

*Living in God's Grace*



*Wilhelmina Lutheran Church*

*Hay Lakes, Alberta*

*1908 - 2008*

# Pastor's Message

Dear Christian friends – the Lord be with you.

The old Romans had **MILE STONES** along their hi-ways indicating the miles to travel from one place to another. When you travel in countries occupied by the Roman Empire, you will see these mile stones still standing.

This year you have reached MILESTONE No. 100 on your congregational hi-way. If we say it fast, it does not seem to be so long ago. But when you walk life's hi-way one year after another it is quite a long stretch. You do not see the end of it, or what kind of an end it may be.



Greg Kjos 2008

But when you get to this distance – 100 years - 36, 525 days – together we rediscover how fast the time has gone and how short the road really is. Furthermore we also discover that the congregation, which started in 1908, now lives in the dawn of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

Therefore when I was asked by the Anniversary Committee to provide a reflective word, I searched around in my mind, my heart and the Scriptures as to what the Lord says to us on this memorable occasion.

My attention was drawn to Prov. 3:6 Now this verse is translated several ways. In the KJV, we read: "IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM AND HE SHALL DIRECT THY PATHS." In free English, this verse is translated by the following: "Have God in MIND WHATEVER YOU PLAN TO DO/AND HE WILL GUIDE YOU IN THE RIGHT WAY." Or put another way, this same verse is echoed in Ps. 37:5 "COMMIT YOUR WAYS UNTO THE LORD AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS."

These words are in sharp contrast to our present day attitude and life style that reflects our desire to get our own way and to live our life according to our plan. Yet Wilhelmina Lutheran's presence is a vivid and lucid reminder that life – especially the Christian life, a life lived and celebrated within community - is about Jesus and living life according to His plan and His

way. Jesus says: Without ME you can do nothing (John 15). Nothing of real and lasting value. And so life ends for so many in a tragic way.

As we celebrate this day and also gaze into the days ahead, who (not what) is our hope based on? It is based on a faith conviction that affirms the living presence of Jesus and a living faith in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore I encourage us to keep looking to Jesus, who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith so that we may continue our race which is set before us, a race established and planned by Jesus and set before us for His glory and our wellness.

In all your ways and plans have God in mind and He will lead you the right way and to everlasting blessed eternity.

- Pastor Greg Kjos



#### **PRAYER:**

We thank Thee, Heavenly Father for all the blessings Thou hast showered so abundantly upon this church family. Thou hast granted them grace to walk together life's road the past 100 years. Keep on leading them the rest of their lives. Bless them in Jesus richly and all their loved ones. Amen

# *Introduction*

The history of this congregation is typical of many, for it was conceived in primitive, pioneering conditions and has continued through the years, through storm and sunshine, poverty and prosperity. People have come and gone, many gave years of outstanding service in various capacities, out of love for the Lord and without any thought of personal glory. Let us honor and give thanks to God and His church, for the ministers and pioneers of this community, who nobly sacrificed so much in order that they and the generations thereafter would have a place to worship, to teach the word of God, to baptize, to marry and to bury their loved ones.

The history was compiled by Mr. John Erickson for the Fiftieth Anniversary commemorated in the year 1958. Every effort to ensure the accuracy of this publication has been made, but with the passing of time and the death of most men and women who were associated with the settlement of the community and the establishment of the congregation, it becomes more and more difficult to obtain accurate information. Many thanks to Mr. Erickson who was commissioned by the congregation. With his permission this history was revised and updated by Alver and Algot Person for the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1983. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the congregation in 2008 the existing history was again updated, this time by Ron Eliason and Deanna Margel, to reflect the experiences and changes of the church building and congregation between 1983 and 2008.

For a number of years during the turn of the century in 1900, there was a general exodus of the people from the Scandinavian countries to America. They were hardy, ambitious people, filled with a spirit of adventure and unmatched courage. The Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed from Eastern Canada to the Pacific in 1885, thus opening the west to the settlement of millions of acres of farm land. The Government of Canada and the railway launched a campaign designed to bring thousands of immigrants to this land. Hundreds of thousands of pamphlets, maps and folders, printed in English, German, French, Dutch, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, Welsh and Gaelic were distributed throughout the countries of Western Europe. This literature gave glowing and exaggerated accounts of tremendous opportunities in the Canadian West. And it told of low priced land which could be had for the asking. Enticed by this type of advertising, and letters from friends who had emigrated earlier, many decided to leave the land of their birth, their homes, friends and relatives to try their fortunes in a new and foreign land, the Canadian West.

In the year 1900, Mr. And Mrs. Staboe and a lady friend (Inga Johnson), emigrated from their native Sweden to Minnesota, U.S.A. There, Inga met and married Jacob Lunde, who had previously left his Swedish homeland. Later on, the Staboes and the Lundes moved to Alberta, Canada and homesteaded in the area which became known as the Lundemo district, located about thirty-five miles northeast of Wetaskiwin, the nearest railway point at that time. Mrs. Lunde, who was well acquainted with the Selins in Sweden, wrote to them, telling of all the wonderful prospects for the future and the homestead land which was available. Axel Selin decided to move with his wife, family and a brother, Petter, and they set out for the land of opportunity. After becoming settled the Selins wrote back to Sweden to the Victor Erickson family, inviting them to come to Canada, which they did. Within the few years that followed, many other families came over and before long the entire district had been settled.

These pioneers arrived in this country with a few meagre personal belongings, odd articles of necessary clothing and had little or no money. Many of the men did off-season work in the timber lands of British Columbia or the railway camps, in order to provide a living and gather a few necessities of life. The privation and hardships suffered in their struggle for existence were many, but they were strong in their faith in God and had untold courage and ambition. They had the spirit and will to work, progress and prosper, which is reflected in the modern farms and fine homes which are in the community today. The first houses and farm buildings were built from hewed logs and home-sawn native lumber. Many of these buildings are still in evidence, a tribute to the skilled workmanship of our early pioneers, a skill brought with them from the land of their birth. Much of the first sod broken in this area was done with oxen and horses.

During times of illness and childbirth, doctors and nurses were too distant to be of much help in time of need, but the people of this district were most fortunate to have in their midst a woman who, although not a trained nurse as we know them today, spent most of her life caring for the sick and lending a helping hand wherever it was needed. This woman was Mrs. Magnus Lindberg (Mathilda). Like a doctor, she was ready to go when called and many a night she had to set out with a team of horses in rain storms or the bitter cold of winter to help a neighbour in distress. She was an experienced midwife, and many of the people living here today were brought into this world with her assistance.

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Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory,  
because of your love and faithfulness. - Psalm 115:1 NIV

# A New Church

In the year 1902, a congregation had been formed some ten miles to the south-east of the Wilhelmina community. This was known as the Fridhem Lutheran Church.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the long distances which had to be covered by oxen and horses, many attended services there occasionally, and a few including the Axel Selin family were members. But these people had a vision of the future, for themselves and their children, that was responsible for the decision that God's word must be planted in our midst. In the land that they had left behind, the church had played an important part in their daily lives and they felt that here too, there was a great need for a church. So on Saturday, the 7th of November, 1908, a meeting was called at the Erik Victor Erickson home for the purpose of organizing a congregation. Pastor Olaf Lindgren, who had been serving the Fridhem congregation, was elected chairman of the meeting, with Axel Selin as secretary. Elected to the board of administration were the following: Deacons - Nils Lindberg, Harold Person and Magnus Johnson; Trustees - Amandus Pearson, Linus Selin and Magnus Lindberg; Treasurer - Linus Selin. It was agreed to name the church the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Wilhelmina Congregation. Many of the early settlers who homesteaded in this little community had emigrated from Vilhelmina, Västerbotten in the northern part of Sweden, and so in

keeping with the memories of home and the place of their birth they decided that it was only fitting to name this new church "Wilhelmina". It was agreed to join the Minnesota Conference of the Augustana Synod, and the constitution of 1887 was formally adopted.



Original church blueprints

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<sup>1</sup> It is of note that the Fridhem Lutheran Church building was destroyed completely by fire in the spring of 2005.

Charter members were as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Axel Selin and family, Mr. and Mrs. Nils Lindberg and family, Linus Selin, Mr. and Mrs. Erik Hanson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Hans Erik Johnson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Person and family, Mr. and Mrs. Gustaf Edvall Carlson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Amandus Pearson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Erik P. Nordin and family, Mr. and Mrs. Per Alfred Forsen and family, Erik Oscar Swanlund, Mr. and Mrs. Anton Pearson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Sandquist and family, Mr. and Mrs. Erik Victor Erickson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Petter Selin and family, Mr. and Mrs. Magnus Lindberg and family, Mr. and Mrs. Nils Magnus Johnson and family, and Per Olof Victor Erickson. This made a total of thirty-three adults and forty-seven children, truly a remarkable beginning.

Elected as a committee to investigate the possibility of building a church and finding a suitable location were Oscar Swanlund, Anton Pearson and Axel Selin. Services were to be held in Swedish once a month in the various homes throughout the community with Pastor Lindgren officiating.

The question of a suitable location for a church site and cemetery was considered at a special meeting, held at the P.A. Forsen home on March the 4th, 1909. One location being on the Oscar Swanlund farm (SW 12-49-21 W4) and the other on the Magnus Lindberg farm (NW 12-49-21 W4). The trustees were given the authority to close a deal with either party if possible. In the meantime, Mr. Swanlund had decided not to part with any of his land for a church building, and instead of attempting to close a deal with Mr. Lindberg, the committee decided that a better location would be on the P.A. Forsen farm (SE 12-49-21 W4), where the church is now located. Considerable opposition to this move was expressed by the members living in the western part of the community as they felt that this would mean much farther for them to attend church.

This matter was finally settled at a meeting held at the Victor Erickson home on September 24th, 1909. The choice of a location on Magnus Lindberg's land or on P.A. Forsen's land was carried by a motion to build a church on the P.A. Forsen's, by a majority of two votes. The sum of \$15.00 was paid to Mr. Forsen for the purchase of four acres of land, with the understanding that the congregation pay for the cost of the transfer of title. However, dissension on this issue resulted in nine families separating from the Wilhelmina congregation to form their own congregation, the Swan Hill Church Society.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Joseph Lutheran Congregation: 100 Years of Grace Centennial Anniversary August 26, 2007

The Swan Hills Society purchased land for a cemetery on NE 10-49-21 W4 and met in members' homes until they decided to work with the Norwegian St. Joseph congregation to "build a church" together in 1915. Pastor Leonard Heiner served both Wilhelmina and the Swan Hill Church Society from 1915 to 1918. In 1949, after selling its share of the building to the St. Joseph congregation, the Swan Hill Church Society disbanded, with some members re-joining Wilhelmina, others moving to Bethel Lutheran Church in Camrose or Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Hay Lakes.

After choosing the location for the Wilhelmina church, a committee of three was then elected to measure out the land for the church-site. They were Harold Person, Hans E. Johnson, and Erik Petter Kristofferson. It was then agreed that work on the church property, such as brushing and fencing be done in the fall by donated labour, Harold Person in charge.

The first annual meeting was held in the Brandland School, on the 11th of January, 1910. Pastor Lindgren stated in his annual report that twelve children had been baptized during the year, eleven of them with parents being members of the congregation. There were four new communicant members, and three couples married. One communicant member and two children passed away during the year. Seven communicant members and fourteen children requested dismissal from the congregation. This left a total of thirty communicant members and forty-three children. The treasurer's report shows a total income for the year of \$44.80 from which \$29.70 was paid to the Conference. Elected as trustee was P.A. Forsen, and J.O. Anderson as deacon. Oscar Swanlund was the elected secretary.

The foundation for the new church was laid in 1912, with each family being asked to haul three loads of stones for the concrete. After the forms were up an open air service was held within the foundation walls to commemorate the occasion. The construction of the building began in 1913 with Mr. M. Matson engaged as building supervisor. The committee in charge of the work consisted of Harold Person, Erik Hanson and Oscar Swanlund, with Pastor Lindgren as an advisory member. All the hauling of stone, sand, gravel, cement and lumber, as well as the building and construction of the church was done by volunteer labour by members and friends of the congregation. The first meetings in the new building were held late in the fall of 1913, although the church was not yet completed.

