmentalized teacher. Regardless of who the teachers have been over the years, the mission remains the same: *Empowered by God's Word, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran School exists to assist parents in educating,*

encouraging, and equipping children for time and eternity.

In late 2007, a group of musicians began exploring the possibility of purchasing a new organ. In December, a quote for an Ahlborn-Galanti 2100 was received from John Nordley for \$20,300. That quote was accepted and in April, 2008, the organ was dedicated in a service with guest organist Jacob Behnken playing.



As time went on, the congregation grew and attendance at services was high. The current sanctuary was filled at most services and sometimes overflowed into the narthex. With no aisles on the side (the pews went over to the walls), traffic flow for Holy Communion was difficult. Talk began about expansion. A building committee consisting of Dale Knuth, Craig Kramer, and Del Toben was formed.

The congregation decided to build a new sanctuary in October, 2008. What do we do with the current sanctuary? To demolish it would add about \$30,000 on to the cost. There were those that did not want to see their church torn down. It came to the attention of a member that McCrossan Boys Ranch was looking for a chapel for its property north of Sioux Falls. Bethel donated the chapel to the ranch, and they paid for the cost of moving it to their location. The church was moved on July 30, 2009. Worship services were then held in the multi-purpose room until the new church was completed.

Many members pitched in to help disconnect the church from the narthex. Men were on the roof using saws to cut the roofs apart. Electrical and plumbing had to be disconnected. A wall had to be built between the narthex and the new construction. Then Fiegen Construction took over the actual construction. On August 9, 2009, Bethel broke ground on the new church.

The stained glass windows were salvaged and became a part of the plan for the new construction. The stained glass cross at the front of the sanctuary was taken out, repaired, and two more made to match the three cross theme established in the multi-purpose room. The pews were made by Davis Furniture Company, a company in Melrose, Wisconsin, where the wood was cut on their land, kiln dried, and then fashioned into the design we chose. The first load of pews and chairs for the main floor was brought by the owner, Ed Davis, and he guided members through assembling and placing them. Later, when the chairs for the balcony and the small pews for the pastor in the front were completed, Janet and Larry Lindemann made a trip and hauled them back to Sioux Falls. Final payment for the pews was \$33,617.29. Jason Kanzenbach, Bethel member, made the altar, lectern, banner stands, plant stands, and baptismal font for the front of the church. Lynn Toben made the sound board banners for the front walls.

The first services were held on May 16, 2010. The new sanctuary totaled 4650 square feet on the main floor and 850 square feet in the balcony. Seating includes 220 on the main floor and about 50 in the balcony. The new church also includes a cry room, an audio room, a sacristy and office space. The final cost of the church totaled \$764,622.

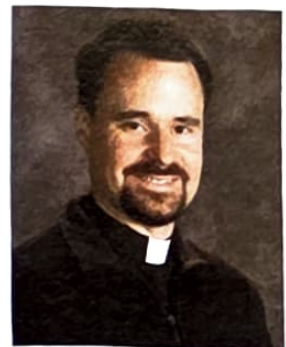


Pastor Janke accepted a call to Janesville, WI, in October 2012. On January 20, 2013, Pastor Benjamin Tomczak was installed as the third pastor of Bethel.

During the summer of 2016, in anticipation of a third full-time teacher, the basement was remodeled. The walls of two Sunday School rooms were removed to make one large classroom. At the same time, space was taken from the office and added to the bell room to make a Library upstairs.

Since 2017, Bethel has helped train future pastors through the summer vicar program of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Jon Neumann, Lucas Callies, and Eric Zabell have provided innumerable blessings through their work and hopefully also become better prepared for pastoral ministry.

In the summer of 2018, by the request of the voters, a Mission/Vision Committee was formed. The purpose of this group was to establish a mission statement, lay out the goals for the future, and help reach those goals. The mission statement of Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church is: *Empowered by God's Word, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School teaches, confesses, and proclaims Christ crucified.*



Pastor Benjamin Tomczak
2013-present

Bethel has taken part in the development of a new mission in Brandon, South Dakota. The Synod's Board for Home Missions approved funding in 2018. Pastor Craig Wilke was ordained in July, 2019, and has begun work.



