

# Early History

A meeting was held November 6, 1887 at Timan L. Quarve's, where Ole A. Bloom was appointed to open the meeting and was later appointed chairman. Timan Quarve was appointed secretary for the meeting.

The first item discussed was that it was now time to organize a congregation. But then the question came up, which synod should we belong to?

A decision was made to draw a draft for a congregation guideline to be presented. The draft was read by Timan L. Quarve, after which the group discussed if we should organize a congregation or not. When the majority did not respond, a motion was made that the chairman request those present to express their opinion about the matter, if they wished to organize a congregation or not. Fifteen men met up and it seemed it was everyone's idea and wish to do what they could to help the community prosper in all ways, especially pertaining to the church, which was most important to our welfare and not to be held back or neglected. Experience has also shown that if you wait and let church affairs slide, there will be more obstacles in the way. Therefore, we should begin at once to organize a church among us.

We found the draft proposed for the congregation guideline too indefinite. We believed that if a congregation was organized, we had to know beforehand from what Norwegian Lutheran synod we should call a minister. Otherwise, there might be a misunderstanding as soon as this was to be decided.

We were now in the midst of a discussion and it was said by some that if we called a minister from Hauge's Synod, they would go along. Others said that if it was our intention to belong to any other synod than the Norwegian Synod, they would refuse to go along in organizing any congregation. Still another emphasized that it could become a cause for disagreement inside the Norwegian Synod about the Missouri group. It was believed that when the question came up to call a minister from the synod, maybe he would praise one or the other's viewpoint, and would, of course, work in the interest of one of the parties and bring discord back into the congregation. Better it would be, no disagreement to have, but to adhere to the books and avoid strife. After some talk, back and forth, and after several had said that if a congregation was organized, they would go with the synod regardless of the discord that now exists within the synod. They were encouraged to not get fainthearted but seek as much as possible to prevent the unlucky church strife, and furthermore put their cause in God's hand. The following proposal was then presented to the meeting:

## DECLARATION

In Jesus' name: According to God's word: Cor. 14:40, Col. 2:5. In any Christian congregation, all things shall be conducted in a proper order. We Norwegian Lutherans have now this time come to a decision to write a congregational guideline, after which the congregational guideline's external and internal affairs shall be administered and decided upon. Also, to call a pastor to serve us from the synod of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

This declaration was voted on by a majority of the group and was then signed by the following men:

Timan L. Quarve	Ole A. Bloom
Haagen J. Moen	Rasmus Wisnes
Paul J. Moen	Knute A. Liudahl
Aug. L. Aanderus	Anders K. Gilbertson
Martin L. Arne	Gulbrand L. Elken
Martin Amston	

Now being it was towards late afternoon, it was decided to postpone further business until a later meeting. This was set for Thursday, the 15th of November, right after services that were to be held at Timan L. Quarve's by Pastor O.T. Lee.

Meeting adjourned.

Quarve, Secretary Pro-Tem

**November 15, 1887:** The next paragraph about what name to be used was discussed.

Several had really not thought about any name. Others thought they should take a name that was not already used and then they thought that being our post office name "Viking" was really outstanding in its kind in all America, then the congregation could take the name from that. Then it would be called "The Vikings" or "Viking's Church". Others again did not like this too well, as it would picture us as Vikings, and also be more cumbersome than if they just took the name of the post office and called it Viking Church. They felt they had to use the singular of the name of the post office and was approved as read:

Our congregation's name shall be Viking Church.

**November 22, 1887:** What they especially worked on was the chairman's right to vote. The motion pertaining to this matter reads as follows:

If the votes, when all, including the chairman has voted, are even, then the chairman casts the final vote.

They were against giving the chairman two votes as this motion reads, and some felt the chairman should have a right to vote only if the votes were equally divided. Others thought the chairman should have the right to vote as the others.

They finally agreed on the following motion:

The chairman has a right to vote only to break the tie.

