

60TH ANNIVERSARY

Hamar Lutheran Church

June 12, 1934

Rothsay, Minnesota

The Hamar congregation celebrated today the 60-year jubilee festival. With such a chance it is both appropriate and interesting to look back and bring forward in memory the days gone by and live again in remembrance of the time for new for the young the pages have faded.

For this view I allowed myself to give the following summary from Pastor Langeland's report of the congregation's 25-year celebration in 1899 for the report from Pastor T. Rosholt who has been with the last congregation and was known as the first pastor, preached the sermon on the first 3 verses on Psalm 87.

After the service in the church, the men gathered under the trees at Casper Rudh's home for dinner. Here the celebration continued after dinner with readings of the scriptures by Pastor Rugland from Barnesville.

Pastor O.N. Fosmark from Fergus Falls talked and remembered the church must always withstand hard battles. He also reminded that we must stand guard against unbelieving Apostles. A historic report prepared by Pastor Langeland was read of which the following is a short excerpt.

Norwegian Lutherans began to move into this area in 1869. In 1870, 71, and 72 most of the country was settled. These emigrants came for the most part from southern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa and from the surrounding area of LaCross. Most of the settlers spoke of living a few years in Olmstead, Fillmore, and in Houston County, here in Minnesota. Others named Clayton County, Iowa, or Coon Prairie, across from LaCross as their starting point.

It was difficult for the Norwegian church in America to keep stride with emigrants and migration. It was a difficult task to send a minister to the locations where the immigrants went. It was in that time where Hedemarken, Hamar, South and North Immanuel congregations were waiting for ministerial service and what made the need so great was (and that which the large thought was agreed about) that there were many unbaptized children in the families - the men turned to Pastor N. Brandt in Decorah with an opportunity to either come himself or send a Norwegian Lutheran minister in his place. One knew that Pastor Brandt was considered as a traveling minister in the synod and he was light on his feet.

Pastor Brandt sent the request to Pastor T. Vetlesen who had newly become a minister for the St. Olaf and surrounding congregations in Otter Tail County. He came and visited Hedemarken and Immanuel's congregations in the fall of 1870. In Hedemarken he preached in the old Sletvold's house Nov. 24, 1870 and here at the same time, 10 children were baptized. Our neighboring congregations were established in the spring of 1871. In the fall of 1872 Hedemarken and Immanuel's congregations arranged for a single call and candidate. T. Rosholt was called as pastor and he took office late fall in 1872.

Here around Rothsay, there were not yet formed any congregations (I will in parentheses note and remember that there was not yet a Rothsay. The place was here, but the town of Rothsay first came on the place a year later, the fall of 1879. S. Larson). From here his service was partly in South Immanuel and partly in Hedemarken. They

tell that the old folks Smikofs went on foot to a service at Sletvolds', a road of 12 miles or 24 miles back and forth.

Hamar congregation was also not yet established. Pastor Rosholdt began to hold services in houses around here and there in 1873. Finally, on June 1, 1874 came the first formation meeting for the congregation. The first organization meeting was held at Casper H. Rudhs' Twenty men undertook parent congregation's arrangement. Some believe there were not as many as 20 men at the first meeting. Some of the names are faded from the list of the meeting that was held in the fall. A name in any case that is forgotten is namely Ole Hansen. He alleges that it was he who suggested the name Hamar.

The first building site established was on a place 2-1/2 miles south of Rothsay on the hill on John Haugan's farm about where the tree planting now is. There also lay the first one buried, namely Ole Gronseth. But soon there was the present grave site, where lie those who were buried later.

The first church is thought to be 22 ft. wide by 32 ft. long. Everything was very simple in the first church. The benches were without backrests. One time the roof blew off, so the congregation members got together again, gathering the remaining parts to get it together again. The old church was cold so in winter, in the later years, services were held in the schoolhouse in Rothsay. By the old accounting it is judged the old church cost \$146.00 in available money.

Our present church was built in 1885 and was barely finished in the spring of 1886 as Minnesota District of the Synod held their yearly meeting in it.

In his report to the yearly congregation meeting of the Hamar congregation held Dec. 5 1916, 33 years after his induction as pastor in this congregation says Pastor Langeland among other comments the following: because my activity here has been member generations, so it is natural that many of those who were with us and participated with us in work from congregations beginning now are gone; here have there been over 200 funerals. Many of these we hope are moved from the work of the struggling church to rest in the Triumphant church. Of those who came to the annual meeting in 1884, we miss today. We will particularly name these: John Wigdahl, Asle Flatin, Tolly Gronseth, Lars Honrud, Amund Smikof, Fredrich Fosse, Gilbert Engelson, Gunder Kantrud. In particular I will remember Ole Hanson, who is sick now and is unable to be here today. He has always borne the burden and the joy with us.

