

# Extended History of Saude Evangelical Lutheran Church

In the early 1850s, a small group of Norwegian immigrant families came to an area located in the northern part of what was then called Obispo township (now named Utica township), in Chickasaw County, Iowa. Among the first settlers were John Johnson Landsverk, Tollef Olson Haugen, Aslak Torvildson, Kurt Olson Kultan, Kittel Kittelson Stordalen; Halvor Eivindson, and Ola Tostenson all from the Upper Telemarken area of Norway, John Svennungson Bolaaken and brothers Alf Olson Vaala and Gregor Olson Vaala from the Lower Telemarken area of Norway, and Knut Tostenson Einang from Slidre, Valdres, Norway. The area where they built their log cabin homes was known as the Little Turkey settlement.

Pastor C. L. Clausen was the first pastor to visit these families in June of 1854, but a congregation was not established there until the arrival of the Rev. Ulrik Vilhelm Koren. An entry in Pastor Koren's journal shows that he held a service in the home of Gregor Vaala on Nov. 26, 1856. Koren provided pastoral care at nineteen settlements in southern Minnesota and northeast Iowa. His busy schedule allowed him to visit each settlement about four to six times a year.

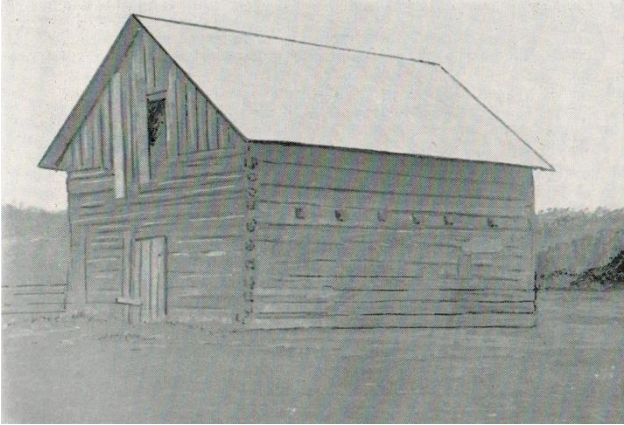
As more immigrants came to the area, the pioneer settlers decided to form a congregation, and in 1857, the "Dale Norske Menighet" (Dale Norwegian Congregation) was formed. Records show that burials were made in a plot of ground located in Howard County 1½ miles north of the present location of the church building. Some of these individuals had died in 1855, which shows



Pastor U. V. Koren

that the plot in Howard County was used as a cemetery before the congregation was organized. There is evidence also that a church building was erected at this location.

In 1858, the Dale congregation officially called the Rev. Koren to serve as their pastor. He accepted the call but also continued as pastor of the Washington Prairie Church near Decorah, IA. In 1860, a small parcel of land (one and one quarter acres) was purchased from Andreas and Cornelia Larsen for the sum of ten dollars by the acting trustees of the congregation. A log church was then constructed measuring 30 feet long by 20 feet wide. On May 19, 1862, the settlers who were buried in Howard County were reinterred near the new church.



First meeting place of congregation

Pastor Koren served the congregation for thirteen years until resigning in 1869. At this time, the Dale congregation formed a parish with the congregations at Crane Creek, Cresco, and Orleans, and a new pastor was called. There was now a need for a parsonage. In 1870, the congregation purchased 20 acres of land for \$600 from Kittle Oleson, and a small wooden frame structure was erected to use as a parsonage. In 1874, construction also began on a new frame church on the



First frame church (1875-1903)

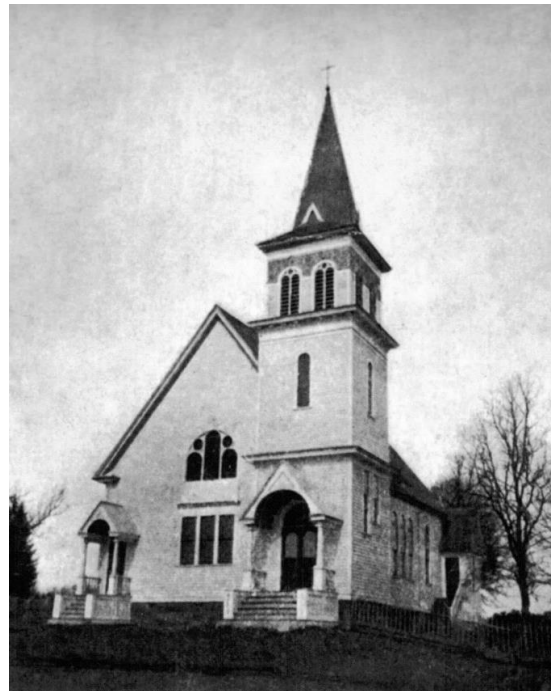
newly acquired land. The old log church was sold and moved away to be used for a family dwelling. The new frame church was 60 feet in length, 40 feet wide, and 20 feet high. The steeple was 14 feet square at the base and about 100 feet in height. The chancel was 14 feet long and 20 feet wide. It was dedicated on August 17, 1875.

