

50th Anniversary History of the Oxford Baptist Church

(Now known as Country Roads Church)

Prepared by Mrs. E. Oker

“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them.”

Acts 14:27

It is amazing at the realization that this priceless time and opportunity of 50 years is now history. And only by the grace of God, and His faithfulness, and the faith of our fathers can we celebrate this anniversary.

In the 1890's, the few Baptists living here belonged to the Isanti South Church. There we no regular services here, but Reverend A.J. Dalstrom had been here and preached the Word of God, sinners were converted, and the Christians were revived.

In February 1894, a Ladies Mission Circle was organized. In February 1895, the Baptists and Free Missions started a Sunday School in the school house, District 47 with Paul Nordell as superintendent and O.F. Wickstrom as secretary. A question arose as to what the Sunday School should be called. Settled by voting, it was called Baptist Sunday School, later under control of Isanti South.

The need of a church home here became urgent. Nels Oker donated 120 rods of land and the work began. Tamarac logs were hauled and hewn by hand for the dimensions, and most of the work was donated.

As soon as possible, the Sunday School was held in the church as well as services, whenever the pastor of the mother church, or any visiting pastor, was available.

On February 9, 1907, a meeting was held at the church for the purpose of organizing a church here.

A council composed of nine members from Isanti South, Isanti North, and Cambridge were present. Reverend J. Nystrom from Isanti South read the Word of God and led in prayer. Reverend Andrew Blomgren of Isanti North was chosen as moderator and Mr. B.L. Gilberts of Cambridge as clerk of council.

The reason for organizing was the need of more efficient work here as the field was large, and was a distance of nine miles from the mother church. As soon as possible, a pastor would be called.

Upon their own request, the following members of the Isanti South were dismissed with the recommendation to the council that they organize a church here: Mr. and Mrs. Olof Hedin, Mr. and Mrs. Nels Oker, Mr. and Mrs. John G Nordin, Mr. Peter Mickelson, Mr. Andrew Magnuson, Mr. Albert Larson, Mrs. Betsy Oslund, Mrs. Anna Swanson, and Miss Eleanor Swanson.

By the grace of God and great faith in Him, with a membership of fourteen the church was organized.

It was called the First Swedish Baptist Church of Oxford. Reverend E.J. Anderson, then at Clear Lake, accepted the call as the first pastor, beginning April 1, 1907.

With seven new members the first year it looked hopeful. Already in 1908, it was decided to build a parsonage. Peter Jacobson donated two acres of land as a building lot. In 1909, the project started and was ready (though not yet complete) for the Reverend A.B. Norberg in the summer of 1911.

Being an artist and painter, he decorated the parsonage, the church, the woodwork, and the pews as they are yet today. We cherish the artistic painting of the cross, with the reading, “Han ar uppstaden” which means “He is Risen.”

In the spring and early summer of 1911, twenty-five new members were welcomed. During Reverend Norberg's time from 1911-1915, ten more were welcomed. And now we were without a pastor, but the good Lord supplied us with someone to bring the message quite often.

Reverend A.J. Johnson was called. He came in the fall of 1916 and served for a period of two years, with eight new members added.

In 1918, the first one of the charter members, Nels Oker, was summoned to the eternal rest. Many others had slipped out of the fold. The financial situation was low and now we were again without a pastor. There were not many visiting pastors either. Victor Anderson supplied in the summer of 1919.

Then came the tests and trials. The interest was lessening. Even the Sunday School, which had been a very active branch of the church, was closed in 1922. Had the Lord forgotten us? No! But sometimes trials come our way only to prove our faith in Him!

In May 1923, the Sunday School was again started under the charge of Ed Nordell and our Chairman Erick Swedin. In the summer, five of our young people were welcomed to the church which proved to be a blessing.

During the summer we had Student Pastors and, with the help of the mother church, the work was carried on. Especially do we think of the late Reverend S.G. Carlson, who was used as an instrument to stir up the gifts of God within the church, and assisted in every way, to the best of his ability, and to the honor and glory of his Master. Many of the following pastors followed in his footsteps. Thanks be unto God for their service here.