**Special congregational meeting, November 27, 1887:** A notice was sent out a couple of days beforehand, that a special meeting was to be held at Timan Quarve's house on November 27, 1887. The purpose of the meeting was that decisions had to be made concerning a cemetery for the Viking congregation.

The meeting was opened by appointing Ole A. Bloom as chairman and August L. Aanderud as secretary. A place for the cemetery was now discussed. They talked about a place by the county line between Wells and Benson counties. That would be between townships 150 and 151, but when they did not find any suitable place along the line approximately in the center of the congregation, east and west, they then gave it up for the parallel section line one mile further north. Here a couple of items were immediately discussed. T.P. Lommen offered land on the north side of the line, about 40 rods west from the "Twin Hill" or Preacher's Hill, "Prestehaug", as it also was called.

People on the west side of the congregation, in particular, talked in favor of that place because it would give them a shorter distance to travel. They also had in mind that a schoolhouse might be built in the near future and they should try to get the cemetery close by as the schoolhouse would, for a long time, be used as a church. Others again talked of a plot three-fourths mile further east along the same line, namely the place where sections 27, 28, 33, and 34 come together.

This spot seemed to be, or would be later, more in the center of the congregation. It lay more convenient for those that live north of the Sheyenne River, if they decided to join here. The first place mentioned, they thought, was too near to settlers and possibly would be in the way for the schoolhouse if it was picked for a cemetery. The other place was also at a lower elevation.

In choosing a cemetery, they should not try to come near a schoolhouse, but decided on a place near where they planned to build a church.

Now that Mr. Lommen had land along the whole line between these two points, he declared himself willing to give land to either place. Also, Anders K. Gilbertson and Timan L. Quarve were willing to give to the cemetery their respective land corners that border the eastern part of Mr. Lommen's offer, or in other words, the congregation was offered their choice of the SE corner of Sec. 28, the NE corner of Sec. 33, or the NW corner of Sec. 34, in Twp. 151, Rg. 69.

It was now unanimously decided that they should choose between these two last-named section corners.

It was also decided that the congregation would not accept less than two acres for churchyard and cemetery. This was agreed to by all and, in particular, by the three land owners.

A committee consisting of three were given full power to decide between the three section corners as the best location, also to decide how and in what form the two acres should be taken. As members of this committee, Ole A. Bloom, Rasmus Wisnes, and Paul J. Moen, were appointed.

**November 29, 1887:** The cemetery committee gave a report through its secretary Mr. R. Wisnes. According to his report, the committee had met November 28, 1887, and after close inspection, they picked the NW corner of Sec. 34 in Twp. 151, Rg. 69 on A.K. Gilbertson's land. They had taken the two acres allotted for the cemetery in a square 20 rods in north and south, and 16 rods in east and west from the section or surveyor's mound. Two rods were allowed on each section line for roadway.

The report was unanimously approved but the committee's secretary was asked to examine the report before it was recorded.

**December 11, 1887:** Only the male members have a right to speak and vote at the congregational meetings that are:

- a) twenty-one (21) years of age;
- b) contribute yearly to the congregation's expenses, unless exempted by the congregation;
- c) are not members of secret societies;
- d) or for other reasons, according to the congregation's decision, are denied these rights.

The congregation can, under certain situations, give such men the right to speak at a meeting which, according to the above paragraph, does not belong to the congregation.

**February 27, 1888:** There was an agreement made with the ones from the north side and also with Pastor Lee that during the busy season they should hold Sunday services in both congregations on the same day. The one service early and the other a bit later than usual.

At other times, two (2) Sunday services are held in Viking for one (1) on the north side. But when the one congregation gets a Sunday service, then the other one has it on a weekday.

The secretary read a letter to Pastor Lee, signed by the congregation's trustees where they ask the minister to serve the congregation on a temporary basis, with a yearly wage of \$50, besides the regular offering to the pastor. The chairman gave the letter to Pastor Lee and asked for an answer on the same.

