

News Release for the weeks preceding November 23, 2008

After 116 years of active ministry, St. John Lutheran Church of Osceola Township, Rural Hector, will be closing its doors. Declining membership and increasing expenses led the members of St. John to make this difficult decision. A celebration of the congregation's ministry and their final worship service will be held on Sunday, November 23, 2008 at 10:30 am. A baked ham dinner will be served after worship. There is no cost for the meal. The worship offering will be given to the St. John Lutheran Cemetery Association of Osceola Township, which will take ownership of the church building and grounds following the congregation's closing.

St. John was begun in June of 1892 by a group of nine men, Fritz Alisch, August Ehrenberg, Wilhelm Ehrenberg, John Homan, Henry Jungclaus, Heinrich Kahle, Carl Lehrke, Franz Voigt and Gustav Wegener. With the assistance of Rev. Dryer, a Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor from Glencoe, these founding fathers organized a congregation. *In accordance with God's word it is our purpose to establish a Christian congregation for the residents of Melville and Osceola Townships. The name of the congregation shall be St. John German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Melville and Osceola Townships. The congregation shall follow the writings of the Lutheran Confessions and shall follow the structure and order set up for the church by our fathers of old.* For the first few years, the congregation met in homes, but in 1897, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Grimm donated two acres of land to the congregation for the purposes of constructing a church building. The total cost came to \$3,820. The church still sits on this site, four and one half miles north and one and one half miles west of County Road 16, at 42817 850th Avenue.

Throughout its long history, St. John has partnered with other area congregations, including St. Paul Lutheran of Hector, Trinity Lutheran of Brookfield Township, and since 2005, with Trinity and Peace Lutheran of Cosmos. St. John has been served by Pastors Ludwig Kettner (1896-1901 and 1906-1909), Jacob Dachsteiner (1902-1905), Henry Krull (1909-1927), J. F. Wipperman (1927-1932), William Heitke (1934-1948), Paulus Pilgrim Sr. (1948-1958), Paul Metzger (1958-1967), Darold Beekman (1967-1972), John V. Burman (1972-1992), Edmund Youngquist (1992-1996), Katherine Skogland (2002-2004), Paul and Sarah Lutter (2004), and Marlaine Doidge (2005-2008.) When pastors were not available, St. John welcomed the services of students from Luther Seminary, St. Paul: David Glesne (1996-1997), Julie Smith (1997-1998), Paul Lutter (1998-1999), Kurt Jensen (1999-2000), Elisabeth Johnson (2000-2001), and Clint Schneklath (2001-2002).

The members of St. John have been faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, seeing that God's Word continued to be proclaimed, taught, and lived. Family members of several generations have worshipped together in this small congregation, prayed together, served each other and their neighbors in the name of Christ. In 1984, Greg Gabriel became the first and only member of St. John to be ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Rev. Gabriel, now of LeMars, Iowa, will be the guest preacher on November 23. Rev. Jeff Engholm of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will conduct the service for closing a congregation. People from the community are invited to participate in the worship service and meal on November 23. For more information contact Pastor Marlaine Doidge at 320-877-7500.