In 1943 Reverend Paul Hammar accepted the call, not as full-time pastor, but for Sunday morning services. His active and efficient wife was a great help to us, especially at our Mission Circle meetings. Reverend Paul Hammar resigned in the fall of 1945 to go into Evangelistic work. Mrs. Hammar was called to fill his place until the end of the year. We were fortunate to have her speak at our Mission Circle meetings until 1953.

The parsonage, being vacant for many years and needing much repair, was sold in 1943. Some repair work and interior decorating was done at the church, and in 1946 electric lights were installed.

Since 1947 we have had the privilege of having Reverend Sidney B. Nelson, first for one service each month, then two each month, and now as full-time pastor, and without a salary. During the last few years he has built his own new home in Edgewood, held a full-time job at the Star Tribune, always mindful of the sick and hospitalized in the community, visiting them whenever possible. May the Lord richly bless him and us. During the winter and spring, six new members have been received, five by baptism.

Within the last two years, the church has been moved over a new basement and a vestibule has been added. The interior of the church has been redecorated, and the outside has been painted, and many memorial gifts beautify the inside and outside. Thanks to the many friends in the community, who have given so generously to the Building Fund as well as donations in work.

Thanks be unto God for His material blessings. It is our prayer that these improvements will be used for His glory, who has led us through these many years.

During these fifty years, 137 members have been received into the church. Many of these have entered the eternal rest, many have slipped out of the fold, quite a number have been dismissed to other churches, and others have moved out of the community.

It has pleased the Lord to call twelve of our charter members. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Revelation 14:13. Two of the charter members are among the living; Mrs. John G. Nordin, now of another faith, and Eleanor Swanson, now Mrs. Per M. Larson of Minneapolis.

Our former pastors, Reverend E.J. Anderson, Reverend A.B. Norberg, and Reverend J.A. Johnson have been called to their reward. Peace be unto their memory.

Erick Swedin, a very talented and efficient leader, held the chairmanship from 1907 to 1944. Oscar Dahlberg has been chairman since then. Ed Oslund has been treasurer since 1915, this being his 42nd year. Sunday Superintendents have been as follows: Paul Nordell, Erick Swedin, Mrs. Nels Oker, Mrs. A.B. Norberg, Reverend J.A. Johnson, John Ullinder, Mrs. Anna Swanson, Ed Nordell, and Mildred Larson who has been Sunday School Superintendent since the fall of 1924, with the exception of one year, 1932, when Mrs. Henry Bellin served. The Sunday School has been a very good, as well as a very important part of the work here, as we think of these young folks as our future church.

As we turn back the pages of these fifty years, many changes have taken place, but how wonderful to know that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8. That alone should encourage us to go forward with a great zeal, knowing His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20.



Sunday School Picnic
1902

We need a
church!



Nels Oker
Charter Member
Donated Land



Betsey Ostlund
Charter Member



Mr + Mrs Erick Swedin
Charter members



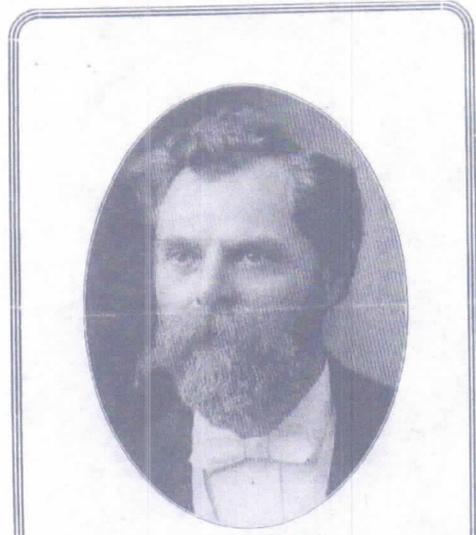
Olaf + Lena Hedin (Front)
Charter Members

Charter members not pictured

- Mr. + Mrs. John G. Nordin
- Peter Mickelson
- Andrew Magnuson
- Albert Larson
- Anna Swanson
- Eleanor Swanson



Our 1st Pastor Rev. E. G. Anderson



REV. A. B. NORDBERG.