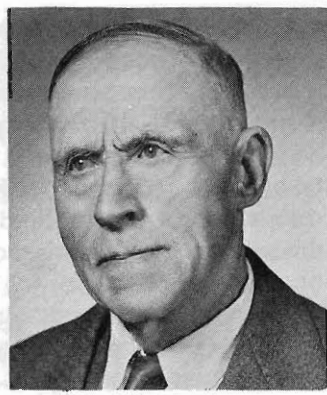
These are translations from the Norwegian of the minutes of the twelve separate meetings held to formulate the constitution of the Viking congregation. They were quite lengthy, so only excerpts from some of them are included here, with the exception of the first meeting, which is printed in its entirety.

## The Building of the Church

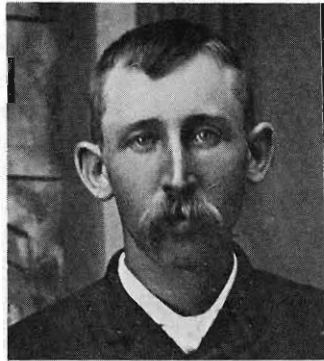
Funds for building the church have been obtained in two ways, namely: gifts from the Ladies' Aid and by subscriptions from members. The Ladies' Aid contributed in all \$2,051.93 (also \$165.00 for painting the exterior). Twenty-nine dollars had been raised by subscriptions in 1894. At the annual meeting in December, 1901, \$800 had been raised. It was then decided to build a church. The size of the church was tentatively agreed upon. A building committee was elected. Sixteen hundred dollars was sub-



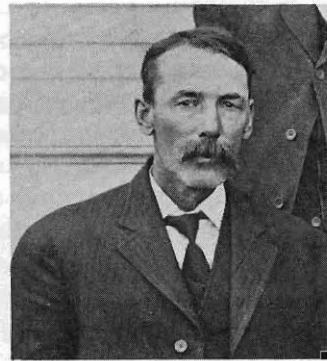
**Rasmus Wisnes**



**M.A. Wisness**



**Knute Liudahl**



**T.P. Lommen**



**Andrew Faleide**

scribed at that meeting. The following February, subscriptions had increased to \$2,700 and, by March, to \$3,200.

The work on the foundation was started that spring but was not completed. In the early summer of 1902, the foundation was completed and erection of the building was started in June. The exterior was completed by October 18, 1903, when the cornerstone was laid. The services were conducted by Rt. Rev. Bjorgo, then the president of the N.W. District of the Norwegian Synod. It was the aim to have the church ready for Christmas Day services. The furnace arrived Christmas Eve and installation was finished by 12:00 that night. Services were announced and on Christmas Day the church bell sounded the glad tidings.

The church was filled to capacity, not only with people but with smoke and bad odor from the burned oil and varnish from the newly installed furnace and pipes.

At the annual meeting of the congregation a few days later, the building committee, which now had served for two years, rendered its report, was discharged and was tendered a rising vote of thanks. The committee consisted of T.P. Lommen, M.A. Wisness, Andrew Faleide, R. Wisnes and Knute Liudahl. The report covered the cost of the exterior of the building and the plastering inside. Itemized account follows:

Material .....	\$3,880.74
Carpenter Work .....	1,728.64
Hardware .....	200.00
Foundation .....	550.00
Lathing and Plastering .....	230.90
Spire .....	36.16
Windows .....	525.00
Painting .....	165.00
Furnace .....	147.92
Miscellaneous .....	330.25
Church Bell (donated by Ladies' Aid) .....	317.59
Total .....	\$8,112.20

The interior furnishings and finishing, including the basement cost nearly the same amount. The total amount exterior and interior, was \$14,312.26.

Up to this time the schoolhouse on R. Wisness' land, built in 1890, was used for church services for a period of 13 years.

## CONTENTS OF CORNERSTONE

The following is a list of the contents found in the metal box, when opened in 1962. It was placed there at the cornerstone laying at the Viking Lutheran Church on October 18, 1903.