In the 1880s, the Election Controversy erupted in the Norwegian Synod. It created such turmoil that several members of the church left and formed another congregation in the town of Saude nearby. This congregation joined the "Anti-Missourian Brotherhood," later known as the United Lutheran Church. Not long after this, the Cresco and Orleans congregations formed a separate parish, leaving the Dale and Crane Creek congregations together. In 1893, a new and larger house was constructed at a cost of \$1400, and the old parsonage was torn

down. This parsonage is still in use at the present, with additions and renovations completed through the years.

On July 8, 1903, the twenty-eight-year-old church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Construction of the current church building was completed at a cost of \$6000, and it was dedicated on June 24, 1904. About this time, the congregation changed its name to the "Little Turkey Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation."

In the early years of the 1900s, the Election Controversy started up again when the major Norwegian Lutheran bodies in America began to discuss a merger. The Little Turkey congregation believed that such a union would compromise the Bible's teaching and did not go along with the merger. The congregation at Jerico, which had previously separated from the Crane Creek church, did not join the merger either. In 1922, the Little Turkey congregation took the name of "Saude Evangelical Lutheran Church," after the area of



Current church (photo from 1908)

Sauderad in Telemark, Norway, from where the early settlers had emigrated. In 1923, the Saude and Jerico parish officially joined the reorganized Norwegian Synod, now known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Until this time, all church services were conducted in the Norwegian language, but now the transition from Norwegian to English began. Services alternated between the two congregations, so each location held services just twice a month – one service in Norwegian and the other in English. In 1941, services began to be held weekly at each location, and Norwegian was no longer used for services after 1945.

As early as 1877, the Saude congregation members talked about how to provide Christian education for the youth. The public schools did not provide the “One Thing Needful,” and besides that, classes were taught only in English. The pastor at that time wanted the church to have its own school, but with the building of the parsonage and a new church, along with the meager incomes of the parishioners, it was difficult to get going. There were several full-time teachers for a while, among them especially a Mr. Sjur Vikdal, who taught in different parts or sections of the congregation during the year. The goal was for ten months of school, but the members resolved that they would gladly settle for five. A later method of offering Christian instruction was to have summer “Norwegian School” in the rural public school buildings that were unused in the summertime. Here, the children were taught the fundamentals of the

Norwegian language and were also trained in the Catechism, Bible History, and Hymnody.



Strandebarm log cabin

After his wife Anna died in childbirth in 1925, Pastor H. M. Tjernagel along with his brother and sons, built a memorial log cabin. It was named the “Strandebarm” after Anna’s childhood home in Norway. This building was used for a Christian Day School for the pastor’s children and other youth in the community. It continued until 1936, when there were not enough children in the area to keep it going. The school was reopened in

another location in 1943, and a school building was soon purchased and moved to a plot at the south end of Saude. It remained in operation there until 1979.

The words in Saude’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet in 1957 remain true today:

What we today, then, have and enjoy in our midst is, humanly speaking due to the unselfish labors of many, many people in the past who have now gone to their eternal reward. Actually, it is all due to the tender mercies of our God. It is He Who has given us this Gospel of a free and unconditioned salvation; it is He Who has supplied the faithful and consecrated laborers in the pulpit and in the pew; it is He Who has moved the hearts of men to will and to do for His Kingdom on earth, especially in our midst; and it is He Who has crowned the preaching, teaching, hearing, praying, working and giving with such signal success. All that has been accomplished, all that we today have

and are and see, is a tribute to the riches of His wondrous grace. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” (Psalm 115:1) To Him alone be all the glory!



Saude church interior

The information in this document was taken from the 100<sup>th</sup>, 125<sup>th</sup>, and 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklets of Saude Lutheran Church.