

A STORY OF THE

FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

Reprinted ~ 2009

Chapter 14: CHURCHES

For many farmers the tilling of the soil is a religious experience. The sprouting of the wheat and the birth of a calf in the spring portray the continuous miracle of life and regeneration. Few can deny the almost spiritual rebirth that occurs each spring in the country. But there are further, more awe-inspiring mysteries that each farmer deals with continually — the forces beyond his control — the floods, the droughts, the hailstorms, and the rains at harvest. The feeling of powerlessness in the face of these natural forces leads some to cynicism and bitterness, but moves others closer to God. Thus, like-minded settlers built congregations for the living and organized cemeteries for the dead. Both Satersdal Lutheran Church and Silver Creek Lutheran Church were organized in the 1890's, but they were not the only signs of religious life in the township. Catholics, Methodists and other believers attended churches in Thief River Falls, then as they still do now.



Rev. August Bredeson, pastor of Satersdal Lutheran Church for twenty-seven years. (C. 1915)

TRF Times
May 1960

Satersdal Church to Note Memorial Day

The first in what is expected will be a series of Memorial Day services will be held at the Satersdal church three miles east and seven miles north of Thief River Falls Monday, May 30.

The Satersdal congregation united with that of Our Savior's Lutheran church of Thief River Falls November 30, 1959, climaxing negotiations which had gone on for nearly a year. The new congregation is known as Our Savior's Lutheran and will worship and work at the church at 401 St. Paul av. S.

The new congregation guaranteed that the church building and cemetery in the country would be maintained and the Satersdal Ladies Aid continues to be a separate organization and occasionally meets at the country church.

The Satersdal congregation was organized by the Rev. Elias

Berlie January 29, 1891. Lars and Even Ose are the only surviving charter members who, with their parents, became members when the church was first organized.

Our Savior's Lutheran church was organized September 7, 1951, by the Rev. Jonas Helland.

The new congregation has made tentative plans to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Satersdal church and the 10th anniversary of Our Savior's church next year.

Associated with our Savior's church in a parish are the Rindal Lutheran church 11 miles northwest of Thief River Falls, the Eithlehem Lutheran church 11 miles northeast of the city and the Reiner Lutheran church 25 miles east of the city.

The present pastor, Rev. Lynn Luthard, began serving the parish November 1, 1958.

SATERSDAL LUTHERAN CHURCH 1891 - 1959

Satersdal Lutheran Church was organized January 29, 1891, by Pastor Elias Thorson Berli, an itinerant Lutheran pastor who served the congregation for six months. In July of that year, Pastor Hans Johannessen Villevik was installed. Services were held at the homes of the original members: G. J. Skomedal, Knute T. Ose, Gunne T. Ose, John M. Johnson, Jorgen Svenkeson, Ole Sorenson, Knute Svenkeson, Tollef O. Tverstol, Gunnuf Froisness, Rasmus Sorenson, Ole Bergland and Ole Olson. The name for the congregation came from a valley in southern Norway from which several of the members had emigrated.

The first Annual Meeting was held in the home of G. J. Skomedal on January 15, 1892, where it was decided that each family should pay \$3.00 a year for Pastor's salary and single people \$1.50. Each family should also contribute 50 cents a year for the Pastor's house rent. The following officers were elected: Ole Sorenson, Deacon; Gunne T. Ose, Treasurer; and G. J. Skomedal, Standing Secretary.

In 1893 Pastor August Bredeson was called. He held twelve services during the year, started confirmation classes, and received a salary of \$23.00. He continued to serve the congregation until 1920.

By 1895 Pastor Bredeson was holding services every other Sunday; the committee searching for a cemetery and building site had been working for two years; and on December 2, the double wedding of Soren Bergland and Gyro Skomedal, and John G. Skomedal and Kari Bergland was held.

Finally, in the spring of 1896, Tollef Tverstol donated some land in the SE corner of the SE ¼ of Section 15 for a cemetery and building site. The congregation held a meeting of incorporation on the site on March 21, and by April 13 Tverstol was dead. Ironically enough, he became the first person buried on the new cemetery that he had just donated. The church was built that summer (no cost is recorded) and in the pastor's record book is the date, "August 2, 1896", followed by the word "Kirken" underlined. The first service in the new church, obviously, was held on that date.

Though no records have been found for the organization of the Ladies Aid, we know it was functioning by 1897 since Pastor Bredeson notes he "was along with the Ladies Aid at the home of J. Skomedal on October 7 where the auction took in \$28.00."

One item in the 1904 Annual Meeting minutes of interest today is a resolution that "Members of the congregation over eighteen years both men and women have the right to vote."