Pastor 1911 - 1915
He painted the picture in chalk
Hanging on wall behind the organ,
"Hans at uppstunder." - He is risen!



Rev. Paul & Mrs. Hammar
1943 - 1945 1945 - 1953



Rev. Sidney B. & Hattie Nelson
1947 - 1991

75th Anniversary History of the Oxford Baptist Church

(Now known as Country Roads Church)

Prepared by Ethelyn Thunstrom

Another twenty-five years have passed and we have prospered in the Lord's service. Many of the founders and elder members of the congregation have passed to their reward and the work of the church has passed on to the younger members and new people in our community.

In 1961 plans were formulated to make an addition to the church. Much thought and prayer was put into this project. A 16'x30' addition, with basement, was dedicated in 1963 with Reverend J.G. Johnson as dedicated speaker.

In 1964 the first baptism was performed in the new baptistery when thirteen souls followed the Lord in baptism. This raised our church membership to sixty-six members.

In 1964 a new piano was purchased for the church with the help of our young people.

In 1966 the sanctuary of the church was remodeled and different pews were added.

In 1968 we became a supporting church of the Grandview Christian Home in Cambridge.

In 1970 an Open House was held at the church to honor Pastor Nelson for the 50th anniversary of his ordination.

In 1972 an ordination service was held for David O'Brien with delegates from neighboring churches attending. David O'Brien and his wife had been very faithfully serving our church and we were grateful for their services. The O'Briens left us for their new post in Michigan.

In 1973 we welcomed seven new members to our congregation and rejoiced in their participation in the Lord's work here. Darrel Bernhardus has been with us in our Sunday School and Bible School and we were grateful for his services.

In 1975 we welcomed five new members, and in 1976 we welcomed eight new members to our midst.

In 1976 we honored Greg and Dianna Kasperzak, missionaries who will spend five years in Indonesia. We are very proud to have these foreign missionaries from our congregation. We wish them God's richest blessing in His service.

In 1978 we received twelve new members, bringing our membership to sixty-eight.

In 1979 work was started on another addition to our building. We are very proud of the new structure where we have an enlarged sanctuary, a Pastor's study, more Sunday School rooms, a larger fellowship hall, two baths, and a nice kitchen. We have also been blessed by many memorials and contributions over the years: an organ, benches, lectern, land, church sign, communion cup racks, song books, pictures, and many other contributions.

In 1981 four new members were received in our church, through baptism, which brought our total membership to ninety-six.

We are most grateful to Dr. Sidney and Mrs. Nelson for their faithful and loving work they have given these many years. Although he has officially retired from our church he continues his faithful support. We ask God's richest blessing on them in their retirement.

"Praise ye the Lord, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."
Psalm 111:11

Oxford Baptist Church



As built in the 1840's

*Forsta
Svenska
Baptist
of
Oxford*



He is Risen!