At the request of the voters, a group of Bethel's organists and pianists convened to research a piano purchase for the balcony. After evaluating numerous acoustic and hybrid digital pianos, a recommendation was made to purchase the GM-12 piano from the Japanese company Kawai. It is five feet in length, has a black satin finish, and a remarkable tone quality. The piano was delivered in time for Holy Week, in April, 2019, and dedicated on August 25, 2019, with Kirk Meyer playing for the service.

In 1994, Bethel served 313 souls. As Sioux Falls has grown, so has Bethel. Currently, Bethel serves 421 souls. Since the merger, the

Lord has privileged her pastors to baptize over 180 people and take over 200 more through biblical instruction leading to confirmation or profession of faith. In addition, we've taught nearly 400 children about Jesus in our Lutheran elementary school. May God enable us to continue this ministry for many years to come!

Bethel's Called Workers

Pastors:

James Bolda, 1994-1996
James Janke, 1996-2012
Benjamin Tomczak, 2013- present

Preschool and Elementary Teachers:

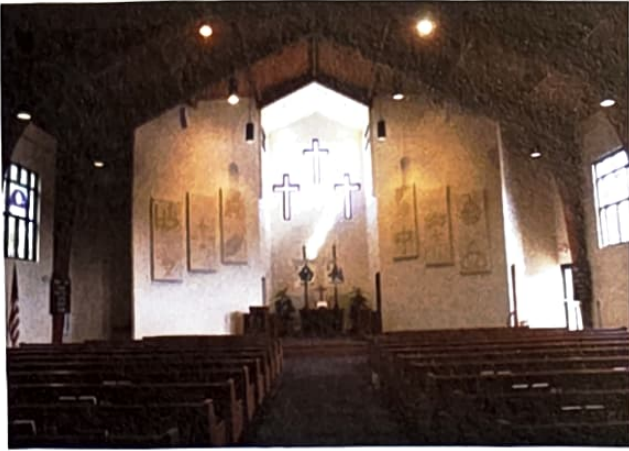
Marcia Bayne, 1997-2001
Kyle Bender, Principal, 2002-2007
Ann Janke, 2002-2012
Dawn Voigt, 2006-2007
Benjamin Priebe, Principal, 2007-2010
Natalie Priebe, 2007-2009
JoAnn Helland, 2009-2014
Steven Haag, Principal, 2010-2015
Katie Rath, 2013
Lawanda Meyer, 2012, 2015-2016
Lydia Kuznicki, 2013-2015
Rebecca Hussman, 2014-2015
Dylan Jensen, Principal, 2015-2019
Glenda Knuth, Principal, 2015-present
Doug Peavy, 2016-2017
Kjersti Jakober, 2018-present
Kristen Tomczak, 2019-present



August 26, 2002



August 21, 2019



Bethel Lutheran Sanctuary



Remodeled Basement Classroom



Library



Church Office



Playground Enlarged in 2015



New Landscaping in 2019



Combined Bethel, First Service: Sept. 11, 1994



Sept. 11, 1994, Lunch after the service



1995



Church Council 2004



Naomi Guild 2004



Bethel Blaze Basketball Team-2003



Palm Sunday-2004



Groundbreaking for the new church-2009



Lydia Guild



The church is on the move—again. 2009



Field Trip to see the Sanford helicopter-2016



Sunday School Music



Ground breaking for the parsonage- 1995



Youth Group Lasagna Dinner- 1995



Naomi Guild 1996



Church Council-September 1996



Groundbreaking for the school addition- 2001



Church Choir- 2004



The Lord's Supper (2016)



