

Event planned for April 6  
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4-6-2008

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church to celebrate 125th anniversary

The bell at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Gaylord will ring 125 times Sunday, April 6 when the congregation celebrates its 125th anniversary.

"To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven" Ecclesiastes 3:1 is the theme for the celebration.

The community is invited to the entire celebration. It is the committee's hope that it will be a large church family reunion of the past and present.

The celebration will begin at 9 a.m. with a Worship and Praise Service lead by "The Keynotes and the Larson's," musicians from New Ulm.

A presentation will be given by the University of Minnesota Raptor Center from 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

There will be an "Ekklesia Corner" (bake and craft sale) in the fellowship hall from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A turkey dinner with all the trimmings will be served from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the church fellowship hall.

Those who attend will have the opportunity to view "Memories of Yesteryear," things 60 years or older, in the fellowship hall from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

From 1 - 3 p.m., the congregation and guests will be "Celebrating the seasons through word, music and fellowship." This will feature talents of current and former members of the congregation.

Fifteen pastors have served the congregation during the past 125 years. The five former pastors who are living are Ordean Grant, Art Wiese, Charles Paulson, Karl Jacobson, and Mary Dodgson. There are also two sons of the congregation that are pastors, Ervin Franke, a retired pastor at Spring Valley, and Dr. Walt Kallestad of Arizona.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church was organized by 10 Christian men on July 29, 1883. St. Paul's currently has about 225 members.

The church has always been at this location. The original wooden church was moved from Main Avenue to 217 6th Street and remodeled into a home. The cornerstone for the present brick church was laid in October of 1915. Dedication of the brick structure was held in February of 1916.

The church was originally named "Freie German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Gaylord, Minnesota." In 1905, the name was changed to St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. The name was later shortened to St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Services were always held in the German language until 1919, when English services were held the last Sunday of the month. When Pastor Vagtz came in 1957, German services were discontinued, but Rev. George Matthiae, upon retirement, still continued two or three German services each year.

Other church additions were a parish education unit in the early 1960's and a new narthex built and dedicated in 1978. In 2005 the congregation held its first Uplifting Celebration to dedicate its addition of an elevator/lift to accommodate the physically chal-

lenged. Another major change was the moving of the parsonage to Harvey Drive nearly two years ago.

The church bell is from 1892 and came to St. Paul's from Missouri. It weighs 1,300 pounds.

St. Paul's oldest member is Elmer Franke who is 100. He lives at Oak Terrace Health Care Center in Gaylord. The oldest lifelong member is Esther Franke, who is 93, and lives at Amberfield Apartments in Gaylord.

Carter Alan Honl of rural Gaylord represents six generations of church membership for the Bierstedt family. Carter is the son of Bert and Angela (Bierstedt) Honl of rural Gaylord. His grandfather is Delroy Bierstedt, great-grandfather is Clarence Bierstedt, and great-great-grandfather is William Bierstedt, Jr. and great-great-great-grandfather is William Bierstedt, Sr.

The anniversary celebrating is being coordinated by the congregation's Uplifting Committee, which includes Cindy Gerholz, Kathy Bierstedt, Yvonne Franke, and Michael Sprandel, along with help from all of the church members.

A church history book and a DVD will be available for purchase at the event.