Oxford Baptist Church

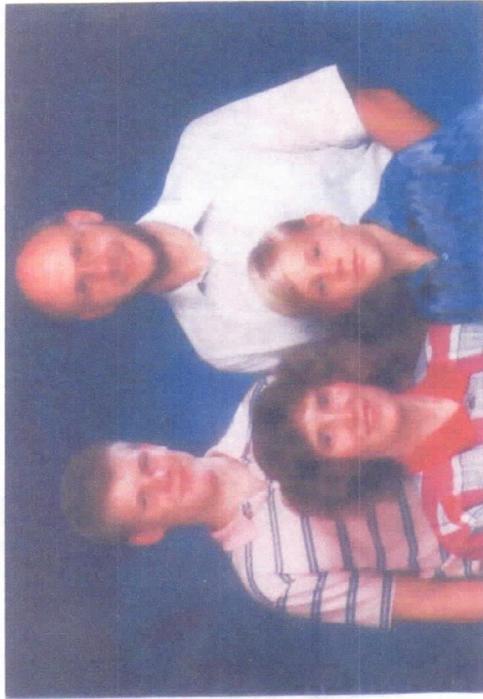
Country Roads Church





Darrel + Jeannie
Bernhardus
← Youth Work

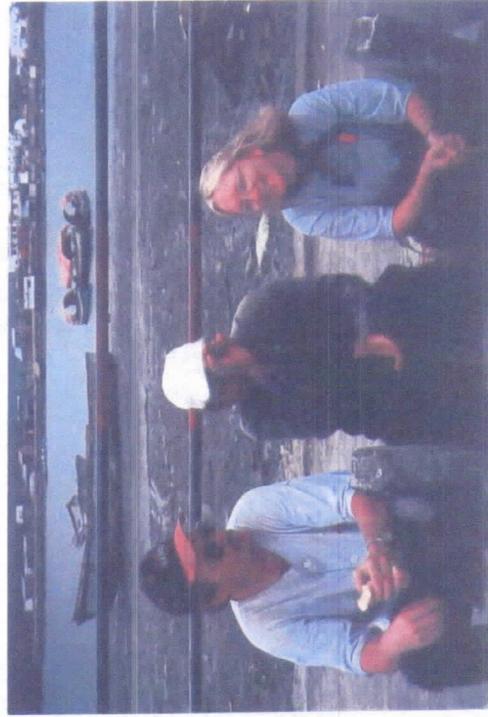
Gray + Dianna
Kas Perzak
→ Indonesia



Lonny + Sandy Fredrickson ↓ Ecuador



SIM International ↓



100th Anniversary History of the Country Roads Church

(Formerly known as the Oxford Baptist Church)

Prepared by Sandy Fredrickson

“And I am sure that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6

When one looks at our first 100 years, from the beginning to now, a few things stand out: change through trials, deep trusting faith in our Lord Christ, and warm, comforting, brotherly love. Many things have changed; some have not!

God has blessed us from the beginning with a number of pastors, speakers, and even laymen during times when we've had no one to fill the pulpit. The pastor who served the longest was Dr. Sidney B. Nelson. He served 35+ years, and without a salary! He passed to meet his Lord on May 15, 1991.

Many faces have changed, but even up to the 6th generation from Nels Oker (the children of Lonny Fredrickson) and a family member of another charter member still remain. Arlene Oslund, whose grandmother was a charter member, and whose father, Ed Oslund, served as treasurer for 42 years, has served the same position of Sunday School Treasurer for over 50 years! We are extremely grateful for their service and commitment to this church.

Not only have pastors and the faces of members changed, but also programs, building remodeling, and maintenance. Even the *name* of the church has changed. For some, change brings heart wrenching trials. For others, it has been exciting to step back and watch God's hand at work. For most, change has made their faith deeper and stronger.

Some things have not changed. The building location for many, even non-members, has come to be known as “the lighthouse on the corner.” Our beloved Swedish chalk painting “Han ar Uppstanden,” which in English means “He is Risen,” still hangs in the sanctuary. Arlene Oslund still keeps track of attendance and the number of bibles brought and records the numbers on the wooden board near the back of the sanctuary. Also, the genuine love and care for the brethren stands undaunted.

Though the main reason for the church is to worship our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to connect others to Christ, we have reached out to the surrounding community in many ways. We've helped send many to Trout Lake camp and retreats where a number of persons have surrendered their lives to Christ. With Reverend Kramer and Annabelle, we held a number of exciting Vacation Bible Schools. “Passport to Palestine,” a particularly memorable one, drew close to 100 youth. We supported Boy Scouts for 20+ years, and Girl Scouts as well. Thanks to Dave and Vicki McLaughlin, our softball teams have been very successful not just in playing, but in drawing youth into our youth Groups and Kids Klub programs where the seed of the gospel was spread among many.

We have done many special activities to gain the community's recognition. Cheer baskets of food were distributed to needy persons during Thanksgiving. When Reverend Jerry and Del McCann were with us, the women began filling Christmas “Shoe Boxes” for the Franklin Graham Association for children overseas. We've had many special suppers and banquets, unforgettable Christmas programs and Easter Passion plays, and even outdoor movies! It was Reverend Jerry McCann's suggestion to offer to the community transportation by the church to the Billy Graham crusade in 1996, and we actively support the Gideons in their disbursement of God's written word by placing it in significant areas.