Bethel School Volunteers 2019



Mrs. Meyer leading a science experiment-2016



September 11, 1994



Pastor Tomczak-2016



The church goes up-fall 2009



Brenda Eich, Janet and Larry Lindemann-2002



Moving the bell for the school addition- 2001



Multi-purpose Room Walls Go Up



Preparing for moving of the church-2009

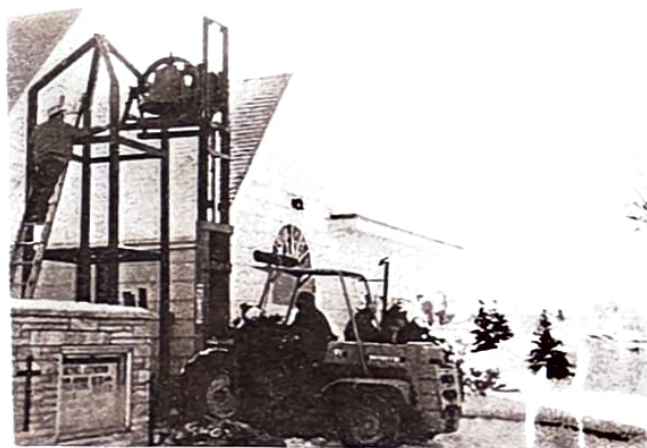
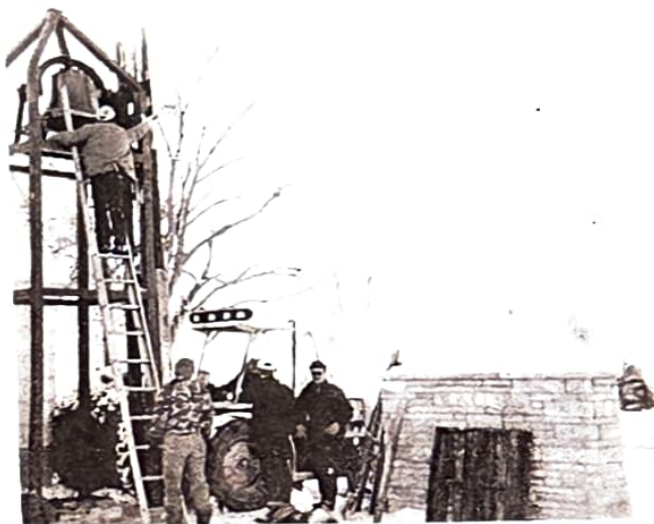
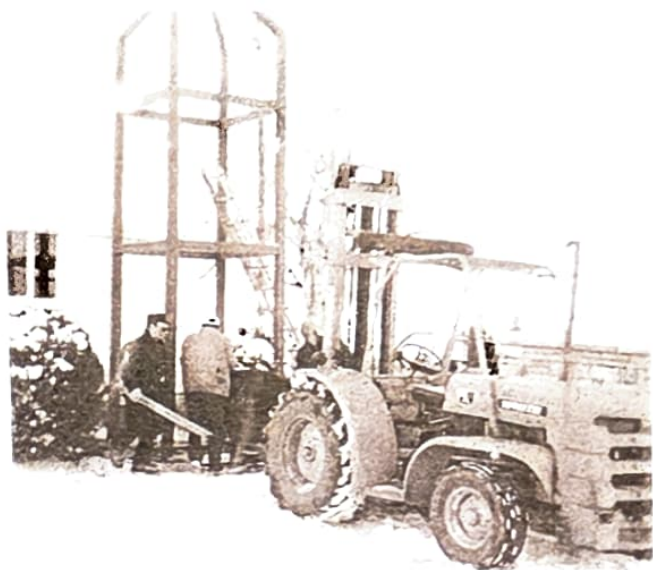


Spring Concert-2019



Mrs. Bayne and her preschool class-1999

Nov. 1983





A Brief History of Our Bell:

In 1906 the brass bell was cast in St. Louis, Mo. It was placed in the tower of the Sinsi Synod Church, and was later purchased from that church for \$250 by Oslo Lutheran Church of rural Volga. The bell was installed in the Oslo Church on March 7, 1928 and was used for the first time March 13, 1928. Due to the closing of our sister congregation (Oslo Lutheran) on Dec. 25, 1982, it was agreed that Bethel purchase the bell for the very reasonable price of \$500. In June of 1983 the bell was moved from the Oslo tower to Sioux Falls. This was carried out by use of a boom truck. A tower was erected at Bethel and the bell was put in place on Nov. 25, 1983. The cost of the tower and related expenses was under \$1,500. Today, Jan. 29, 1984, we dedicate this bell and bell tower to the glory and praise of God's holy name.