The financing of this tremendous project and undertaking is of considerable interest. Pastor Lindgren and Axel Selin were elected as a committee to canvas for pledges and donations. The trustees were authorized to borrow up to \$500 dollars if necessary. The treasurer's report of the building fund for the year 1913 reads as follows:

**Receipts**

Donations from Ladies Aid	\$219.60
Subscriptions from members	262.75
Loan from Pastor Lindgren	250.00
Collected for paint	11.40
Lacking	<u>2.75</u>
	\$746.50

**Paid Out**

Lumber and building material	\$624.60
Salary to building supervisor	53.00
Board for building supervisor	7.50
Collected for paint	11.40
Paid to Lindgren on loan	<u>50.00</u>
	\$746.50

Donated by free labour at 25 cents per hour<sup>1</sup>: \$826.25

It is also of interest to note the church budget for the same year:

**Income**

Donations from members	\$76.55
Collections	5.45
Income from picnic social	<u>8.55</u>
Total Income	\$90.55

**Paid Out**

Pastors salary for 1913	\$44.25
Conference dues	37.70
On Pastors salary, 1912	6.00
Balance on hand	<u>2.60</u>
	\$90.55

These figures tell a remarkable story, a story of dogged determination, perseverance, sacrifice and faith during the days when there was little or no money. However, the people willingly contributed what little they had. It brings to mind the story Jesus told of the poor widow who contributed more with her two small coins than all the others who gave only out of their wealth (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4).

After the church had been erected, it was by no means complete. There still remained the matter of furnishings within the church. For the bare walls

<sup>1</sup> A record was kept of all labour donated to the church and valued at the rate of 25¢ per hour.

were not conducive to an atmosphere for proper worship. Makeshift furnishings were first used and little by little these were replaced to what you see today.

A young girls society, "Små Flickornas Syförening" had saved enough money for an organ by the end of 1914. Mr. Axel Selin purchased the organ in Winnipeg at a cost of \$114.30. He also served as the church organist until 1923. In 2005 this organ was sold and the proceeds used to purchase a sound system for the building.

During the years of 1916, 1917 and 1918, a very active Young People's Society raised enough money to cover the cost of the necessary furnishings. The altar, altar ring, lectern, pulpit and hymn-board were built and assembled by Mr. Olaf Wallin and Mr. John Person. The altar painting was done by Mr. Wallin. The communion vessels were purchased by Pastor Heiner from a congregation near Calmar which had disbanded. Two gasoline lamps were also purchased by the Young People. The pews were purchased in Edmonton at a cost of \$200.

A decision was made at the annual meeting on January 12th, 1917 to finish the construction of the church. Mr. John Ness was hired to plaster the inside walls. A contract was assigned for the construction of the steeple at a cost of \$130.00 dollars to a Mr. Hornquist and Oscar Selin.

The completion of the belfry and spire in 1919 marked a highlight and historical event of the congregation. The congregation hosted the Alberta Dis-



First service within the foundation of Wilhelmina Lutheran Church in 1912.  
Pastor Lindgren established the congregation in 1908.

trict Convention and at this service the church was dedicated to the Service and Glory of God. The Wilhelmina Church became a landmark that was visible near and far, for it was built on the highest point of land along the Inter-provincial Pipe Line from Edmonton to Lake Superior.

A twentieth anniversary celebration was planned for 1928, so a committee comprised of Jonas Anderson, Hans. E. Johnson and Axel Selin, was elected to be in charge for the building of a dining-hall and to raise the money for this. The Ladies Aid donated the greater amount to the project. This addition was built in 1928, and is used as a dining hall, or for Sunday School classes and social functions.

The sound of the church bell over the countryside in the home land had entered deeply into the souls of these early settlers, and they felt that no church was complete without a spire and bell. But to purchase a bell required funds which were sadly lacking, so for the time being the congregation had to do without one. However, at the annual meeting on January 6th, 1930, the Luther League Society was given a free hand to raise funds for the purchase of a bell to which they immediately contributed the sum of \$25.00. Adrian Anderson and Einar Lindberg were elected to be in charge of this undertaking. By 1932, enough money was available for the purchase of a bell and it was ordered from the St. Louis Bell Foundry in St. Louis, U.S.A. at a cost of \$221.47 complete with the necessary mountings. The bell weighed 579 lbs. and carried with it a fifteen-year guarantee. It was hauled out from the Hay Lakes station on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August by Gunhard and John Erickson. In the meantime a committee headed by Jonas Anderson and Hans Johnson were making preparations for the installation and with the aid of many willing hands the bell was hoisted into place.

Pastor Otto Eklund was instrumental in establishing this undertaking. On the first Sunday of September, 1932, the bell chimed out its jubilant tones for the first time, announcing to one and all that worship was being held in the house of God. Pastor Axel Eriksson served the congregation at this time.

Inscribed on the bell is the following verse of Hymn No. 328 in the Swedish hymnal:

*"Hit, o Jesus, samlas vi, Att ditt helga ord få höra.  
Vardes sjelf du stå oss bi, Och var hag till andakt röra,  
Att han, ifran jorden tagen, Till dig ailtid varder dragen."*

Following is the English translation, hymn No. 302 in the old English hymnal:

*"Blessed Jesus, at Thy word. We are gathered all to hear Thee; Let our hearts and souls be stirred, Now to seek and love and fear Thee; By Thy teachings, sweet and holy, Drawn from earth to love Thee solely."*

From the early days, the church was heated with a barrel type wood-burning heater which proved to be rather inadequate. So with a donation from the Luther League, a large coal furnace was purchased and installed in 1941. Then in 1975, natural gas was available, so a forced air gas furnace was installed, which was a great improvement. The baptismal font, made by John Person, and the altar Bible are among the gifts from Mr. Axel Selin. In 1947, Mr. Hellquist and Alex Matson were assigned to repair, re-shingle and paint the steeple. In 1948, the Women's Missionary Society purchased and installed a carpet. In 1980, this carpet was replaced using funds raised by the Willing Workers. In 1953, funds were canvassed for the installation of electricity.

During 1957 and 1958 the church was painted inside and out, ceiling tile put on the ceiling and the walls finished with wall plank. Michael Lee donated his talents in redecorating the Altar painting. The outside was painted in 1976, 1990 and again in 1998. At the annual meeting in 1980, a decision was made to raise funds to re-shingle the roof with cedar shakes. The work was assigned to Mr. Francis Gartner. The kitchen was re-shingled with cedar shakes on April 28, 1984 and again on May 3, 2008. New front doors were donated in memory of their son by the Con Winder Family and installed in 1986. In 1989, Max Lienholt upholstered and then donated seat cushions for the sanctuary pews. Manfred Watterrodt crafted and donated a small table and chair that has been used for signing the register at many weddings in the years hence. The steeple was re-shingled in January of 1987. The replacement of the church foundation commenced October 1, 1989 and was complete shortly thereafter. In December of 1990 a very welcome addition was completed - the new bathroom. After 80 years we finally had indoor plumbing! In 1990 the church was also re-insulated. Kirsten Forsen crocheted and donated a beautiful picture of "The Good Shepherd". A chain-link fence was installed around the cemetery. Two ceiling fans were put into the church sanctuary (which turned out to be a source of nearly endless debate... On or off...on or off...too hot...too cold...but after 14 years an equilibrium was finally reached - and the item removed from the council agenda!) In 1991, an advent wreath was hand-crafted by Ryan Nordin and donated to the congregation, which has enhanced our advent preparations as we light the advent candles each week before Christmas.

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Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned,  
in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.  
All glory to God forever and ever! Amen. Gal. 1:4-5 NLT

In the summer of 1993 Michael Lee once again shared his great talents with the congregation and undertook a complete restoration and repainting of the Altar Painting. The finished work is beautiful. In the spring of that same year the cross on the steeple was replaced with a new one handcrafted by Algot Person. Arnold Naslund built new tables for the kitchen in 1993. In 1996 a sizable donation was received for new windows, which were purchased and installed that same year. The Willing Workers ladies group raised money for new Easter and Advent paraments, which were sewn by Lillian Nordin in 2002. Ardis Johnson and family donated money toward a new church sign (2002) which now stands in front of the wheelchair ramp that was built the previous year. In 2001 the front steps were also replaced. In 2003 the exterior of church received a big face-lift in the form of vinyl siding, at a cost of \$20,000. In 2005, a sound system was purchased and installed at cost thanks to Gordon and Terry Lien. The family of Norman Selin purchased a communion tray in his memory (2006), eliminating the extra step of collecting a communion cup from the top of the piano before receiving the Lord's Supper. Finally, in preparation for the 100th anniversary celebration, Kimberly Bell did a beautiful job of re-painting the altar, pulpit, altar railing, baptismal font, lectern, plant stands, window frames and floor (summer of 2006). Outside floodlights were also added to the building, brightening up dark nights. Evergreen trees were planted in 1932, 1968, and 1978, which adds much to the appearance of the church grounds. Porcupines and early spring snow storms caused some noticeable damage to the north-west corner of the cemetery evergreens in the mid-2000s, and will need to be replaced.

Over the years there have been many improvements voluntarily done by each and every one involved with the church in one way or another. To mention everyone would take up volumes and so we ask forgiveness if we have not mentioned you by name - remember that our Father sees and remembers everything even if we do not; your contributions go neither unnoticed or unappreciated and we thank you for them.

In more recent years, annual events have included: candlelight Holden Evening Prayer services throughout the season of Lent, a pancake breakfast usually held the Sunday after Easter; a Golf Tournament played at Miquelon Hills Golf Course in June; a cemetery service on the last Sunday of July; a post-Thanksgiving barbecue held the Sunday after Thanksgiving (weather permitting); the Santa Lucia program held in early December; and last, but definitely not least, the Christmas Eve Candlelight service.

Wilhelmina has also been featured as a film location site for two Alberta produced movies. "Heart of the Sun" by Dancing Stone Films (1996) and "Catching the Chameleon" by Ordinary Hero Productions (2004).

# *Of the Ministry*

Throughout the years this congregation has been served by many pastors, lay-men and students who faithfully and diligently ministered to the people:

1908-15	Rev. Olaf Lindgren	1977-82	Rev. Robert Kemppainen
1915	Rev. A. Wattman	1982-83	Rev. Dennis J. Wenzel, interim
1915-18	Rev. Leonard Heiner	1983-90	Rev. Paul Roellchen-Pfohl
1919-20	Rev. C.G. Anderson	1991	Pastor Ramos, interim
1921	Rev. Otto Eklund	1991-92	Rev. Mark Sallmen
1922	Rev. Leonard Alexander	1992-93	Rev. James Kruger, interim
1923-27	Rev. C.G. Gronberg	1994-96	Rev. Marylin Haugen -Strand
1928-31	Rev. Otto Eklund	1995-96	Rev. Vincent Eriksson, supervisor, pulpit supply
1931-37	Rev. Axel Eriksson	1995	Rev. George Friedrich, interim
1937-38	Rev. N.J. Lundahl	1994-2005	Rev. Craig Wentland
1938-47	Rev. Carl A. Bernhardson	2005-06	Rev. Rolf Bjornstad, interim
1947	Rev. Bertil Edquist	2006-07	Rev. B. Rachel Dart, interim
1948-49	Rev. Otto Eklund	2008 -	Rev. Greg Kjos
1949-55	Rev. C. Robert Pearson		
1955-56	Rev. John Arvidson		
1956-60	Rev. Robert Ek		
1960-65	Rev. Paul M. Swedberg		
1967-72	Rev. Donald Miller		
1972-76	Rev. Robert Jacobson		