- A copy of the congregation's history (in Norse)
- A copy of the New Testament (in Norse), printed in 1888 - Price: 25¢
- A copy of "Synodens" hymn book
- A copy of the constitution and bylaws
- A copy of the "Leeds News", dated October 15, 1903
- A.M. Greenfeild's subscription.
- A copy of the "Oberon Reporter", dated October 15, 1903, Knute Liudahl's subscription
- A copy of the explanation "Forklaring" - Price: 25¢, printed in 1890
- Two copies of "Amerika", dated Friday, October 16, 1903

## 1903 CHURCH OFFICERS

President .....	Rasmus Wisnes
Trustees .....	H.K. Hellerud, J.E. Rosendahl Sam Morken, Iver Larson, Ole Flaskerud
Secretary .....	Andrew Nelso
Treasurer and Sexton .....	A.K. Gilbertso
Janitor .....	August Aanderu

It is evident that the congregation had the last word as to what position the stained glass picture windows should have.

It was decided that Martin Luther would occupy the north side, with Jesus and the lamb having the honored position on the south side.

Also, instructions were given not to install the windows until they could be accompanied by screens to avert the breakage from possible hailstorms.

Painting the interior of the church had been delayed for a period of two years, due to lack of funds. At one particular council meeting in late 1905, Pastor Oksendahl was delegated by the council to meet with the Ladies Aid "to prevail upon them to lend whatever funds they had to complete this project."

There was also concern about employing a professional to do the work. The secretary was instructed to contact one. Ole Hictor, a very competent painter from the council's viewpoint, was chosen.

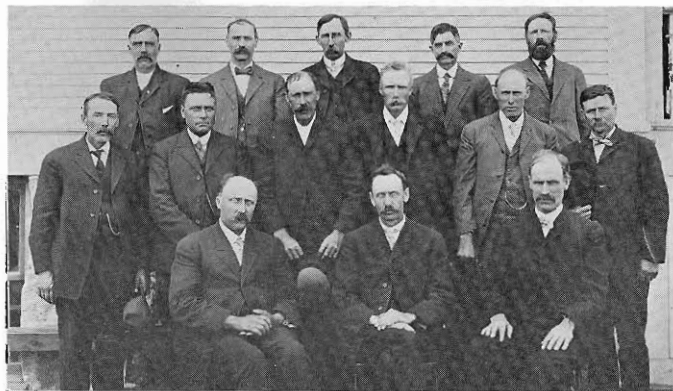
The August, 1905 records show that the church council purchased 60 posts at 18 cents each from Rasmus Wisnes to be used as hitching posts. An early photo of the Viking Church shows this installation, directly west of the church. Others recall that they were on the north side also, just off the public right-of-way.

Eventually, some were used to fence the church grounds, as shown in other pictures. Sixty posts would make a very lengthy hitching rail if all had been used solely for that purpose.

On the committee were: Fred Jacobson, chairman; Einar Lindgren; Kermit Bergsgaard; Bernice Ellingson; and Hazel Hagen, with Roger Anderson as the prime contractor. The finishing work was completed in January, 1972.