Tom Knutson was an active member, Martin Heggen also. Of those who were at the yearly meeting 33 years ago, I see today only Casper Rudh.

FROM THE REPORT OF THE 50 YEAR CELEBRATION

In 1924 the Hamar congregation celebrated the 50-year anniversary. The man who led the festive service was Pastor O.A. Norman from Ashby who preached the festive service. Pasto Norman is still strong yet and is in his 80th year. He is one of the pioneer pastors and a childhood friend of Pastor Langeland. He spoke of God's word, warm and heartfelt, holding up the faith from where the many different means the Lord has blessed the congregation's plight to prove their thankfulness in word and deed.

A thank offering was laid on the Lord's Alter for our missionaries.

The congregation's choir under Mrs. O.T. Grangaard's leadership sang: "The Lord is My Shepard". The congregation's women had brought well filled food baskets and dinner was served in the church basement to all who stayed, at least over 400 people. After dinner they gathered again in the church. Pastor Salveson opened with scripture and prayer.

There were talks and songs both in Norwegian and English languages. Many of the neighbor pastors were present and took part. There were many songs between the talks of Mrs. J.C. Serkland, Barnard Lein, Torolf Hexum, and a violin duet by Theodore Fjestad and Oscar Lein. The following pastors were present: U.D. Johnson, D.J. Grove, S.J.N. Ylvesaker, H. Bjornson, H.R. Romness, and J.L. Lassenson.

The congregation history over the first 25 years authored by Pastor Langeland and read by him at the 25-year celebration in 1899 was on this occasion read by Pastor Salveson. A detailed congregation's history over the last 25 years was authored by T.K. Brye and read by him, and the following is a short excerpt of the same:

In 1899 the Ladies Aid bought the organ for the church.

In 1902 their furnace was installed under the church.

In 1913 built the basement under the church for a cost of \$2011.00 and contributions yielded from the Ladies Aid, Dorcas** (young women association), and the Youth Association for a total of \$1,389.49

In 1916 these associations paid \$147.40 to wire the church

In 1921 the inside of the church was painted for a cost of around \$700.00 to which Dorcas donated most of the cost.

In 1922 the Youth Association and Dorcas bought a good piano for the congregation.

In 1924 new steps of cement by the entrance was built and sidewalk laid around the church.

Without being along in donating to so much of the congregation's spending have these associations also donated large sums to missions, children's institutions, and schools. In 1924 the Girls Association became Dorcas. Later the Youth Association became Luther League and these 3 associations continued to do unbelievable good in the congregation and in our community for needed improvements. The Ladies Aid in the 10 years that have passed since our 50-year celebration in 1924, each year donated \$150.00 or more to the missions in addition to each year handling costs of holding 6 weeks of religious school in the church basement. We will name the largest donations to the congregation that are as follows:

1925	Ladies Aid for bathroom in the parsonage	\$197.76
1926	Ladies Aid for communion service for parsonage	\$55.30
1928	Luther League for piano for the basement	\$275.00
1929	Ladies Aid for new floor in the church	\$395.15
1929	Ladies Aid for different material in church & new oven in the kitchen	\$137.30
1930	Ladies Aid and Dorcas for new pews	\$1,273.50
1930	Dorcas for new organ in the church	\$605.87
1930	Ladies Aid and Dorcas paid \$75.00 each towards a new furnace, the old furnace went bad and had to be replaced for a cost of \$900.00. the last 5 years Dorcas has also donated \$100.00 or more to missions and children charitable organizations in the community. Already before we observed our 25-year celebration in 1899 the Ladies Aid had given the congregation the church bell, pulpit, alter structure and the alter picture.	
1931	Dorcas and the Ladies Aid for range in the kitchen	\$125.00
1931	Dorcas and the Ladies Aid for new windows in the church	\$1,095.00
1932	Ladies Aid for new dishes in the kitchen	\$112.00

The following pastors served the Hamar congregation in these 60 years:

Pastor Tollef Rosholdt	1874 - 1878
Pastor Stiner Svenningsen	1878 - 1883
Pastor Mogsse Laneland	1883 - 1921
Pastor Emil Salveson	1923 - Present (11 years)

With these thoughts of our congregation's history, I think it will be possible to do a short pause for yearly memories. Pastor Langeland who so faithfully served our congregation as caregiver for 38 years - surely a long service time seldom seen at one place. We remember also the willingness and kindness Mrs. Langeland who in all manner was Pastor Langeland's faithful help. That which is narrated here was before automobile's time and the common means of transportation was horse and buggy and Mrs. Langeland surely traveled much in the cold north wind and many a severe snowstorm together with her man on the road from the parsonage, which at that time was by the Hedemarken church, to Rothsay, a distance of 8 short miles – to fill her position as organist in the church. In Hedemarken, of which congregation I was at that time a member, Mrs. Langeland was for many years the leader of a well-directed choir. Mrs. Langeland died in Sept. 28, 1921 at the age of 60. Pastor Langeland was 29 years old when he began his work among us. They are buried at Hedemarken Church where their bodies rest until resurrection morning. Their memories will long live among us.