**Olaf Lindgren 1908-1915**



**Leonard Heiner 1915-1918**



**C.G. Gronberg 1923-1927**



**Otto Eklund 1928-1931**



**Axel Eriksson 1932-1937**



**N.J. Lundahl 1938**



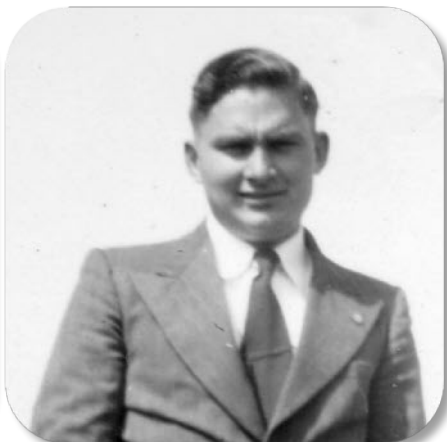
**Carl Bernhardson 1939-1947**



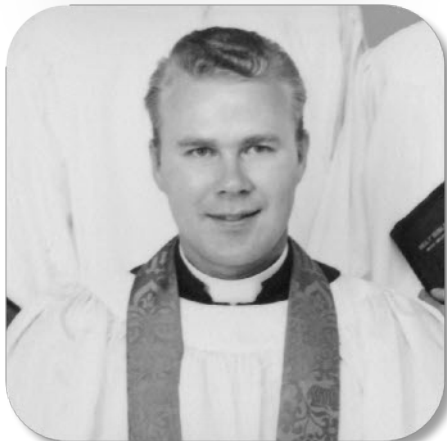
**Bertil Edquist 1947**



**Robert Pearson 1949-1955**



**John Arvidson 1955-56**



**Robert Ek 1956-1960**



**Paul Swedberg 1960-1965**



**Donald Miller 1967-1972**



**Robert Jacobson 1972-1977**



**Robert Kemppainen 1977-1982**



**Dennis J. Wenzel V.P. 1982-1983**



**Paul Roellchen-Pfohl 1983-1990**



**Pastor Ramos 1991**



**Mark Sallmen 1991-1992**



**James Kruger 1992-1993**



**Marilyn Haugen-Strand 1994-1996**



**Vincent Eriksson 1995**



**George Friedrich 1995**



**Craig Wentland 1996-2005**



**Rolf Bjornstad 2006**



**B. Rachel Dart 2007**

# *To Reminisce*

Even though Pastor Per Almgren never lived to see the day when the Wilhelmina congregation was organized, he would be noteworthy of reference. In 1902, he became the frontier missionary of the Augustana Swedish Lutheran Synod in Alberta, with headquarters in Wetaskiwin. In a four year period he established eight congregations, including the Fridhem congregation in 1902. Fridhem provided a nucleus of twenty-four confirmed members and thirty-four children to organize the Wilhelmina congregation in 1908. Had his destiny not come to the sudden tragic ending of his life in 1906, it is likely he would have been the founder of the Wilhelmina congregation also. The legend is that as he was travelling along a trail through the woods in his buggy, from a preaching engagement near Pigeon Lake, a tree felled by a woodsman, crashed down on him and he was fatally injured. A monument in his memory was placed at the location. Almgren's successor was Pastor Olaf Lindgren.

Pastor Olaf Lindgren organized the Wilhelmina congregation and served until 1915, receiving a salary of \$50 a year. In 1910, Lindgren moved to Czar and organized a congregation there, but continued to serve the Fridhem and Wilhelmina parish, commuting from Czar. A Lutheran church was built at Kingman about 1914. The three congregations formed a parish until the Kingman congregation disbanded.

Remuneration was very meagre and no doubt there were many moments of dark discouragement and despair. But these men were strong in their faith and through perseverance and determination, their work has been fruitful.

Pastor Leonard Heiner was ordained in Minneapolis, U.S.A. in 1915 and therewith accepted a call to this parish, receiving \$100 a year for his service. He was one who faced many trials and tribulations and whose ministry was cut short by his death during the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, when he laboured among the sick until he too, succumbed. It is suggested that you read the heart-rendering biography of Pastor Heiner by V.J. Tengwald in the Armena history "Footprints along the Stoney", p.215-216.

Pastor Otto Eklund, a strong hard-working minister and farmer, was noted for his powerful dynamic preaching. He was well-known and well- liked as he served the parish so many times over the years. In addition to Meeting Creek, he served the Fridhem and Wilhelmina parish. He also had a very profound interest in the Miquelon Mission (north of Miquelon Lake) which

he established in 1929, but it was finally dissolved about 1945. Upon his death, as stated in his obituary, was a well-phrased sentiment, "The Oak Has Fallen".

Pastor Axel Eriksson was another pastor who was noted for his faithful attention to the matters of the parish, even under the most adverse conditions. Stories are told of his great endurance as a walker, often walking the distance of seven miles from Fridhem to Wilhelmina. He also attended to the Miquelon Mission. Death ended his ministry in 1937. It is evident his ministry made a strong impression upon his own family, in that three of his sons, Herbert, Harold and Paul entered into the ministry and a daughter, Helen, became a deaconess.

Pastor Carl Bernhardson can be remembered with gratitude for his very thorough and profound preaching and his faithful ministry until his death in 1947. While he served this parish and the Miquelon Mission, he was also Dean of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute. The Swedish language was generally used until 1949, in the service and records.

Pastor Robert Pearson served the parish for a period of six years before accepting a call to the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute as Dean. During his ministry the congregation discontinued receiving mission aid since he was also teaching at the Bible School and his salary there supplemented his salary from the parish. In 1949, Bethel Lutheran Church was organized under his guidance, becoming the third congregation within the parish.

Pastor Robert Ek arrived from the Seminary in Rock Island but hails from Monterey, Minnesota. He and Mrs. Ek were newly-weds when they arrived in 1956. Under his leadership, the congregation celebrated the fiftieth anniversary in 1958.

Pastor Paul M. Swedberg was extended a call in 1960. He served the parish until 1965, when he made a decision to serve in the mission fields of Africa. During this period the Wilhelmina and Fridhem congregations were struggling for survival, so on the recommendation from the Synod that active members transfer to neighbouring churches of their choice, the Fridhem congregation voted in favour of disbandment in 1963. At a special congregational meeting held at Wilhelmina on September 5th, 1965, the recommendation by council passed by a vote of twelve in favour and ten against, that the Wilhelmina congregation also disband.

From the time when the church closed, there was a feeling amongst the people of something amiss and interest was on the increase to have it re-opened for services. A meeting was called in the fall of 1966. The president of the

Western Canadian Synod, Dr. J.M. Zimmerman, presided at the meeting, followed with discussion. Pastor Donald Miller, serving the Bethel congregation at Camrose, attended the meeting with concern, and offered to lend a hand providing that some arrangement was possible with the Bethel congregation. A suggestion by Dr. Zimmerman that Wilhelmina affiliate with the New Sarepta congregation and Pastor Lyons as a trial, was agreed upon. However, Pastor Lyons departed from Alberta immediately after the first service was held. Arrangements were then made with Bethel and Pastor Miller to serve Wilhelmina which he continued to do faithfully until he left in November, 1972.

Pastor Robert Jacobson and family accepted a call to the parish and arrived in January, 1973. He will be remembered as being a distinctly extraordinary minister, and was very well-liked. He was a strong preacher and teacher of God's word and encouraged the members of the parish to be good stewards of the land. Upon a recommendation by Pastor Jacobson, at the annual meeting in January, 1975, it was resolved that the Wilhelmina congregation request to be re-instated into the Western Canada Synod as they had not been since the congregation disbanded. The question of realignment with Our Saviour, Hay Lakes, was under discussion in 1977, due to the overloaded responsibility on the pastor. A motion was carried unanimously that Wilhelmina desired to continue the affiliation with Bethel and Pastor Jacobson. However, due to the dominating perseverance from the Bethel congregation and the Synod president, Pastor Sjoborg, the Wilhelmina congregation reluctantly had to eventually come to terms - an arrangement that has in fact worked out to the benefit of both Our Saviour and Wilhelmina over the past thirty years. Pastor Jacobson went on to become bishop of the Alberta/Northwest Territories Synod, a position he filled for ten years.

Pastor Robert Kemppainen, a Senior Seminarian from Minneapolis, Minnesota, was extended a call in May 1977. He arrived to begin his ministry the first of September, 1977. A memorable event of 1979 was the wedding celebrations of Pastor Kemppainen and Marilyn Schoenkecht, R.N., a local lass of Hay Lakes. He continued Pastor Jacobson's ministry of strong preaching, teaching and stewardship. He also introduced more contemporary forms of worship, putting his guitar to good use on many Sunday mornings. Upon accepting a call from the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute, Pastor Kemppainen handed in his resignation in 1982.

A call was extended to Seminarian Paul Pfohl of St. Louis, U.S.A. on January 3, 1983. He accepted the call and served faithfully until December 1990. Pastor Paul and his wife were newly wed when they arrived in our parish. On April 29, 1984 Pastor Paul's ordination service took place in Hay Lakes. During the vacancy in 1982 and 1983, the parish was served by vari-

ous supply pastors including student Greg Kjos and Vice Pastor Dennis Wenzel. Pastor Paul and his wife, Joan, quickly became an important part of the community, and were involved in many aspects of community life. Their door was always open and people were welcome to share their joys and burdens over a cup of coffee at their kitchen table. Family and youth were also an important part of their ministry. When they left in 1990, three children had been born into their family and they were expecting a fourth. Pastor Paul was well known for dropping in unannounced for an afternoon or evening visit, and was always willing to pitch in and lend a hand where needed.

The congregation was served for a brief period by Costa Rican native, Pastor Ramos - a decidedly dynamic speaker with a tremendous enthusiasm for God and trust in God's faithfulness. As one congregational member summed it up with a laugh in later years: "He'll be well remembered for pioneering the three hour sermon!"

Pastor Mark Sallmen was instrumental in re-introducing Swedish traditions within the church, beginning with the first "Santa Lucia" celebration held in December of 1991. This program has become a highlight of the year ever since it first began and special thanks must be made to Lillian Nordin for organizing the children and youth in the community each year to commemorate Saint Lucia's story of light and giving to the poor. Pastor Mark also held a Swedish Julotta (6:00am Christmas Morning) service in the Swedish language the year he served us.

Between 1992 and 1996, the congregation experienced a rotation of ministerial leadership.

Rev. James Kruger began by serving for nearly a year and a half. He's remembered as a strong evangelist, grounded in the Word and Traditions of the church. When the congregation sang a chorus containing the word "Hallelujah" during Lent, we were quickly taught that, for Lutherans, it was inappropriate to use the word "Hallelujah" at that time. Lent was the season of reflection and preparation.

In 1994, Pastor Marilyn Haugen-Strand was called and served for a short time. She spent one year of that time on maternity leave, at the end of which she announced her resignation (her husband had accepted a job in British Columbia necessitating a family re-location). Pastor Vincent Ericksson served as supply minister and also supervised intern Craig Wentland during Pastor Marilyn's leave of absence. Pastor George Friedrich also served as interim and mentor prior to Pastor Craig's ordination.

In 1996, Rev. Craig Wentland - who had already been serving the congregation in an intern position - was called as full time pastor. He was ordained at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Hay Lakes, and continued to serve the parish for the next eight years. He encouraged youth participation in worship services, and advocated faith outside of "Sunday". The confirmation students were involved in external ministry such as visiting the residents of Rosehaven. He also promoted inter-generation activities and worship which met with some success. In 2004, Pastor Craig moved on to become chaplain at the Augustana University College in Camrose.

In March of 2008, Pastor Greg Kjos accepted a full time call to the Hay Lakes Parish. In the two intervening years, we were served by two interim ministers. Rev. Rolf Bjornstad from Edmonton and Pastor Rachel Dart, who also commuted from Edmonton. Due to the nature of interim ministry, and the physical aging of many members of the congregation, Wilhelmina experienced a degree of directionlessness and feelings of fear over the future viability of the congregation during this time. Pastor Greg's acceptance of the call to serve us has brought a renewed sense of purpose and a re-grounding in God's word that we are very excited about. We are looking forward to serving the Lord faithfully for the next one hundred years! It's interesting to note that Pastor Greg was here at Wilhelmina twenty-five years ago as a student. We are delighted to have him back.