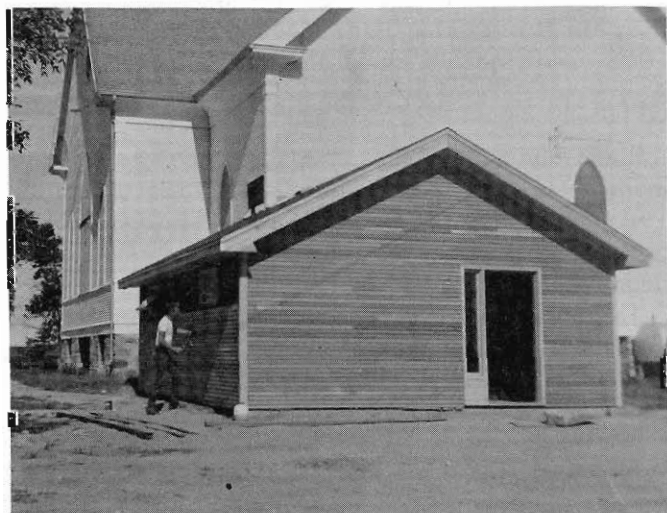
**Basement entry built in 1937.**



#### **Pioneer Founders of Viking Congregation**

**Back row, left to right: Gulbrand Elken, Timan Quarve, Knute Liudahl, August Aanderud and Olaf Haakenson. Middle row: Tosten Lommen, Paul J. Moen, Rasmus Stenerodden and Ole Wisnes. Front row: Rasmus Wisnes, Albert Liudahl and Andrew Gilbertson. Original Founders not pictured: Haaken Moen, Martin Arne, Elef Rud, Iver Larson, Ole Bloom, Eric Hagen, Martin Arnsten and Even Lamén.**

As mentioned briefly in another section, the new entrance to the basement on the east side (to replace the smaller one built in 1937) was first discussed at the annual meeting in the fall of 1970. The decision to build was left up to the church council, with input from the Ladies Aid. Approval was given in May of the following year.



**Replacement entry built in 1970.**

Insulation, laid in the attic in 1955, was found to be inadequate, so additional insulation was added in 1985, bringing the R factor up to 38 to 40, a measure of heat

resistance. The project was under the supervision of the Paulson Construction firm, with men of the congregation participating.

It also became necessary to re-do the attic electrical wiring at this time. Rewiring the basement and installing a new "service entrance" was done in 1983.

On the grounds east of the church that once occupied the Gilbertson and/or Liudahl store building, is now the site of the old Quarve #2 schoolhouse. It was moved from its former location, one mile west.



**Old Quarve #2 on the transport.**



**Hilbert Haakanson, Alfred Lynne and Mrs. Lars (Sophie Brandvold) Todahl were members of the 1903 confirmation class, the last to be held in the Aanderud School or Quarve #2.**

It afforded a place of worship for the congregation for many years prior to the building of the main structure in 1903. During the centennial, it will house displays of old pictures, antiques, etc., as well as a typical schoolroom setting of the era.

Through the many decades of Viking's history, the Viking Church has been the recipient of numerous memorials, special gifts and donations of various kinds. The Viking congregation is most appreciative of these gifts and grateful for the generosity of its friends and members.

With the Viking centennial nearing a reality, plans were made for the upcoming celebration by selecting working committees, gathering data and routing it all in retrospect.

First, a little sprucing up was in order. A gleaming coat of paint . . . not one, but two for the exterior of the church building. Again, old photographs provided proof that at one time it was trimmed in a darker color. Further research

provided the authenticity. By gently scraping off the paint, it was found that more than one trim color had been used at different periods, including green and gray.

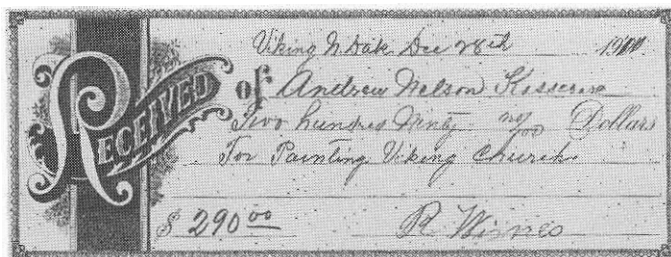
The very latest, on the new application, is an overall white, with medium gray trim. It is strikingly beautiful, renders character and fully accentuates its architecture.

Under the supervision of Larry Lysne, with volunteer help from the men of the congregation, the interior was redone with a fresh coat of paint also. The project commenced in January of 1987.

The following is a comparison labor cost of painting the exterior of the church in different years: 1905 - \$290, 1959 - \$724, 1974 - \$3,030, 1986 - \$4,000.