Since land on the east side of the river was growing more populated, it was decided in the Annual Meeting of 1907 to move the church to land donated by Gunne Ose on the south bank of the Silver Creek in Section 25, its present site. The church was moved in the winter of 1908 by Ole O. Listol using twenty-two oxen. They crossed the river and came up the Silver Creek. He received \$65.00 for his work and the congregation provided the moving timbers and three loads of rocks per family for the foundation. An allocation of \$6.00 was set aside for Soren Bergland's labor to side and paint the church and another \$6.00 to Ole Lee and Ole Esplie to build two out houses on the new site. (A new Lutheran church had just been erected a mile and a half to the south. It had chosen the name "Silver Creek Lutheran Church" since the Silver



Satersdal Church being moved across the Thief River in the spring of 1908. Ole Listol used twenty-two oxen and received \$65.00 for the job.

Creek and its tributaries was a beautiful geographical feature on the east side of the Thief River prior to the dredging of Ditch 20 in 1913. Confusingly enough, the church that was called "Satersdal" was then on the bank of the Silver Creek, while the church that was called "Silver Creek" was on a knoll a mile and a half to the south.)

By 1916, the pastor's salary had been increased to \$200.00 annually, but in 1919 the congregation voted to discontinue the \$3.00 per member allocation and go to each member paying as much as he wanted. For the next several years the salary dropped to \$150.00 a year and by 1922 the treasury could only find \$129.58 for the pastor. The Ladies Aid had to make up the difference . . .

Through the years, Special Evangelistic and Laymen's Meetings were held twice a year as well as a month of Parochial School in the summer for the children. In 1925 the Sunday School was organized.

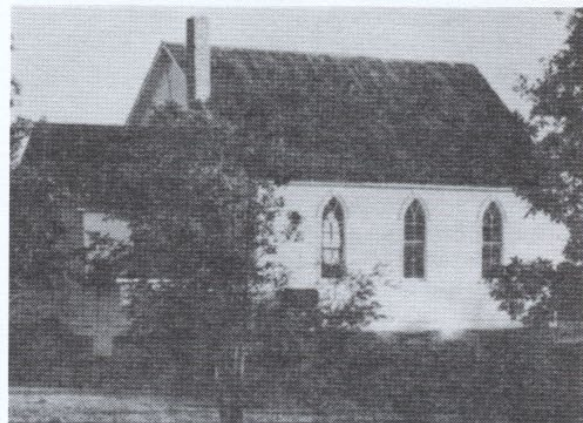
Pastors who served the congregation after Pastor Bredeson were O. I. Raaum (1921-28), O. J. Haukness (1930-31), Reinhart Peterson (1934-37), M. G. C. Vagenes (1934-44), Silas Ericson (1944-47), Evangelist Eddie Berg (1947-48), Sigurd Berg (1948-49), Jonas Helland (1950-57), and Lynn Luthard (1958-59).

The Satersdal Church belonged to a parish that included Rindal in New Solum Township, Bethlehem in Agdar Township, Reiner east of Goodridge, and Our Saviour's in Thief River Falls. The parish was affiliated with the old Lutheran Free Church. As pastors became more reluctant to serve many small churches in a parish, the Satersdal congregation held its last meeting on November 30, 1959, and merged with its sister congregation, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. At that meeting Ingvald Wold came singing down the aisle on the way to his regular pew, "Ever Be It So Humble, There's No Place Like Home".

Sons of the congregation who have gone out as pastors include Roger Ose, Gaylen Ose, Connely Dyrud, and Randy Moe presently in seminary.

After the church closed, Memorial Services have been held every year on Memorial Day Sunday and starting in 1979, a candle-light Christmas Service has been held on the Saturday night between Christmas and New Year's at 5:00. The cemetery corporation continues to operate with members made up of the descendants of original members of the congregation.

Loiell Dyrud



Satersdal Church 1984

**SILVER CREEK CHURCH
Founded in 1899**

Where do you begin the story of a church? The story begins in the hearts of Christian people desiring the fellowship of other believers and the feeding of hungry minds on the message of the proclaimed Word of God.

Thanks be to God for the flame of faith that burned in the hearts of those early pioneers in our township and community. From this beginning was born the Silver Creek Congregation, as believers gathered for services at the Eliza Gibson home (now known as the Mrs. Melvin Torgerson home) on August 14, 1898. Pastor Halvor Bjornson served as the first pastor.

At a meeting on March 12, 1899, the Silver Creek congregation was formally organized. It took its name from the Silver Creek, which ran nearby with tributaries draining off in several directions. Some still remember the fish caught in that creek. The charter members were: Saave Brokke, Andreas Gutterud, G. Gunderson, Ole B. Johnson, K. Molstad and Tollef Johnson. The first officers of this new congregation were: secretary, Saave Brokke; treasurer, G.

"I have seen men take land, farm it for a time and then pass away. Then someone else would take the same farm and after a while he would pass away. It is then we come to know the truth that even if we have a deed to the land we farm, we do not really own it. God owns it and we only use it for a while."

Alfred Solem
From "Centennial Reminiscences"
July 29, 1984