# *Church Auxiliaries*

One organization which has done outstanding service within the church was the Ladies Aid or as it is known in Swedish, "Kvinno-förening". When the congregation was organized in 1908, the ladies organized the same year to shoulder their share of the endeavour to establish a church. Throughout the years, they have contributed thousands of dollars in financial aid to the church to help with the building, furnishings, and maintenance. The spinning party and quilting bee was a great event, when the ladies of the community would gather to card wool for making quilts and spinning the wool into yarn with their home-made spinning wheels. Then throughout the year the ladies would knit socks and mittens, and embroider all sorts of fancy goods in their spare time. These goods were then sold by auction. By this means they were able to raise enough money to help the congregation and still carry on their own work. Without help from the ladies, the church might often have found itself in serious financial difficulties. One item of interest is that a man, John Person, served as President for a number of years, indeed which no doubt reflects the high esteem in which he was held by the ladies of the church. The Ladies Aid was organized on August 30, 1908. Mrs. Inga Lunde was elected president and treasurer and Mrs. Petter Selin as secretary.

The Women's Missionary Society was organized on June 24, 1914, with Mrs. Jonas Anderson elected as president and Mrs. Elias Anderson as secretary. A mission festival was held once a year in order to raise money for Aid to Missions at home and abroad. On December 12, 1952, the Ladies Aid and the Women's Missionary Society formed one unified society known as the Ladies Guild. In 1961, the name was again changed to Lutheran Church Women. All societies folded in 1965 when the congregation disbanded. After the congregation reorganized, the ladies society also reorganized and are now known as the Wilhelmina Willing Workers. We extend a special acknowledgement of praise to the members of these societies, and the Luther League, who have so faithfully stood by the congregation whenever a need existed, since the formation of the Wilhelmina church. The Willing Workers continue to provide lunches for funerals, bring dishes for potluck lunches which are held regularly throughout the year and are involved with fundraising (usually in the form of bake sales and serving at auctions). Since 2004, we have also been involved with Neighbour Aid - a Camrose organization that runs the Food Bank and a soup kitchen called "Martha's Table".

Små Flickornas Syförening was organized on March 2, 1911, under the leadership of Mrs. Inga Lunde, with Hanny Hanson as treasurer. This group was active until shortly after the Luther League was organized in 1915 with Pastor Heiner as president, Axel Selin vice-president, Gerda Hanson secretary, and Magnus Johnson treasurer. Over the years this society was very active. Regular monthly meetings were held which consisted of the business agenda and an excellent program. Several different socials were held each year. Exchange programs with other churches were a highlight of fellowship, and so



Organ purchased with money raised by Små Flickornas Syförening in 1914

were the Alberta District Luther League Conventions. Wilhelmina hosted the convention in 1932, 1941, and 1947. This was an all day affair for all week which required a great deal of expense and long hours of work and preparation to accommodate the guests. The Swedish language was used in the secretarial records until the end of 1933, when it was changed over to English. The Wilhelmina Luther League dissolved in 1965 when the congregation disbanded and has not reorganized since.

Sunday School commenced in 1909 with a class of ten children under the leadership of Mrs. Inga Lunde, who was a faithful and zealous worker within the church and community. More pupils were attending as the years went by. Probably the largest attendance was during 1929 and 1930 with an enrolment of forty to forty-five pupils and five to six teachers, including Pastor Eklund as superintendent and Mrs. Clara Vikner, a qualified teacher of the Swedish language, as vice-superintendent. The Christmas concert was presented by the Sunday school children to the enjoyment of the children and audience until 1997, when a congregational "Family Christmas" program was adopted in which all members of the congregation are encouraged to participate. Summer Vacation Bible School was also held at various times. In the summers of 1929 and 1930, Miss Edna Johnson, Conference missionary, was invited and taught for three weeks at the Brandland School and two weeks at the Miquelon School. In 1997, after many years of low enrolment, the Sunday School was discontinued. In 2006 a worship program for children and their families was re-instated and has received favourable response from the attendees. Schooner, our toucan puppet, was an instant success with

the kids and we've had the blessing of a great team of young men helping (most of whom have been confirmed at Wilhelmina in the past eight years). The bible story skits are acted out by our volunteers each week and the program concludes with a craft that ties into the day's lesson. For 2007/08 our theme was "Take Two Tablets and Call Moses!"

Following are those who have served in the position of Sunday School superintendent: Inga Lunde, Harold Person, Magnus Johnson, Axel Lindgren, Hanny Hanson, Jenny Selin, Axel Selin, Paulus Mattson, Agatha Nordfeldt, Pastor Eklund, Clara Vikner, John Person, Kristina Anderson, Blanche Hanson, Nannie Swanlund, Anita Johnson, Seena Swanlund, Alver Person, Angeline Nordin, Carol Johnson, Anna Lofgren, Evelyn Pearson, Ted and Margaret Matson, and Jean Matson. Also a note of recognition to all who have served as assistant teachers.

The Junior Mission Society was also organized by Miss Edna Johnson on July 15, 1930, with the following officers elected: President - Hennie Johnson, Vice President - Sylvia Nordin, Secretary - Judith Person, Treasurer - Elias Vikner. Mrs. Knut Nordfeldt and her daughter, Blanche Hanson, served as leaders. Miss Hanson was also the Canada Conference President of the Junior Mission Society. A Church Choir was organized in 1915, under the leadership of Pastor and Mrs. Leonard Heiner who gave their best performances at the Luther League meetings and church festivals. After the untimely death of Pastor Heiner in 1918, the choir continued for a while under the leadership of Mr. Barne Welda. In 1931, Mrs. Ole Olson (Annie Erickson) had within a short time assembled a choir that, under her training, developed into a very fine group of singers. Mrs. Olson had a manner and personality that endeared her to all who knew her, and the young people who worked with her always gave their best at practice sessions and performances. This choir carried on most successfully until her death on April 6, 1941. The piano was purchased with funds saved by the choir and was since dedicated to the Glory of God in memory of Mrs. Olson. Due to the constant temperature fluctuations in the building, however, the piano eventually had to be replaced. Special thanks go to Richard and Evelyn Pearson, who donated their piano to the congregation in memory of their daughter, Diane, when they chose to leave the farm and move into Camrose. Although, we have not had a formal choir in the past 25 years we have often met together to raise our voice in praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the 1990s the choir practiced and performed several Christmas and Easter cantatas and we continue to participate in the Scandia Lutheran Church (Armena), "Prelude to Christmas" program most years.

The congregation, as a whole, has also been involved in running auction sale concessions to raise funds in times of financial duress or to help the financing of special projects like re-shingling the building.

As was customary with most country churches, a cemetery was located near the church. A plan for the cemetery layout was drawn up by Harold Person and approved by the congregation. He was also the first cemetery caretaker until the election of Oscar Swanlund, 1928-1933. Others who have served in this role are: Hans Johnson, 1934-1938; John Person, 1939-1959; Albin Person, 1960-1978; Richard Knull, 1979-1988; Algot Person 1989-1998; Larry Selin 1999 to the present. In 1983, 151 burials had been recorded. As of 2008, 226 souls have been laid to rest up on Wilhelmina's hill. A grant of eleven hundred dollars was received from the Alberta Government in 1975 for improvements to the cemetery. In 1990 a chain link fence was installed around the cemetery and in 2004 markers were made to replace those that were in poor condition and for graves that were unmarked. General cemetery upkeep is currently the responsibility of work teams who have a set rotational schedule for grass cutting. A spring work bee is usually planned in the spring to handle other upkeep tasks.

The first confirmands of this congregation were part of a class confirmed at Fridhem in 1910: Amanda Person, Gerda Hanson and Oscar Selin. Of the Fridhem congregation were: Hilma Nelson, Edna Lindgren, and Florence Skogman with Pastor Olaf Lindgren.

The first confirmation in the Wilhelmina church was a class of eighteen, confirmed on May 24, 1914: Walter Selin, Jenny Selin, Hildur Selin, Hogda Johnson, Martha Lovisa Johnson, Nestor Johnson, Anna Johnson, Emil Helgren, Esther Lindberg, Einar Lindberg, Paulina Lindberg, August Anderson, Hanny Hanson, Ellen Carlson, Carl Carlson, Hildegard Danielson, Olga Grundberg and Nannie Grundberg with Pastor Olaf Lindgren. With regret, there was no photograph of this class.

Among the first weddings after the congregation was organized was that of Sara Kristofferson to Oscar Swanlund, Mina Kristofferson to Olof Forsen and Olivia Kristofferson to Hilmer Sikstrom. The first wedding within the new church was that of Amanda Person to John Person in 1914. Shortly afterward a double wedding united Victoria Kristofferson to Albert Berg and Petra Hanson (Lunde) to Elis Anderson.

The following have served as congregational secretary for some period during the years past: Axel Selin, Oscar Swanlund, Erik Hanson, Albert Swanson, John Person, Knut Nordfeldt, Richard Pearson, Mary Anderson, Ernest Nordin, Albin Person, Evelyn Pearson, Connie Servold, Joanne Huebner,

Jean Klappstein, Robert Klappstein, Jean Matson, Debbie Klein, Deanna Margel, Dave Hoogendoorn and Sandy Olansky . Treasurers: Linus Selin, Frank Johnson, Axel Selin, Erick Carlstrom, John Palm, Hans Palm, Stanley Selin, Ivar Lofgren, Reynold Nordin, Verner Johnson, Hampton Anderson, Algot Person, Muriel Holdsworth, Marilyn Nordin and Sarah Bossé.

A financial secretary was also elected in the period of 1929 to 1965. Only three served during this time and they were: John Person, Erick Carlstrom and Algot Person. When the church reopened in 1966, Algot Person resumed the role. Between 1980 and the present, Marilyn Nordin and Muriel Holdsworth have held that position.

Those who have served as organist are: Axel Selin, Mrs. Pastor Gronberg, Alhard Johnson, Hennie Selin, Judith Person, Seena Swanlund, Mrs. Pastor Pearson, Vivian Selin, Marlene Streberg, Marilyn Kemppainen, Leona Carpenter, Anita Johnson, Robert Klappstein and Deanna Margel.

The following have served as custodians: Harold Person, Magnus Lindberg, Anders Kristofferson, Erik Kristofferson, Oscar Swanlund, Jonas Anderson, Hans Johnson, John Person, Algot Person, and Ryan and Lillian Nordin.



Wilhelmina's most recent confirmation class - 2007. Jessica Bossé and Meaghan Selin. It is interesting to note that both girls are great granddaughters of two of Wilhelmina's first confirmands in 1914, Ellen Carlson and Walter Selin.



# *Anniversaries*

The twentieth anniversary was celebrated on July 7-9, 1928, with Pastor Otto Eklund and other ministers within the Alberta District of the Augustana Lutheran Synod, including Pastor Lundahl, Pastor Eriksson, Pastor Anton Nelson, and Pastor Gronberg.

The church council for 1928 included, Deacons - Paulus Mattson, Knut Nordfeldt and John Person. Trustees - Jonas Anderson, Andrew Olson, Hans Johnson, Axel Selin, Magnus Lindberg and Herman Selin. Secretary - John Person and Treasurer - Axel Selin.

The fortieth anniversary was celebrated on August 13-15, 1948, with the following proceedings:

The Friday evening service was conducted by student Donald Johnson. On Saturday a.m., Pastor Otto Eklund of Meeting Creek conducted the service in the Swedish language. On Saturday p.m. the following program was presented: Vocal trio - Alphild Naslund, Joan and Marjorie Webster. Piano rendition by Sylvia Tveit. Vocal duet - Mrs. Arthur Eriksson and Mrs. Chester Grue. Reading by Alver Person. On Saturday evening, Pastor Eklund dedicated the piano, candelabra and the rug, in memory of the pioneer members. Vocal duet - Mrs. Stanley Selin and Mrs. Elfert Johnson. Another duet - Mrs. Seth Johansson and Mrs. Jonas Grundberg.

