

Brief History of St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church, Garnavillo, Iowa

Although the St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran congregation organized in 1894, it did not build its first church building until 1897. Services until then were held in what once had been the Congregational Church, 205 N Washington Street, what is now the Garnavillo Museum. To build their first church, the congregation in 1897 purchased 4 lots on block 4, Garnavillo, from Mrs. Margaretha Albers for \$650.

J.A. Hempeler was the contractor for the church to be built with dimensions of 60' x 36' x 18' with a 65' steeple. It was completely furnished for an approximate cost of \$3,300. A small school house, 24' x 18' x 9' was built at the same time for \$175. In 1902 a fence was added around the property. In 1920, electric lights were installed in the church. And, in 1924, the walls of the church were redecorated and the pulpit and altar remodeled. In 1928 an addition was made to the church sanctuary to accommodate a two manual Hinners pipe organ installed for a total cost of \$2,834.20 in 1929. In 1937 the exterior of the church was remodeled, a basement was added, and an 18 foot classroom, sanctuary addition was built for a total cost of \$7,000. The school house, no longer needed, was bought by Fred Wendt who moved it and remodeled it into a home at 303 N Washington Street.

On March 12, 1945, the church building was completely destroyed by fire with only the contents salvaged. The congregation met in the Garnavillo High School auditorium until a new church building was completed.

In July 1946, the new church built on the old stone foundations under the supervision of Thorson & Son Architects was dedicated. The dimensions were 79' x 36'. It was built of enduring materials, exterior walls of brick and limestone, in the English County Colonial style. Native timber was used. The mason builder was William Wille. A brick fireplace was built in the church yard. All the chancel furnishings, which were of light oak, were purchased from Ossit Church Furniture in Janesville, WI. The oak pews which were saved from the first church were refinished for use in the new church. In November 1946, a new 3 manual Wangerin organ was purchased from Milwaukee, WI, and installed for a cost of \$6,500. In 1972, the oak front doors of the church were replaced with full length glass doors. In 1974, a partition between the "mother's room" and the narthex was removed. A parish education unit was started in 1974 with a bid of \$42,248 by Eldon Swisher. The parish education addition was dedicated in 1975. In 1979, new pews were purchased. Twenty-seven of the old pews were purchased by the Clayton County Fair Board. The church basement was also remodeled in 1979. In 1988, the steps in front of the church were replaced with a ramp, and new light posts and railings were also installed. In 2015, the basement Sunday school room in the educational unit was remodeled. In 2016 a wheelchair platform lift was installed.

In 1901, the congregation built a parsonage for \$1,100. A barn with dimensions 18' x 26' x 16' was also built. In 1913 a corn crib was added next to the barn. The corn crib stood until 1933. Heating was updated in the parsonage in 1924. In 1927, the parsonage was modernized and remodeled, a bathroom and washroom were added. In 1934 a garage and woodshed were built to replace all the outbuildings at the parsonage. In 1944, the parsonage was completely renovated with a new complete basement under it. In 1945, a new furnace was installed. In 1954, the congregation voted to build a new parsonage. The parsonage was finished in 1956.

Compiled March 10, 2017 by Jane Thein, Garnavillo Historical Society

Resources: St. Peter Lutheran Church 1997 Anniversary Book, 1946 Dedication & Anniversary Book, and news articles 1945-46.