We've supported long and short term missions. Among them are: Bob and Nancy Sorley in Japan, Dave and Cheryl O'Brien with SIM International, James and Georgina Challander in Singapore (and areas of the Tsunami), Bill and Sue Arvan in Ukraine, Greg and Dianna Kasperzak (from our own congregation), and Lonny and Sandy Fredrickson on a short-term mission to Ecuador (also from our own congregation).

We've supported a number of Compassion Children over the years. Currently we are supporting Marianna from the Dominican Republic, and Uwimanna from Rwanda.

We support Grandview Christian Home in Cambridge, Cambridge Pregnancy Resource Center, Trout Lake Camp, BGC and MBC missions, and Focus on the Family. More importantly, we've tried to meet the needs of neighboring families through our Benevolent Fund and special offerings.

We have been blessed with donations, gifts, and improvements to our property and building. Outside we have a paved parking lot, handicap ramp, sign, ball field, and hitching posts – for all those horse lovers! Inside we have remodeled, carpeted, put in air conditioning, and video and sound systems to name a few.

We have been blessed with music and song: Sharon Williams and Eunice Barnes played the piano and organ for many years, Dave and Sean McLaughlin with guitar and song, Steve and Lois Junker with the saxophone and song, and even our current pastor Reverend Gary Bawden and his wife, MaryAnn, just to name a few. "Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the assembly of the faithful." Psalm 149:1.

Most of all we've been blessed by God these last twenty-five years through our pastors, interim pastors, and speakers:

Reverend John and Annabelle Kramer (1982-1990)

Dave McLaughlin and Frank Wymore – laymen (1990-1992)

Interim Peter Parker (1992)

Pastor Jerry and Del McCann (1992-1999) He was ordained in 1997

Interim and now Reverend Gary and MaryAnn Bawden (1999-present)

Associate Pastor Randy and Sonja Barrows (2001-present)

Through them we have received fifty-one new members into the family of believers in Christ. Of twenty-five members, many have gone to their eternal rest, others have transferred or moved to live in different areas.

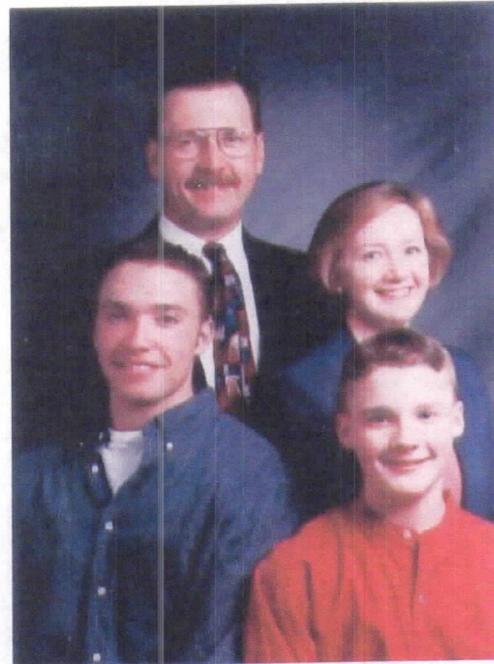
Looking at our first 100 years is interesting, enjoyable, and even profitable if we learn from our mistakes. To say we've made none we condemn ourselves. As time moves on, let us not continue to look back, for in looking back to the past we do not grow. So let us look forward to the next 100 years with confidence. As Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age." Matthew 28:19-20.

As we go, let us remember, "To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of His glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior, through Christ Jesus our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

Jude 1:24.



Rev. John and Annabelle Kramer



Rev. Jerry and Del McCann
(Liam + Ryan)



Rev. Gary and MaryAnn Bowden



Associate Pastor Randy and Sonja Barrows



Passport to Palestine ↑



Christmas Play →



Passion Play



Lollipop the Dragon ↓



Spunky ↓



Women's Retreat



Softball!

Softball II



men's Retreat

Boy Scouts
20+
years
↓



youth group!