On Sunday a.m. Pastor Eklund conducted a baptismal service and Holy Communion. Vocal solo - Verner Johnson and a duet - Mrs. Chester Grue and Mrs. Arthur Eriksson. Sunday p.m. Pastor Eklund presided for the following program: Hymn by the Sunday school. A chorus in song was presented by the members who were present of the first confirmation class (1914) and the second class (1918), including Mrs. Jenny (Jonas) Grundberg, Mrs. Hildur (Walter) Selin, Mrs. Signe (J.A.) Linden, Mrs. Ellen (M.C.) Holdsworth, Mrs. Paulina (George) Webster, Mrs. Martha Lovisa (John) Olson, Walter Selin, Einar Lindberg and Herman Selin. Members of the 1928 class presented their confirmation hymn in Swedish. Taking part were Mrs. Blanche (Hans) Palm, Mrs. Ina (Egil) Lien, Mrs. Herminie (Arthur) Eriksson, Mrs. Irma (Oliver) Selin, Elfert Johnson, Leonard Swanlund, Stanley Selin and Roy Forsen. Accordion selection - Stanley Selin and Rudy Swanlund. Mr. John Erickson compiled and presented the historical sketch of the congregation. Greetings from the Ladies Aid by Mrs. Stanley Selin, Sunday School - Mrs. Chester Grue, Luther League - Mr. Herbert Carlstrom, Women's Missionary Society - Mrs. Hans Palm. Greetings

from the following pastors were read by J.U. Erickson; Edquist of Chicago, Swenson of Scandia, Tengbom of Calgary and Vikman of Edmonton. Pastor Eklund concluded with a commentary. The evening program was presented by the Luther League, Mrs. Chester Grue presiding: Vocal duet - Mrs. Verner Johnson and Miss Doreen Johnson. Quartette - Mrs. Arthur Erickson, Mrs. Chester Grue, Rudy and Leonard Swanlund. Accordion selection - Stanley Selin and Rudy Swanlund. Topic of the evening by Pastor Eklund. Vocal solo - Mr. Axel Selin (82 years young). Student Donald Johnson conveyed greetings from the Swea Congregation and concluded the program with the Benediction.

The church council on the fortieth anniversary (1948) included: Deacons - Axel Selin, John Person and Elfert Johnson. Trustees - Erick Carlstrom, Hans (H.E.) Johnson, John (J.U.) Erickson, Hans Palm, Stanley Selin and Sixten Lindberg. Recording Secretary - John Person, Financial Secretary - Erick Carlstrom and Treasurer - Stanley Selin.

The fiftieth anniversary was celebrated on June 27-29, 1958, under the leadership of Pastor Robert Ek, with the theme, Fifty Years of Grace. "And from His fullness we have received grace upon grace." John 1:16; Message by Pastor Otto Eklund, "Fifty Years of Grace to our Fathers"; message by Pastor Robert Pearson, "Fifty Years of Grace in the Word"; message by Professor Otto A. Olson, "Fifty Years of Grace in the Sacrament"; message by Pastor L. Floyd Lewis, "Fifty Years of Grace and My Response".

The board of administration on the fiftieth anniversary year, 1958, consisted of the following members: Pastor Robert Ek, Deacons - Hampton Anderson, Emil Peterson, Albin Palm, Ernest Nordin, Ed Nordin and John U. Erickson. Trustees - Stanley Selin, Sidney Matson, Albin Person, Alhard Johnson, Reynold Nordin and Verner Johnson. Congregational secretary - Richard Pearson, Financial secretary - Algot Person, Treasurer - Reynold Nordin.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the Wilhelmina Lutheran Church was held the weekend of June 11 and 12, 1983 and was attended by approximately 250 guests. Activities commenced with a service conducted by Rev. Wenzel Saturday June 11<sup>th</sup>. Former pastors of the church Rev. R. Jacobsen and Rev. Swedberg took part in the service and reminisced on the past. Rev. Vincent Erickson and Rev. Luther Erickson were also present. Bishop Sjoberg of Edmonton was the guest speaker.

The service was followed by fellowship and coffee. Slides were shown by John U. Erickson of Lethbridge, Alberta, a former resident, covering the history of Wilhelmina Church and the pioneers of the area.

Rev. Wenzel conducted the Sunday morning service including communion. Rev. R. Kemppainen delivered the sermon. The Swedish Consul, Lars G. Fahlstrom also addressed the gathering. Dinner was served outdoors after which Ed. Holdsworth emceed the afternoon program. Alver Person was the main Guest speaker. Herb Erickson, a former retired Pastor also spoke briefly. Special recognition was given confirmands from the past years. Of the 18 confirmands from the first class in 1914 only three remain alive. Present were Jenny Grundberg (Selin) of Camrose and Hildur Anderson (Selin) of Wainwright, Alberta. Carl Carlson of Vancouver, British Columbia was unable to be present. Derry Anderson was the most recent confirmand of the church. Greetings were read from former Pastors unable to attend. These included Rev and Mrs. D. Miller of Winnipeg, Rev and Mrs. R. Pearson of Edmonton and Rev. and Mrs. Robert Ek of Kenora, Ontario. A letter from the family of the late Hanny Collin of Donald, Alberta was also read. Rev. Wenzel presented a special picture to the congregation.

Souvenir plates, designed by Michael Lee of Sherwood Park, Alberta picturing Wilhelmina Church, were used for special presentations. They were also sold as souvenirs. A history booklet compiled by Alver and Algot Person, which updated the original 50th anniversary book written by John U. Erickson, was also available.

The Board of Administration on the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Year, 1983, included the following members: Pastor Dennis Wenzel, Council - Richard Knull, Algot Person, Richard Pearson, Ernest Nordin, Terry Nordin, Clarence Huebner, Robert Klappstein, Ed Holdsworth and David Holdsworth. Chairman - Ed Holdsworth, Congregational Secretary - Robert Klappstein and Treasurer - Muriel Holdsworth.

The Council for the One-hundred Anniversary Year (2008) is: Gordon Lien (chair), Sandy Olansky (secretary), Terry Nordin, Pat Selin, Richard Knull, Ed Holdsworth and Bob Klappstein.

The 100th Anniversary Committee consisted of Bob Klappstein (chair), Marilyn Nordin (secretary), Ed Holdsworth, Liz Eliason, Maxine Hoogen-doorn and Dan Johnson.

Current expectations place attendance for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary at about 500 people. Planning for such numbers entail a lot of work and organization: committees have been struck for invitations, food, worship programming, as well as parking, facilities, washrooms and so forth. In fact, all current active members of the congregation are on at least one committee for the anniversary! Glass mugs, etched with the church, are being pre-ordered for those

wishing to purchase one. Two paintings have been commissioned (one by Glenda Beaver and the other by Jim Brager). A raffle for the paintings is being held, and the winner will choose which painting they wish to have. The second painting will be presented as a gift to our sister church in Sweden.

We have been raising money for the past couple years and as a result have the opportunity to invite guests to a meal free of charge for the festivities. One major ongoing fundraiser has been the “Summerfest Concert” held in June - all three have featured Doug Ezeard as the central performer. He has done a fantastic job in entertaining and ministry, and all who have attended have been blessed by his message and music. We thank Gordon Lien for organizing this event - it would not have taken place without him recruiting and spearheading the show. We also gratefully acknowledge the Skandia Lodge #549, Vasa Order of America, who provided a sizable donation to the congregation to cover the costs of tent and equipment rental.



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“The sun has set on the pioneers.  
Most have gone, and others grown old,  
but we have a glorious heritage  
of memories untold.

How quickly life flew by for them,  
After coming to this land.  
In the endless sea of infinity  
One life is a grain of sand.”

May we be grateful to our forefathers, who worked so hard under primitive conditions to leave us this blessed heritage, and our faithful pastors who struggled through snowbanks in winter and mudholes in summer, to bring us the word of God. The remains of many of these await the resurrection outside the walls of this church.

May the seeds sown here continue to grow and bear fruit.

- Ryan Nordin for the 90th Anniversary: June 28, 1998

# *Ties to Our Swedish Heritage*

Over the years, we have been blessed by our relationship with our Swedish brothers and sisters in Christ overseas. We of Wilhelmina, Hay Lakes Canada have often been blessed by visitors and gifts from friends and family from Vilhelmina Lutheran Church, in Vilhelmina, Sweden. A few of these occasions are highlighted below.

In June of 1984, a delegation from Vilhelmina, Sweden arrived at the church visiting relatives and friends of our founding fathers who left their country three quarters of a century before. Katarina Johansson, Curator Vilhelmina Museum, Per-Uno Hagren, Curator Vastorbotten Museum, Sume Jonsson, Umea Museum relived the past as they were entertained and educated by stories of Wilhelmina's history and heritage. A "Vilhelmina, Sweden to Wilhelmina, Canada" display of photographs and artifacts were on view at the Provincial Museum in Edmonton, Alberta from June 2 to July 11, 1984. On July 15 David Goa from the museum and Algot Person arranged a program and artifact display including a film presentation of the Vilhelmina district at the church. Patrick Sehlin of Vilhelmina, Sweden, an exchange student who was working in forestry at Rocky Mountain House, Alberta was a special guest. The artifacts and films were a great success and enjoyed by all.

In 1985, a gift of silver candle holders was made to the congregation from the Vilhelmina congregation in Sweden.

1990 Summerfest Celebration - June 24, 1990

## ***Wilhelmina Church hosts 600 as Swedish Choir performs***

The bonds between Sweden and Canada were strengthened when a tour of 183 visitors from Northern Sweden attended a traditional Mid-Summer Festival on June 24<sup>th</sup>. Although there are now many nationalities enriching our worship at Wilhelmina, there are still strong ties with the mother church in Sweden. Out of this group a total of 60 visitors formed part of a Swedish choral group called the Lappland choir. Alver Person, one of tour organizers reported most of the visitors live in the cities of Vilhelmina and Storuman, Sweden. Many of the visitors have descendants in the area. For many it was their first visit to Canada. In anticipation of the visit, members of the church made great preparations, including the erection of two large tents that were filled to overflowing with 550 to 600 people in attendance.

Greetings and gifts between the two congregations were exchanged prior to the 10 A.M. worship service. Pastor Ronny Thellbro from the Vilhelmina Lutheran Church in Sweden led the Holy Communion Worship Service in the Swedish language. Pastor Paul Roellchen-Pfohl of Wilhelmina Church performed two baptisms, Ryan James, infant son of Nancy and Richard Clark and Brittany Jean, infant daughter of Bonnie and Eugene Galenza. The Swedish Mixed Choir sang hymns and the choir of the Vilhelmina Church sang during communion. Following the service, a beef dinner was served outdoors under bright sunny skies and all enjoyed fellowship.

At 2.30 p.m. the tents were again filled as the crowd enjoyed a fine concert performed by the Lappland Choir. Further presentations were made and the Willing Workers raffled off a quilt depicting the Vilhelmina Church. Winner of the beautiful quilt was Ernest Hunt of Granum, Alberta. The afternoon concluded with a bountiful lunch served and further fellowship was enjoyed.<sup>1</sup>



Arrangements for summerfest included catering, tents, benches & tables, PA system, shuttle buses, nametags, flags, guest books, and plates for sale.



<sup>1</sup> Marg Arnston, The Camrose Canadian

A reindeer bone Cross fashioned by Sven-Ake Fisfjell, which now adorns the altar, was also received as a gift from Sweden in the summer of 1990.

On October 31, 1993 over 100 people attended services dedicating the new steeple cross and the redecorated altar painting at the church. Congregational member, Algot Person, crafted the new cross for the steeple. With a new backing in place, restoration of the altar painting was undertaken by an Edmonton artist, Michael Lee, son-in-law of Judith (Person) Swanlund who is a former resident of the Wilhelmina area. The present altar painting is exactly the same as the original one that was completed in 1917 by Olaf Wallin of Czar, Alberta with the assistance of John Person. The redecorated altar and large plaque was dedicated to the Glory of God and in memory of the pioneer members and Pastors who founded the Wilhelmina Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1908. Part of the cost for the projects came from a donation from our sister church in Sweden, as well as donations from present and former congregation members. Pastor James Kruger conducted the service.

