

Calvary Lutheran Church first known as "Fridhem Evangelical Lutheran"



1903-2014

Fridhem Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized on the 17th day of August in the year of 1903. The place of organization was the Methodist meeting hall where Pastor J.W. Lundgren served as chairman and Ed Lundberg served as secretary. The constitution recommended by the church became "Svenska Evangelska, Luterska Församling". The term 'Fridhem' means "home of peace".

Fridhem at its birth was the product of two mother churches, Bethesda north of Murdock and Zion Lutheran Church of Louriston township. An equal number of charter members came from both mother churches. The nearly impassable roads of the early decades of this century served as a strong contributing factor in the establishment of another Lutheran church in Murdock.

Much initial impetus for the organization of Fridhem came also from successful Christian work carried out among the Scandinavian children of the area through the formation of a Sunday school just two years before the Fridhem congregation was organized. Swan Hillman was one of the early driving forces behind the Sunday school which had an early enrollment of about 54 young people with lessons being taught in the Swedish language.

The first services were held in the homes of the people, then the Methodist meeting hall, and finally the Presbyterian Church at a monthly rental fee of \$2.00.

This congregation possessed a home for its dead long before its living, for an acre of land was donated by John Lyd for a cemetery before the congregation's formal organization. The ministry of Pastor J.W. Lundgren (1903-1904) was extremely short but of a sufficient duration to establish a regularly worshiping congregation with a flourishing Sunday school.

The ministry of Pastor Erik Norseen (1904-1915) gave sufficient stability to the church for the people to go ahead with the building of an edifice within which to worship the Lord. A building committee was formed and a subscription list was quickly drawn up. By 1905 the foundation of the church had been completed. Finally the church building was constructed in 1906 at a total cost of \$1,868.96. The Ladies Aid contributed \$680.21 to the total cost of



Picture of the men who organized Fridhem Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1903.
(Celia Lindstrom gave this picture to Fridhem/Calvary church for its history folder.)

the building. The builders of the edifice were Axel and Emil Palm. John Palm constructed the church pews. The church building was dedicated on the 29th of May in the year of 1907 with Pastor L.P. Bergstrom, Vice President of the Minnesota Conference giving the dedication address. A pulpit was purchased for \$45.00.

The Ladies Aid auxiliary was organized in 1903 and from the start served as a tower of strength to the congregation. They truly labored in the Lord through giving to missions, working and planning, baking, sewing and praying. In the year of 1911 the ladies of the church cleared the congregation of its debts and proceeded to paint the interior of the church building.

In the year of 1912 the Luther League was organized and served as an arm of the church ministering to the congregation's young people. The league also promoted the welfare and work of the church through its many activities such as in 1914 this auxiliary provided a bell for the church.

During the ministry of Pastor Norseen, transportation was extremely difficult on terribly poor roads. The trip to Benson by means of horses used to take some four hours. We also notice from the start, Fridhem was a part of a four-point parish which included Benson, Starbuck and Bethesda. Tremendous demands were made upon the early pastors who spent much of their time traveling great distances.

During the period of Pastor C.A. Lindahl (1915-1921), the need of a fellowship hall was recognized and for the cost of \$1000, Luther Hall was built.

During this period the Augustana Lutheran Church was experiencing the change from ministering to a Swedish immigrant population to one body ministering to a new American culture. This transition began locally when in 1920 the English language was first introduced into the services. Considerable disagreement occurred as to how much the Swedish or English tongue should be used. The pastor's report mentioned the fact that the Sunday

school had dwindled to some six children, but when English was introduced, its membership boomed to some fifty children. The report goes on to say, "The English language must be used equally on a par with the Swedish since we do not want to lose our young people, those who desire English and those who cannot understand any language but English."

Through the years of 1922-23, the work of Christ in this community was without pastoral leadership.

During the period between 1923-30, the English language was used more and more with a joint Calvary-Bethesda Bible class being conducted by Pastor E.J. Peterson. Pastor Peterson was described as an extremely kind man whose philosophy was "Be ye doers as well as hearers". Pastor Peterson and his wife did not stress material things in or out of the church but made a deep impression upon the people in their congregations.

Pastor Arthur Chell (1930-39) was ordained in the 1930 and called to this four-point parish as his first charge. During his ministry Pastor Chell succeeded in accomplishing a much needed parish re-alignment. Bethesda and Calvary were taken from the four point parish and made into a separate pair of churches with their own pastor. He was described as soft spoken, kind and a diplomat. This organizational pattern continued until 2010.

Following the ministry of Pastor Chell, Rev. Elmer Johnson (1941-1944) served Calvary and Bethesda until the fall of 1944. In 1942 Fridhem Lutheran changed its name to Calvary Lutheran. During his five year ministry, Pastor Johnson was known especially for his ministry of mission. From the spring of 1945 until 1960, Rev. B. G. Holmes very ably served the Calvary and Bethesda congregations. During the ministry of Pastor Holmes a new basement was built under the church in 1951 and a new oil furnace was installed. This greatly increased the effectiveness of the church's teaching ministry by providing more adequate classroom and fellowship hall space. Pastor Holmes was known for being a teacher and pulpit preacher of the first order. He served as a very able administrator in going back and providing the parish with an up-to-date set of books known as the parish registry.