The vast majority of Hamar congregation's present members are apparently either baptized, confirmed, or married by Pastor Langeland - many apparently all 3 parts. I am certain that these will always have Pastor Langeland in respectful and loving memory forever.

In the 50-year celebration held in 1924 lived yet Casper Rudh, Martin Heggen, Torger Kantrud, Haken Halvorson, and Paul L. Pauson of the 20 men who were with to begin the congregation and the 3 first named were with to take part in the festive occasion. These are no longer among us, but Mrs. Casper Rudh lives still, despite knowing frailty by reason of disease and her old age. During the 60 years have the following functions been conducted in the congregation in the following statement from the church register:

Baptized - 1275 Confirmed - 976
 Married - 194 Buried - 473

The congregation has had the following officials (officers)

Secretary

Gilbert Engelson	1874 - 1877
Tollef Gronseth	1877 - 1895
T.E. Stras	1895 - 1922
Carl Stras	1922 - Present

Cashier (treasurer)

Gilbert Engelson	1874 - 1877
John A. Wigdahl	1877 - 1880
Ole Stras	1888 - 1890
K.C. Gulson	1888 - 1890
Asle Flatin	1890 - 1913
T.K. Brye	1913 - 1925
O.F. Grangaard	1925 - 1930
Alvin Rorvig	1930 - 1933
Edwin Skugrud	1933 - Present

Since the construction of the church in 1885 and accounts associated with debt were settled, the guide was John A. Wigdahl who was treasurer for the project. In building the church basement in 1913, H.M. Brusven was likewise the guide.

Sunday School and Youth Association

There has in a long row of years, Sunday School has been held in the congregation. The first reference to this that I can find are in Pastor Langeland's suggestion to the congregation for 1898 after he had known of Religious School in various districts: say: "besides there has been held Sunday School in Rothsay with 5 teachers under T.K. Brye's leadership since midsummer".

In his report for 1907 he says: there have been numerous wishes that there should be a structured arrangement with the Sunday School. And that talk is of large importance that we should understand the concern. There are also a variety of wishes to establish a Lutheran Youth Association and that the church purpose it for consideration. The Youth Association was established at that time and later was replaced by the Young People's Luther League.

The congregation has also for many years had a choir in its service, but I have no knowledge of what time it was formed. From the beginning and entirely to the later years the service and all business was in the Norwegian language. The first allusion that I can find to English services are in Pastor Langeland's report for the year 1920. Wherein he says: there have been wishes expressed that there should be some services held in English during the year for the sake of the youth growing up. There are some now who learn their childhood religious training in English, and have difficulty following along in the Norwegian preaching. We should we to it to take care of that wish. As a result of the congregation's minutes that Pastor Langeland had offered to hold some English services during the year either afternoon or evening (so the total number of Norwegian services be held anyway) and the minutes will inform that the meeting thanks Pastor Langeland for his offering the plan.

This is then a short reflection of the congregation's history from the beginning to this time. Much work was done and many a heavy load was taken to get it to the state that it is in now.

Most of them who were along in the work and who took the heaviest load have moved over the river and their bodies now rest under the sod a mile south from here or at other places; and the few that are here somehow stand ready and wait for that call to carry them over the river to the shore. And in that move, they take nothing with them, but entrust it all as inheritance to us who are here; and it is then up to us to care for that legacy and continue the work that the old have begun, and that they so faithfully cared for during the time they were here with us. They are now gone, and we have only memories to recall.

The Hamar congregation must always be faithful to the Lord and trust in His promises. Mathew 6:33

But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

** Originally called "pigeforening" was formed in the early days of Hamar. They were the young women of the congregation. They held regular devotional and business meetings in the homes of the members. They held annual suppers and bazaars and donated the money from special projects to the church. Two things were served as refreshments at meetings with a charge of ten cents. Devotions were usually conducted in the Norwegian language until 1927 when it was suggested at the annual meeting in January that devotions be conducted in the English language. At a regular meeting on Feb. 8, 1924, the group met at the home of Mrs. Edwin Skugrud and reorganized the "pigeforening" into a Sewing Club. This Sewing Club was named the Dorcas Society at this meeting.

Edwin Skugrud is the writer of this report. He wrote the original 11 pages in Norwegian and did a great job. He had a terrific knowledge of the written Norwegian language. Margie Halbakken had this report and gave it to me to translate. It took a long time, but with some help from Joyce Bruns (Eldon Brenden's sister), I was able to finish the job and share with the congregation. I think it is safe to say that nobody in the congregation has ever seen this report so maybe we can all look back and see the sacrifices that have been made by our ancestors. - Arnie Moen