On July 24, 1994, the church hosted a 27 member youth group led by Pastor Ronny Thellbro from Vilhelmina, Sweden who conducted a special Swedish service with communion. The youth group sang two hymns and two fine selections on the flute were played by a member of the group. Prior to the service, a presentation was made to Algot Person in observation of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and in appreciation of his dedicated service to the church. At the close of the service Pastor Thellbro presented a Swedish Church flag for use of the Wilhelmina Church. This was “for us to remember, when we look at it, that Jesus Christ is the King”.



Wilhelmina 75th Anniversary - June 12, 1983

# *Our Memories...*

## Wilhelmina Church

The Church is standing on this Hill  
All because it was God's will

People came from near and far  
By Foot, by Horses, and by Car

To worship God inside these doors  
And gained their strength from His resource

Some left church feeling mild and meek  
And came back faithfully every week.

As people have come for 100 years  
This Church has seen both joy and tears.

And as it's steeple still points to the Sky  
We say "Glory" and "Thanks" be to God on High.

-Dilys Kinias

## Julotta

"One of the most cherished memories from my childhood was that of the "Julotta" Christmas service. On Christmas morning we would get up at five o'clock. How well I remember walking with my mother and father in the dark of early morning. On approaching the church we could hear the tinkling of sleigh bells and the "screeching" of sleigh runners over the crisp hard snow as our neighbors travelled to church by sleigh. (The church was located on our farm, so we had a short distance to walk.) The church was lit up with candles in every window and the beautifully decorated Christmas tree glistened. I, being filled with awe and wonder, was so jubilant that once more Christmas had come. Certainly we felt the presence of God very near, and in spite of hardships, we had so much to be thankful for!"

- Anna Lofgren (née Carlstrom), reprinted from "Each Step Left Its Mark",  
A History of Hay Lakes and Surrounding Area, p.190.

## Wilhelmina - A Little Church Doing Big Things

“Glory to God in the Highest” . How appropriate are those words painted in Swedish above the altar. As our current president, Gordon Lien, often reminds us “when you’re at Wilhelmina, you’re a little closer to heaven” (Wilhelmina is the highest point on the Interprovincial Pipeline).

I have some wonderful memories of the people of Wilhelmina Church when I was growing up. Who could forget Algot Person’s quiet, gentle ways or the wonderful deep, rich voice of Verner Johnson as he would sing a solo in church (often in Swedish). There were lots of good male singers in the congregation at that time. You always knew their favourite hymns ‘cause, boy, did they “belt” them out!! Ernest Nordin, Elfert Johnson, and Albin Person are the ones that come to mind, but I’m sure there were others. Anita Johnson was the organist then and she sure got a workout from the old pump organ. She had a red hat that she often wore with a little bauble on the top and that’s about all you could see of her behind that big old organ-- just the top of her hat moving back and forth as she pumped with her legs. I guess those were the “good old days”. There was no running water, so Ernest Nordin would bring a couple of cream cans full of water to church if we had a pot-luck dinner. No running water also meant going for a walk to the outhouse and praying there would be no wasp nests out there. One of the best church attenders when I was growing up was Captain, Algot Person’s three-legged Norwegian Elkhound. We would be done Sunday School and be wearing off some energy in the parking lot before the service started, and we could see Algot’s little blue car coming up the road and not far behind was Captain.

There are more recent memories, too. And a greater appreciation of all that Wilhelmina has accomplished throughout its 100 year history.

Being in the position of church treasurer for almost 13 years has allowed me to witness many “miracles” financially. Many Decembers I thought “how are we going to meet our budget commitments by the end of the year?” It amazes me that we always manage to do it. Somehow God’s spirit moves us to donate a little bit more or He creates a fund raising opportunity for us.

In the last thirteen years we have replaced the windows in the church, put on new siding, installed a sound system, repainted the altar rail, pulpit and lectern, and are in the process of re-shingling the kitchen roof. On top of that, we have raised enough money to hold a 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration that will welcome over 500 people to come and worship with us on July 20, 2008!!

We have also been able to help our brothers and sisters in Christ through donations to Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Global Hunger, World Mission Prayer League, On Eagle's Wings, Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots, Bethany Homes for Children, The Camrose Food Bank, Campus Ministry, Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute as well as local families hit by tragedies such as fire, illness and financial difficulties.

I often wonder “How is a small church such as ours able to do all this?”. It is because the Holy Spirit has called so many people to Wilhelmina—two movies filmed here, visitors from all over the world (Sweden, England, USA, Switzerland, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Australia and Afghanistan to name a few), descendants of the founding members who continue to support us financially and through their prayers, we have been featured in the Edmonton Journal several times, photographers and artists have used Wilhelmina in their works, we are on the cover of “Scandinavian Connections” (a book about the Scandinavian settlement of Alberta) and we have a congregation that is committed to “living in God’s Grace”. As I read the history of Wilhelmina, I realized that commitment goes back 100 years to the Swedish settlers that formed Wilhelmina Lutheran Church. This church, through God’s will, has literally touched the lives of thousands of people.

How blessed I am, to have been a small part of Wilhelmina's 100 years!  
How proud I am, to be associated with this "little church on the hill". How I  
look forward to seeing God's plan for this church in the years ahead!

-Sarah Bossé (née Holdsworth)



## Memories of Wilhelmina Times

I have to reminisce a bit about my memories at Church. The first things I remember are the Sunday School, the concerts both Christmas and Easter, the Jul Otta that we had to get up early for, and the many picnics we had when I was little and going to Sunday School. I remember reciting by heart the whole Christmas Story from Luke one year for the concert. I don't know what has happened to my memory since I grew up!



Ed and Dilys Kinas  
Wilhelmina Church  
July 2, 1960

The Vacation Bible Schools were always fun. One year it was so muddy that Pastor Pearson and Helen left their car at Egil's corner, walked barefooted to our place and drove Dad's tractor and wagon box the rest of the way to VBS. Boy, have roads improved to Wilhelmina since that time.

Luther League brought great memories with tobogganing parties, and skating parties on Elfert's slough. Oh to be young again!

Confirmation was exciting with 13 youth in our class. We all took turns having the classes at our houses each Saturday. Many good times were had. I remember 6 of us in Pastor Ek's VW Beetle going to Sylvan Lake Bible Camp one year. I think some of the kids were from Camrose. Anyhow, those were the good ole' days.

These are some of the highlights that stay in my mind but I know there were many more good times there. I still come back to Wilhelmina when I have a chance. It will always be one of my fondest memories.

- Dilys Kinas (née Nordin)

## Dear Wilhelmina Friends,

Carolyn and I wish to thank you for the invitation to join you for the celebration of your 100th anniversary on July 20, 2008. How we would love to be able to be there with you to share in this wonderful day! Distance and duties, however, make it impossible.

Serving Wilhelmina from 1973 to 1976 was a great joy for us. We felt so at home among you, even though we had to travel to and from Camrose. It was difficult for me to admit that I could no longer properly serve you, especially on Sundays, and to recommend to Bishop Sjoberg that an alignment with Hay Lakes would be in your better interests. It was so hard for me to do that.

Many, many memories flood to mind, both joyous and solemn, some of them very personal and precious. Some have found their way into sermon illustrations and anecdotes over the years.

We cherish the photo of the chancel of Wilhelmina taken in about 1916 and presented to us in 1980 by the daughter of the man who made all the chancel furnishings, Amy Wallin Williams who died just a couple of years ago at 107, sharp as ever. We also cherish the spectacular photo of the “church on the hill” taken by Mrs. Nordin and presented to us on our 25th Wedding Anniversary in 1990. We cherish the day when Carolyn and I will be laid to rest here at Wilhelmina cemetery (if you do not mind some Catholics rising from the dead surrounded by Swedish Lutherans!)



Photo of original altar painting - 1916

May God continue to bless you all, pastor and flock of the Lord, and make you a place of refuge for the tormented and a new life in Christ for all!

With thanksgiving and prayer,

- Fr. Joseph R. Jacobson (Pastor Bob, February 2, 2008)

#### Dear Members and Friends of Wilhelmina Lutheran:

In the Book of Philippians, Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” These words came to mind when I received your invitation to join you in the 100th anniversary celebration on July 20, 2008. They came to mind for two reasons: the pioneers who started Wilhelmina Lutheran Church no doubt “rejoiced” when they had organized and formed a struggling, yet vibrant, congregation to serve the people in the area. And, the second “rejoice” caused me to remember that when I arrived to serve Bethel Lutheran in Camrose, Wilhelmina had been closed. However, you were given the opportunity to open the Church again, which you did, and which caused a great deal of “rejoicing” again. Although Paul did not add a third “rejoice” to his message, I am certain that you are adding that today. Rejoicing that you have had 100 years to live and share the message of God’s love which brought salvation to God’s people through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and rejoicing that you can continue that witness in the years to come.

In the years that I was privileged to work and share ministry with you we had our times of joy and our times of sorrow. And, in those times of joy and sorrow, we always tried to look to the Holy Spirit for help and guidance. They were good days.

Although I never, as I recall, mentioned it to you, I used to refer to Wilhelmina as Lazarus, as it, too, had been raised from the dead by our Lord and Saviour.

There were so many heart-warming incidents that took place while I served you and I am grateful for each and every one.

Thank you for the opportunity that you gave me to serve you and I hope and pray that you will truly “rejoice” in the celebration of the congregation’s 100 years of ministry and that you will continue to rejoice and serve our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the years to come.

What a wonderful experience it would be to be with you on this day of celebration and thanks. However, my wife, Terry, is in the last stages of Alzheimer’s and I cannot either take her on such a trip as this would require or break the commitment that I already have for “your day”.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus”

- Pastor Donald I. Miller (February 11, 2008)

### A Special Place

We so looked forward to Christmas Concerts where the Nativity was played out with homemade-and-put-together costumes, props, and background. A large decorated Christmas tree always graced the front of the church, complete with lights, portraying the festive occasion. The church was usually full of parents, aunts and uncles, and other congregation members eagerly awaiting their children’s performance. Lines we had memorized and songs we had diligently practised, would now be revealed and we nervously awaited our turn to impress our families. I remember wearing my very first pair of black patent high heels (1 3/4") to our Christmas Concert when I was about 14 years old and how excited I was. When we had concluded our performance, candy bags were handed out to all the children before the evening was complete and our Church Christmas concert was over for another year.

Vacation Bible School, which was held in July or August for about a week, was a learning and fun time. Crafts were learned, new songs were sung and we were able to spend some fun time outside. At the end of the week a pro-

gram was put on for our parents and we were able to display all the treasures which we had created during the week. I remember both attending as a child and helping to teach Vacation Bible School as I got older.

When my parents didn't go to Church on a Sunday I dressed for Church and stood at our gate and waited for a passing neighbor to pick me up. This was a 'chancy' situation as we had no telephone so there was no way to check and see if anyone was, in fact, going to be coming down our road. However, most of the time I would get a ride.

I remember my Mom speaking of a young adult organization which I think was called "Cheery Chums". She spoke of this with fondness as it obviously brought back memories of skating and tobogganing parties and travelling suppers where each course of the meal was served at a different house. It sounded like a fun time for young couples of the Church.

Our Confirmation class consisted of 7 young people and three of them were my cousins. We attended Confirmation classes most Saturday mornings for 2 years, except for July and August. We started classes with Pastor Ek and, when he left, we continued with Pastor Swedberg when he took over. In the winter we travelled from home to home instead of having it in the Church which had to be heated in advance. The conclusion of our Confirmation was held on 2 consecutive Sundays. On the first Sunday all of the Confirmands



Confirmation 1961 - Velma Selin, Keith Klein, Verna Johnson, Palmer Swanson, Bernette Nordin, Kenneth Klein, Linda Matson, Pastor Paul Swedberg

stood in front of the Congregation while the Minister asked us specific questions on the Bible and information which we had learned over 2 years. We did not know the questions in advance and we believed that we would fail if our answers were not correct. If we 'passed', the following Sunday we would be confirmed, becoming official members of the Church, and receiving Holy Communion for the first time. It was part of our growing-up experience. Our families usually had private dinner celebrations following the official Confirmation Service. Picking out a new dress for Confirmation, even though during the Church Service it was covered by a Choir gown, was very special. I still have the necklace and earring set which I received from my parents as a gift at the conclusion of my Confirmation which was some 48 years ago.

