

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Silverton, Oregon



131st St. John's / Immanuel Anniversary
1982 - 2023

In the beginning

Early in the 1890s, it had come to the attention of the Minnesota District Synod of the Northwest Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, many Scandinavians had moved to Oregon. They soon agreed that Silverton seemed to be an ideal spot for a new church. Arrangements were made and June 6, 1892, was the beginning of the Silverton Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran church in Silverton. In 1917 that name was changed to Trinity Lutheran Church.

There were also a few Norwegians, like Kittel Funrue from Petersburg Nebraska, who became interested in starting a second congregation. On November 10th that same year, St. John's Lutheran Church became a member of the National Lutheran Church known as the United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. Seems the two synods were not in complete agreement on some doctrinal and practical affairs of the church, so 1892 brought two new Lutheran churches to Silverton.

The families of C. Christenson, Marcus Christenson, Ole Eide, Kittel Funrue, Gustav Johnson, Hans Johnson, J.H. Johnson, P.K. Johnson, Oluf Olson, and Ole Vold became the Charter Members of St. John's Lutheran Church. 42 Charter Members in all.

Rev. O.R. Sletten became St. John's first pastor and stayed for two years. Rev. N.J. Ellestad of Portland conducted worship services every fourth Sunday until Rev. C.W. Nodtvedt came in 1896. Rev. J.C. Reinertson came in 1902, Rev. H.M. Mason 1909, Rev. I. Lium 1912, and Rev. J.C. Roseland 1914.

For the first six years the congregation met in the First Christian church building later known as Calvary Lutheran Church.

Also in 1892, the St. John's women found it important that they too organize. The first meeting of the Ladies Aid was in December of 1892, in the parsonage then on Water Street. Mrs. Gustav Johnson became the President, Mrs. Kittel Funrue the secretary, and Mrs. Sletten (Pastor's wife) the Treasurer. Mrs. Edmond Olsen and Mrs. Paulson also attended. They each paid 25 cents at the first meeting and decided monthly dues would be 10 cents.

During those first years without a church building, they met at members' homes. Often the women would walk four miles or more, sometimes on muddy roads and over hills, to get to a meeting. They carried food for lunch and the projects they were working on. If the men were not busy, they would take the ladies in their horse drawn wagons.

Sewing and knitting consumed some of their meeting time, and once a year they hosted a dinner and bazaar to raise money for the foreign and home missions they supported. Members continued their pledge to work for the church, and membership grew. They raised enough money to buy the land for their own St. John's Lutheran Church building.

1893 - In the spring, Pastor Sletten organized a choir. Rehearsals were in homes of members who had an organ, since the congregation did not have a place to put one. Mrs. A.F. Hobart (Ida Johnson) was the organist and director. Choir members were Bennie and Syvert Funrue, Hilda and Oscar Olson, Albert, Anna, and Martin Sather, Clara, Emma, and Ole Storaasli. Often the choirs from St. John's and Trinity joined their voices for Sunday morning worship.

1894 - On January 17th the young people organized themselves in to a group called St. John's Young Peoples Society. Their Charter Members were - Pastor Sletten, Amalie Johnson, Ida Johnson, Oluf Johnson, Oscar Olson, Mikkel Opsund, Albert Sather, Martin Sather, Marie Storaasli, Emma Storaasli, O.T. Storaasli, and T. O. Svengen. They met every other Wednesday in a member's home at 6:00pm. A joining fee was 25 cents, and the dues 10 cents for each meeting. Norwegian was spoken until July 13, 1902, then English was adopted as the language they would use, while the language of the church was Norwegian for the first 25 years. The Young Peoples Society had great projects, and supplied the colored windows for the church building.

1895 - Times were really difficult for those first years, especially 1893-96. January 20, 1895, a request was made to the synod Mission Committee to give aid to mission work in Oregon. What a difference mission aid meant to both St. John's and Trinity. There was money for a pastor, to support the congregations, and for building supplies. The congregations helped establish the cemetery, assisted in obtaining pledges, and contributed wood for the stoves.

New members joined St. John's Lutheran: John Anderson, Paul and Martha Dullum, Anna Johnson, Edmund and Karen Olson, Gunder and Anne Opsund, Selma Storaasli, Henriette and Truman Storaasli.

Sunday School was organized, and Kittel Funrue was the superintendent for 12 years. Travel conditions sometimes made attendance difficult, but the Sunday School kept growing. Martha Dullum was the teacher who started many of the young children with the Norwegian ABC book in preparation for the Norwegian Sunday School books.

By the end of six years without a church building, it was decided to build a church on the property purchased by the Ladies Aid. August 9th of 1898, the exterior was up and painted white, and the cornerstone was placed. A lot had happened to this new congregation in those first six years, and with a building the congregation kept growing.

1901 - A group of young girls organized a Girls Aid Society. Their first meeting was in the home of Mr. & Mrs. G.L. Alrick. Rev. Nodtvedt was the pastor of the congregation at that time, and instrumental in getting the Girls

Aid Society started. Agnes Nodtvedt was the first President and the Charter members were Ida Alrick, Lulu and Nellie Amundsen, Mattie Erickson, Henrietta Halvorson, Bertha and Ida Loe, Agnes and Josephine Nodtvedt, Mabel and Nora Quall, Minda and Tilda Ringness. Hilda Olson and Marie Opsund joined a short time later.

The aim of the society was to work for missions both home and abroad, and to help in the growth of the congregation. Items purchased by the Girls Society for the church were: the first Communion set, the altar painting, baptismal font, two chancel chairs, and hymn books for the Sunday School.

By 1904, the 24x60 foot church building was at its capacity. It needed choir space and classrooms and some improvements. Upon completion, there was a dedication for the additions in 1907. Rev. J.C. Reinertson had come in 1902 and stayed until 1908.

In 1914, it was felt that the congregation needed a bigger church building. In the spring of 1915, the old building was taken down and a new church erected on the same site. St. John's second church building was dedicated October 17, 1915.

Our Charter Members had a vision to grow a church. Without cars and trucks and paved roads, they made it happen. They worshiped, cared for each other, laughed and cried, loved and knew loss, and survived no matter what the weather brought to them.

Today we are in our fourth church building, we do know cars and trucks and paved roads. Like those 131 years ago, we too continue to grow our church. We worship, we care, we laugh, we cry, we know love and we know loss, we survive no matter what the weather brings our way.

Blessed are we in this happy place. Remembering of all those who have come before us and thinking of those yet to come.

Pastors of those early years and the first church building – 1892 - 1915

Rev. O.R. Sletten	1892 - 1894
Rev. C.M. Nodtvedt	1896 - 1901
Rev. J.C. Reinertson	1902 - 1908
Rev. H.M. Mason	1909 - 1911
Rev. I. Lium	1912 - 1913
Rev. J.C. Roseland	1914 - 1922