In the summer of 1961 a newly ordained minister named Pastor Robert Mader (1961-1964) became the new pastor of Calvary and Bethesda churches. In the following year a representative of the church's Department of Architecture and Building and Finance made a study of Calvary's building needs. During the annual meeting in January of 1963 the church members of the congregation decided to embark on a threefold program of church renovation. The three stages embraced the worship area, the fellowship hall and the church basement. The first stage was completed in time for the celebration of the church's Sixtieth Anniversary which bore the theme "The Living Church".

Refer to the last page for a complete list of pastors/interns and years of service at Calvary.

Other events:

† Electric chimes were installed in the tower in the year 1948, and these beautiful chimes could be heard for almost an hour before every worship service.

† In 1952 a beautiful electric organ was procured under the auspices of the Calvary Luther league and dedicated to the memory of Mrs. C. E. Rundquist and to her daughter Lillian, Mrs. Walter G. Anderson, both of whom served as organist for long periods of years.

† Additional parking space was donated by the W. T. Estrem family. This piece of property was eventually sold in 1977 and is presently the home of Calvary member, Alice Randt.

† In 1954 Bethesda joined in half ownership of the parsonage.

† In 1964 the Cemetery Association was organized, separate from the church.

† In 1981 a new gas furnace was installed in the church, a 2-car garage was added to the parsonage and the parsonage kitchen was remodeled as a joint project with Bethesda. The Sunday schools merged. A new sign was constructed as a memorial from the family of Victor and Anne Nelson.

† In 1984 trees were planted on the church lawn as a memorial by the Penning, Palm and Smith families.

† In 1987 the church was added to the city sewer system, pews were upholstered, additional land was purchased for the cemetery and evergreens were planted.

† In 1992 Calvary adopted the ELCA songregational constitution. New church doors were installed as a memorial by the Stegeman, Egge and Skoglund families. A handicapped access ramp was added to the exterior of the church.

† In 2001 new siding was put on the church with labor provided by the congregation.

† In 2003 (August 3rd) Calvary celebrated its 100th anniversary with Pastor Carl Listug as the interim pastor.

† In 2009, Calvary joined five other churches in discussion of a new alignment.

† In early 2010 a vote from the six churches, Bethesda, Buffalo Lake of Grace (DeGraff), Calvary, Hope (Sunburg), Monson Lake (Sunburg) and West Lake (Sunburg) favored the new alignment. These church are Mission Points of the Area Churches Together Parish (ACT). Pastors were interviewed and called to the ACT Parish. Pastor Michael Carlson and Pastor Amy Juel-Palmer were called to the new parish. Today this parish is under the guidance of Pastor Carlson and Pastor Dan Croonquist.

It was during this time that Calvary became an important arm of this ACT parish as it became the first home of the KMS Area MOPS organization. The basement of Calvary was revised to fit the needs of the MOPS program.

During the past 111 years, many fine men and women have guided the Calvary congregation. The Congregation is grateful to God for sending these individuals to lead us through His word and sacraments. We are also thankful to those faithful members, both living and those who have gone before us, who participated in God's Christian work from the beginning in 1903 to the closing in 2014. Thanks be to God!

Pastors/Interns of Fridhem/Calvary Lutheran Church

1903-1904	J. W. Lundgren
1904-1915	Eric Norseen
1915-1923	C. A. Lindahl
1923-1930	E. J. Peterson
1930-1939	Arthur Chell
1939-1940	Student Carlton L. Berg
1940-1944	Elmer J. Johnson
1944-1945	Vice Pastor J. G. Swedberg
1945-1960	B. G. Holmes
1960-1961	Student Paul Hanson
1961-1964	Robert Mader
1964-1965	Pastor Bernell Baldwin
1965-1968	Bernard Heruth
1968-1969	Vice Pastor Pearson/Eugene Eckland
1969-1971	Roger Schwartz
1971-1972	Vice Pastor Dwight Johnson (Trinity in Benson)
1972 -1973	Rex Schwartz
1973-1974	Vice Pastor Paul Dumke (Bethel in Willmar)
1974-1983	Gary Schulz
1983	Intern Louise Esbjornson
1984-1988	Scott Larson
1989-1991	Nathan Tuff
1992	Interim Don Syverson
1993-1997	Kelly Wasburg
1997	Christy Wendland
1998	Carlton Nelson (spring confirmation)
1998	Gina Maria Koeber
1998-2003	Trevor Bailey
2003-2004	Carl Listug
2005-2008	Bev De'ak
2008-2010	Mike Likens
2010-2014	Michael Carlson and Amy Juel-Palmer
2014 to present	Michael Carlson and Dan Croonquist

Calvary Lutheran Church of Murdock Closing (an excerpt from the S.W. MN ELCA website)

We give thanks to God for their life, mission and ministry. We are thankful for the way God used the life of this congregation and thankful for all the people they touched as they proclaimed Christ Jesus. As they sought to live out their daily mission trip of their baptisms we are thankful for all things good, true and beautiful they were able to do in Christ's name together and as disciples and apostles of Jesus.