Wilhelmina is special because it has survived 100 years. Our forefathers worked hard and sacrificed much so that this Church could be built and maintained. My grandparents, parents and one of my children are already buried there and hopefully, when the time comes, my surviving family will be at rest there too. Because it has stood tall and proud on a hill overlooking the surrounding countryside for so long, Wilhelmina has become a landmark. It brings back memories of my childhood and young adulthood as I was baptized, confirmed and married there and my four sons were baptized at Wilhelmina. It is part of my Swedish Christian heritage and has had a part in shaping the person I am today.

-Linda Fisher (née Matson)

### "Our Memories" – Paul and Sally Swedberg

Our memories of Wilhelmina Lutheran Church cannot be entirely separated from those of the rest of the "Camrose Parish" of the Augustana Lutheran Church which Paul was called to serve as pastor. We arrived in Camrose in the late summer of 1960 full of the enthusiasm and idealism, which are the gift of youth. We had two sons, Dan and Eric who were born in 1957 and 1960. We were the first occupants of the new parsonage in Camrose, next door to Bethel Lutheran Church. The third congregation in the parish was Fridhem Church, about midway between Bethel and Wilhelmina. (Fridhem disbanded in 1963. The members were at liberty to join any of the many Lutheran churches that were to be found in any direction from Fridhem. The great majority did just that.)

Two more sons, Philip and Michael, were born in 1962 and 1964. Sally's responsibilities at home did not allow much opportunity for travel to either Fridhem or Wilhelmina. She remembers that she sometimes filled in for Hennie Selin to play the pump organ for services. When Hennie played she

would watch for a subtle signal from Paul that it was time to end the prelude. Sally didn't know about that signal. One Sunday she was playing "He Lead-eth Me" over and over again. Paul thought she would stop. Sally was waiting for him to make an announcement or to say *something*. For a long time Paul never wanted to hear that tune again! Sally would have appreciated some *leadership* from the *pastor*!

In those years the pavement ended at the Camrose town limits. Pastor Bob Pearson had told Paul that before he had arrived in 1949 the day of "really bad roads" had ended. Now, gravel roads were no novelty to Paul. He had grown up in a rural area in Minnesota and had driven a lot on gravel highways and rural roads in Saskatchewan and Alberta. However, there were some uncertain times while getting around the hill country especially in the springtime or after a heavy rain. He remembers only one time, however, when road conditions kept him from getting to where he needed to be. In either '64 or '65 there had been a storm with drifting snow over Saturday night. He decided it would be prudent to take the long way around, namely, by highway to Armena and then straight north past the Selin place. He never made it quite that far. There were many drifts in an east-west pattern across the road. It was easy for the vehicle to plunge through them at first but eventually in a large drift the Ford came to an unceremonious halt. Upon getting out to look things over, he discovered that the entire space under the hood and around the engine was packed with snow. The engine was still running but the fan belt had been stretched. That final drift was just south of the Selin place. Allan was out with the tractor clearing the driveway. With some help from Allan the car was extricated from the drift and the snow was re-



moved from the engine but by then it was too late to continue on the remaining 2 1/2 miles or so to the church. Upon returning home Paul phoned one of the deacons, perhaps Ivar Lofgren. He learned that the congregation had been waiting for him to arrive. Later he learned that he likely would have made it to the church without any trouble had he taken the more direct route north of Camrose. Is it any wonder that the Swedbergs moved to Liberia in tropical Africa after their five years in the Camrose Parish! (There was no snow there but some roads were poorer than even the old trails through the bush in Alberta!)

It was a privilege to come to know and to count as friends the clergy couples that had served Wilhelmina in preceding years. Pastor Otto and Mrs. Wilhelmina (Mina) Eklund were retired and living in Camrose but had lived in the district for many years. Pastor Bob and Mrs. Helen Pearson also lived in Camrose where Pastor Bob was dean of CLBI. Pastor Bob and Mrs. Siv Ek were our immediate predecessors. They had moved on from Camrose, of course, but their path and ours crossed numerous times over the years. During the months between Pastor Ek's departure from Camrose in early 1960 and Paul's arrival in August, Pastor Corliss Holmes of Meeting Creek served as vice-pastor. (We now say "interim pastor".) During those months it was decided to invite Pastor Otto Olson from Saskatoon to come to make home visits in the congregation. Pastor Olson was also Canada Conference President and, at the same time, Professor of New Testament at the Seminary. He did indeed come, stayed for about a week and, with someone to drive him around the district, made home visits on most if not all the families of Wilhelmina in the fall of 1960. I remember attending the meeting with the church council. Pastor Olson put the challenge before the men, "*Do you want this congregation to continue and to flourish.*" The response was affirmative. "Yes, we do." On the last day of his stay, a Sunday, he used Genesis 28:10-17, Jacob's dream at Bethel, as his sermon text: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He emphasized how the congregation and its building had been precisely that for many in the past and could continue to be that in the future. It was a compelling sermon. We know that flies like to come into buildings in the fall. After the sermon Pastor Olson told me that one of those flies had flown right into his mouth as he preached! I don't think he missed a beat. I reflect now that such an intensive introduction to all of the families of the congregation might not be such a bad idea for a newly arrived pastor, too.

The inscription on the wall above the altar at Wilhelmina, *Ära vare Gud i höjden*, reminds us of the words of the angels who announced the birth of the Saviour. *Glory to God in the highest* also reminds those who enter God's

house that this is a place set aside for worship but also that our bodies, our lives, are intended to be consecrated for God's purposes.

Paul's parents both learned Swedish as their first language. He always considered himself to be "100 % Swede". The Wilhelmina Swedes had retained the Swedish language and Swedish identity to a greater extent than had the Swedberg family in Minnesota! Not "all of us" at Wilhelmina were Swedes in the 1960s but most were. It was hard to overlook that given the name of the congregation. The story of the immigrants from northern Sweden traveling to Alberta and settling in the Hay Lakes - Miquelon Lakes area is best told by others. I learned some more of that story - quite unexpectedly - during the years 1993 – 1998 when we lived in Wainwright. I met and had frequent visits with Hildur (Selin) Anderson. She told me of her girlhood adventures growing up in the Wilhelmina district. She said that she and her cousin, Jennie (Selin) Grundberg were referred to as the "Selin Twins". Visiting with her was like being back at Wilhelmina once again.

Our five years of association with Wilhelmina work out to be five percent of the one hundred years that are looked back upon in 2008. They were the first five years of Paul's ordained ministry. It was a challenge to serve three congregations at one time, even two. Sunday was a very busy day. There were separate confirmation classes in each of the churches. Classes at Wilhelmina met on Saturday mornings in homes. During Lent there were midweek services for each congregation. Separate council meetings were held and, yes, I remember sitting in the car on the south side of the church on a warm evening and waiting in vain for even one council member to show up for a scheduled meeting. I don't remember how that came about.<sup>1</sup> There are more memories. But then we are not to try to fill a book all by ourselves!

From 1965 until 2008 we recall only two return trips to the Wilhelmina Church. In 1968, while we were on a leave from Liberia, Paul was invited by Pastor Don Miller to either preach or give a greeting at Wilhelmina and Bethel Churches. In 1983, Sally and Paul attended an evening program that was part of the 75th anniversary celebration. By God's grace we will be back again in 2008 for the Centennial events. We look forward to seeing friends from years ago and meeting new people who are now part of the Wilhelmina family.

May the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, continue to bless and use this congregation - in this time and in this community - for His glory. Amen

- Paul and Sally Swedberg

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<sup>1</sup> Being a farming community, when the fields were ready farm work took precedence over meetings and other activities...Pastor didn't know that yet!

## Thin Places

It is impossible to capture in a few words every moment of grace that I experienced at Wilhelmina over eleven years so I will limit myself to two: one will describe the place and, the other, the people.

In the Celtic tradition, they call places where it seems easier to experience the presence of God – places where the line between the ordinary and divine seems fuzzy – “thin places.” The Wilhelmina church building is definitely a “thin place” and I believe that this is particularly true at night. My favourite services of the year at Wilhelmina were the evening services: Santa Lucia, Christmas Eve, Lenten services with Holden Evening Prayer, and Easter Vigil. These services had a way of melting hard hearts and making them receptive to God’s presence.

In terms of the people, shortly after I became the pastor in 1996 one of the things that I really appreciated about Wilhelmina was the willingness of the congregation to worship, learn and play across the generations. In the wider church it was being discovered that if things like Sunday School were seen to be “only for children,” then children would get the message that someday they would “grow out of” their need to learn. There was a lot of encouragement for congregations to embrace intergenerational activities as an effective way of passing on the faith of Jesus Christ to children and youth. In this way, Wilhelmina was on the cutting edge of the Church! The only encour-



agement people needed to participate was the promise of a potluck dinner.

So together we celebrated Martin Luther's birthday (complete with a cake prepared by Lillian Nordin) and learned about his life and the Reformation. We made unleavened bread together as we reflected on the meaning of Holy Communion (upon tasting the bread, Albin Persson noted that we had not added enough salt!). Chris Ryan, if I recall correctly, won the "Journey to the Promised Land" board game competition demonstrating his knowledge of the Old Testament. Young and old participated in the church picnic games (for some inexplicable reason the water relay always turned into a water fight – males vs. females). Occasionally even grownups (Russ Olansky), along with the children, would don bathrobes and tea towels for the Christmas pageant.



I believe this sense of community and the willingness of old and young to be a little vulnerable, to encourage, and to support one another was a wonderful witness of what it meant to be the Body of Christ.

- Pastor Craig Wentland

### 100 Years in Canada...

On the weekend of August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003 over 300 descendants of one of Wilhelmina's church founders, Axel Kristoffer Selin, held a reunion in Hay Lakes, Alberta to commemorate the family's arrival from Sweden on that day in 1903. A memorable weekend concluded with worship at the Wilhelmina Church on August 10, 2003 - filling the church to capacity.



## Visited By Angels

**Hebrews 13:2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.**

At the morning worship on May 13, 2001 (Mother's Day) a woman and a young man joined us for service. The woman was more mature, but it was hard to guess what the relationship between the two was. When I began to record the offering (after the service) I was surprised to find along with the cheque I had received from the young man was another cheque, this one from the woman. Without breaking confidentiality I must admit that I was very surprised at the amounts.

I believe that God's Holy Spirit revealed that there was something special about this visit, so I jotted down the phone number (Stony Plain) so that later I could make a call and say thank you--and tell them how blessed we were to have them visit us. When I dialled the number I got a voicemail recording. I left a message saying who I was and on behalf of the congregation I just wanted to say thank you for their generosity and that it had been such a blessing to have them come worship with us.

Somehow, I just couldn't stop thinking about this occurrence so on Monday I decided to phone Pastor Craig and ask him if this couple had said anything about why they had come to Wilhelmina. His reply was, "Yes. They said God had told them to come" Wow! I was so excited. I told him I believed it was true, that it was like having two angels visit us, that they had been very generous, and that I thought Wilhelmina had experienced a miracle.



Throughout the week this event just kept on blessing me-- I thought about the stories we read in the Bible and God regularly speaking to His people. For example, God told Peter he was to go to the house of Cornelius, speak to the fearful Ananias, and tell him to go to Straight Street where he was to speak to Saul, lay his hands on him and heal him. So why should I be surprised to hear that he continues to speak clearly to His people today? The more I thought about it, I began to wonder what was God telling us at Wilhelmina.

I felt that four significant things happened.

1. God spoke to this couple.
2. They testified that God had told them to come to Wilhelmina - this was an affirmation that God has a purpose for Wilhelmina.
3. They were obedient to God's instruction and came.
4. They gave generously of their means - it wasn't a casual dropping by.

The following Saturday, I had the strongest urge to call the number again and I did. The young man answered after the first ring. I told him how they had been on my mind all week. I explained that there had been times over the years when I struggled with discouragement. I stressed what an encouragement it was to me to know that God had sent them. I asked him:

1. Could he tell me more about how God had spoken to them?
2. Would they allow this information to be shared with the congregation?

The answer to both questions was yes.

He said he had been on his way to Camrose (Monday May 7), travelling on Highway 623, when he saw the sign for Wilhelmina Lutheran Church. He said he was moved by God's Spirit and believed God was telling him to go to that church. So he turned off the pavement and drove down the gravel road until he reached the church. When he returned home that evening, he told his mother what had happened. He said "My mother is an Intercessor". She prayed, asking God what He wanted them to do. She got the same message from God that the young man had; that He wanted them to visit Wilhelmina. The young man returned to the church alone on the Wednesday evening of that same week, where he spent some time in the churchyard praying before going into the church. He said he felt a strong sense of God's Holy Spirit in this place and again felt that God was affirming that he and his mother should return for worship on Sunday. He also said that he believed Wilhelmina has a good heritage--that this church was established for and has a purpose to serve God. He believes many Churches today have been born out of strife and that God needs churches that have the right foundation so that they can be a witness for Him to the world! The young man said he and his mother had a wonderful time worshipping with us. He believes God led them to Wilhelmina as an encouragement to us and insisted that we recognize that *this is the work of Jesus and not something they are doing on their own.*

Editors Note: The young man and his mother came a couple of times that summer to worship with us, along with the young man's fiancé. The following summer they were married at Wilhelmina, with the Willing Workers catering the wedding reception.

-Taken from a letter written to the congregation from Muriel Holdsworth.

## God's Plans

My earliest memories of Wilhelmina Evangelical Lutheran Church come by way of a phone call from one of its (past) members, Verner Johnson. In the fall of 1965, Ed and I along with our two small children were living in Edmonton but making plans to move a house onto our property at NW 8-49-20-W4.

In the fall of 1965 - under extreme resistance - the church had been closed. The phone call from Verner that fall was part of an effort by many members of the congregation to have the church re-opened. He told us that he was aware that we were planning to become his families' immediate neighbours. He gave a brief summary of the congregations desire to have the church re-opened and invited us to make Wilhelmina our new church home. As far as I know, Verner didn't even know if we regularly attended a church; through the invitation Verner stepped out in love and faith and as a result here we are today!

At the time, I certainly didn't know what the future would hold, but God knows all things. Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." We are forever grateful to God for his plans: The congregations' passion and efforts to have the church re-opened were successful. The current congregation (and hopefully -future generations) will continue to be blessed with the privilege of joining together to worship our awesome God in this beautiful place. What a rich experience! My mind is flooded with so many memories of people, past and present;



God's fellow workers who have used their gifts to bring glory to God. Excellent councillors; cemetery caretakers; the many members who have worked tirelessly to care for and maintain the beauty of the church building; treasurers, secretaries, musicians; Sunday school teachers; Willing Workers. Most of all, God has graciously provided us with faithful Pastors who have taught and preached His truth so that God's love through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit is continuing to be fulfilled today.

- Muriel Holdsworth (née James)

### A Church in Action, A Church at Rest

Anyone approaching Wilhelmina from the south will see a beautiful white country church, framed with a border of green evergreen trees. When you draw closer you'll notice a particularly fine specimen of spruce tree, towering over the steeple and situated in the centre of the cemetery. I was told by the late Ernest Nordin that it was planted near the grave of Edwin Olson in 1937. It is hard to believe a tree could grow to such size in 70 short years, but it also doesn't seem logical for the cemetery caretaker of the time, to have allowed Andrew Olsons' grave to be dug so near a well established tree. I guess we'll never know for sure how old this tree is, as all the people with that knowledge have probably passed on by now. But by just being there, it makes a wonderful and unique centre piece for the Wilhelmina Church cemetery.

Pastor Bill Harder, former Pastor of Scandia/ St. Joseph Parish, described the Christian Community as being like a tree and consisting of two parts. The visible part is above ground and is comprised of the trunk, branches, leaves or needles; it is vibrant and full of life: or what he called the active church. The roots on the other hand are the invisible part of the tree, providing a solid foundation, a secure anchor, the source of nourishment, or what I will call the resting place of the Saints at Wilhelmina. So in this great tree standing solid and secure in the centre of Wilhelmina's cemetery we have a visual symbol of our church. A church in action, a church at rest: proud of our history, joyful in the present, anticipating our future, always in service to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My first intimate contact with Wilhelmina Church was in late November or early December of 1941, when my nephew Ryan Davidson, an infant, died of a childhood disease, probably pneumonia. I do not remember anything about Ryan, as I was only four years old myself. But receiving the news of his death, my older brothers helping dig the grave, my dad and Carsten (Ryans' dad) building a wooden box from rough sawed poplar boards to contain the coffin and strapping it to the spare tire assembly of a 1928 car, are as vivid in my memory today as when it happened. The day of the funer-

al was cloudy and cold with the threat of more snow, with several inches on the ground already. I don't remember anything about being in the church or the service, but clearly remember the bell ringing, a large number of people dressed in black or dark coloured clothes, gathering around the grave, some were crying and holding on to each other, all shivering in the cold. That's it, all I remember.

Until we moved to a farm near Miquelon Lake in May of 1966, I had no further involvement with Wilhehmina Church. I became involved when the church was reopened in early 1967, and have been attending ever since. Being part of the congregation also called for participation on the team responsible for care and maintenance of the cemetery. The cemetery "crew" as it was sometimes called, consisted of nearly all members of the congregation, both men and women at one time or the other. Grass cutting time usually happened in the evening after supper; sometimes many would come, sometimes a few, but always there was intense activity for a couple of hours as lawn mowers and grass trimmers roared away until the cemetery was manicured and presentable for another couple of weeks. If the mosquitoes weren't too bad, we usually stood around talking and reminiscing for half hour or so before returning home. What great times! Over the last few years one becomes aware that many who participated on the work crews are now themselves resting peacefully in the cemetery at Wilhelmina, able to rest, knowing that there will be a new generation prepared to carry on the tradition. Over the past forty years I have received great pleasure and satisfaction being part of this service to our congregation and community. As one travels back and forth over the graves, reading the names and dates on the headstones, many were neighbours and friends, for me others are just names. Many questions come to mind, especially for the infants and young ones whose life on earth was so short. Who were they? What happened? I'll never know their story; I will always be wondering and never have the answers. One thing is for certain, the scriptures say, "I knew you before you were knit together in your mothers' womb;" and "the Father knows the number of hair growing on your head." So even if I don't know their story, their story is written in the Book of Life and preserved for eternity.

While the Wilhelmina Church cemetery has received loving care and attention for nearly one hundred years, what is in store for the future no person knows. One can only speculate: maybe it will carry on as is for another hundred or maybe five hundred years, or, maybe one day be marked only by a plaque or monument and cared for by some committee or the state. It is also possible, as memories and history dim over time, nature will reclaim what it gave up some one hundred years ago. We may not know, but our Lord knows and He will never forget.

- Ed Holdsworth

## In Closing...

Well, two years passes very quickly. When Ron and I undertook updating the history book, it seemed we had so much time...now all of a sudden we're down to the final few days. I often laughed about updating this book - 25 years ago I was nine years old - and until about seven years ago lived quite unaware of the nuts and bolts operation of the church. Without the help of the congregation, this update would not have been possible. I am especially grateful to Ryan and Lillian Nordin who have been keeping track of dates and activities through photos and scrap-books, and Ed and Muriel Holdsworth who helped out with the "To Remember" section. Ron has done a ton of reading through old minute books to search out names and dates, and he's handled all of the work pertaining to the actual printing of the booklet. I am very grateful.



Names and dates are good, and important, but I have been most excited about the addition of this "Our Memories" section. Here are the stories of the people and that's the part I like best. I have enjoyed reading the submissions we've received, and I hope that all of you will too. It's been fun to read the stories of people I know (and some that I don't). I've been fascinated by how things were different and amazed at how they are the same. I've discovered some really interesting things: "You mean the congregation really split over the location of the church when all the possible locations were less than a mile from each other?!!" I guess travel by horse and wagon made a big difference, but it just seems strange to me one hundred years later. I am glad they built where they did, though - I can't imagine the church in any other location. I really had to laugh when I discovered the fans had been installed 14 years earlier and the council was still debating the issue when I was chairperson - and council did share many wonderful moments of merriment over those discussions. I was fascinated by the different perspectives I heard about Algot - whose name, in my memory, is nearly synonymous with Wilhelmina since he was always up at the church cleaning and working and just being there. To hear him described as one of "the big boys" who used to sit at the back of the church 'intimidating' to the younger kids made me realize how small my own perspective was - that here was a person who had already lived much of a lifetime before I was even born. And how true that is for the church and the lives that it has touched - my own little slice of experience is so small in that hundred year span.

I do, however, have a host of wonderful memories of Wilhelmina - from laying on the floor beneath the pews as a child and tracing the cracks between

the floor boards to my first nerve-racking climb to the top of the steeple when I was sixteen (which was just before the 90th anniversary celebration and Algot had rebuilt the steeple steps. My mom tells me the old ladders were *really* scary). Now I can climb to the top of the steeple with ease, and have given tours to many others as well. The view is beautiful and every time I look at that 576 lb. bell I marvel at the work it must have taken to hoist it up there so many years ago. I'd love to hear that story. Come to think of it, Dale even gave me our engagement ring at the top of the Wilhelmina steeple! I have been at the church at all hours of the day and night (thanks to a night job I held for a time after finishing high school). I love Pastor Craig's description of "thin places" - indeed that has been my experience. Here, at Wilhelmina, the Holy Spirit and presence of God is so close and that is why I love it best. Here I can really talk with God. I have spent ever so many hours playing the piano on my own or kneeling in prayer at the altar of Wilhelmina. I treasure every moment of that "mystic sweet communion" as an old hymn writer once wrote. Though I know that the Lord is not the building, I also fear the loss of the building - for it is here that I have most closely felt the presence of Jesus. The people of Wilhelmina have been my family - and having just completed a study on our Lutheran Swedish Heritage which Pastor Greg led, I have a greater appreciation and understanding of why the "family" element of Wilhelmina is so important. It is "family" that was so important to our early pioneers, and that legacy still remains today. Through struggles and stresses and our imperfect human natures, we still want to be a family and live together in unity with Christ and with one another. What an



Interior of the belfry

amazing gift and blessing we have been given. It was my Wilhelmina family - Richard and Evelyn Pearson, Ed and Muriel Holdworth, Algot Person and so many more - that gave me support and encouragement when I was growing up just by being there. I could fill a book on my own with memories of choir practices, services, potluck lunches, Sunday School activities and oh so many more things but I think I've given you just a glimpse of my own small sliver of experience. I hope that you will be blessed by it, and I pray that in your own lives the Lord will continue to bless you and your families as you grow closer to Him.

- Deanna Margel (née Matson)

A photograph of a small, white, single-story Lutheran church with a dark shingled roof. It features a tall, white steeple with a dark roof and a small bell tower. The church has several arched windows and a simple wooden fence in front. The background shows some trees and a clear sky.

*Glory to God in the  
Highest*

*Wilhelmina Lutheran Church  
Hay Lakes, Alberta Canada*

*Your word, O LORD , is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.  
Your faithfulness continues through all generations.*

*Psalm 119: 89-90a NIV*

A photograph of a larger, white, two-story Lutheran church with a dark shingled roof. It features a tall, white steeple with a dark roof and a small bell tower. The church has several arched windows and a simple wooden fence in front. The background shows some trees and a clear sky.

*Ara vare Gud i Höjden*

*Vilhelmina Lutheran Church  
Vilhelmina, Sweden*