**Kory Dokken of Leeds, painting the church 1986.**



## Old Settlers Association

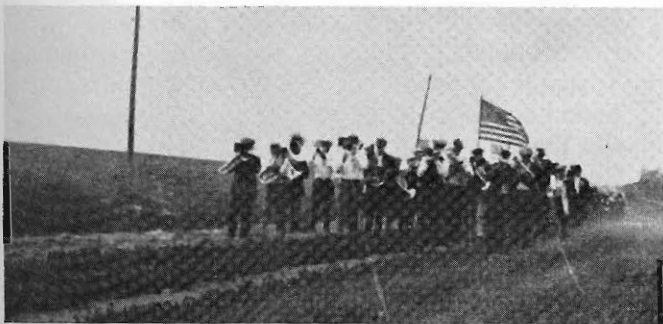
The following is a typical record of the minutes of the Old Settlers' Association, which began in 1908, and according to the records, was terminated in 1926. These are the minutes of the annual meeting which was held on July 4, 1922.



**March was from the Aanderud School to Presta Haug on the Fourth of July in 1922.**

The annual picnic of the Old Settlers' of Viking and vicinity was held on July 4, 1922, in Quarve's Grove on the hill, one-half mile west of the church. The original plan was for an all-day celebration, being also the 36th anniversary of the settlement. But, the people did not come until they saw it would be a fine, clear day and, thus, no program was put on in the forenoon.

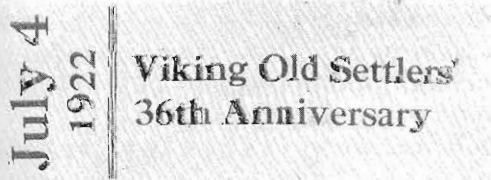
After the people had their picnic dinner, the parade started about 2:00 p.m. from the schoolhouse west of the hill, led by the Maddock Band -- 24 pieces, of which, four were ladies. The band leader was Dr. R.J. Critchfield. World War I Veteran, John Gilbertson, had charge of the procession, assisted by Miss Gina Wisness. The procession formed four abreast: first the band; next the Old Settlers', headed by Lars Bergsgaard, the standard bearer; then came a number of other citizens; and, finally, all the school children from the six or eight school districts, each one with a flag.



**Parochial school children, led by the Maddock Band.**

The procession marched to the grove, halting at the speakers stand, where the children, assisted by the band, sang two patriotic songs. Mr. M.A. Wisness, the president of the day, gave the opening speech and introduced Miss Hilda Wisness, who read the Declaration of Independence. Professor Felland, principal of Maddock Agricultural School, spoke at some length about the old settlers. T.L. Quarve read a paper on the immigrant. By his consent, it appeared in our paper the following week. Torger Syness gave a fine explanation of the Declaration and American citizenship and what it meant, lauding the old settlers and exhorting the young and new to follow the course of the old ones.

Reverend Orwold spoke next and, as all the previous program had been in English, he chose Norwegian. Auditor, Ginard Gilbertson of Minnewaukan, representing the younger generation, spoke in behalf of them.



The last speaker was the Register of Deeds from Benson County, Mr. S.S. Reding. After some remarks in English, he read a Norwegian poem, composed for the occasion. The

band rendered some selections between the speakers and at the close. The Old Settlers' had a business meeting. Thirty-nine responded to roll call and five asked to join. From the minutes read, it was learned that with the five now joining, the organization had, at present, 75 members. Nine had died and six moved away. Thus, there were in all 90 on the roll. This was, however, not even one-half of those who should and might belong, as all who came before 1900, and all their children were eligible.

Officers for the next year were: president, M.A. Wisness; vice-president, Albert Sundet; secretary, T.L. Quarve; and treasurer, Christ Arnston. In other words, all were re-elected. Those elected to arrange the next annual meeting were: Nels E. Gullerud, Bernt H. Grondahl, Ole L. Bergsgaard, Anton E. Snikerpladsen and Olaf Haakanson.

## Pastors

The Viking settlement, located partly in Benson County and partly in Wells County, was founded in 1886 by Timan Quarve, Tosten Lommen, Andrew Gilbertson, Abraham Faleide, Rasmus Wisnes and August Aanderud. The first three came from Spring Grove, MN, and the others from Hickson, ND.

The following year an influx of homeseekers, some with families, came to settle and become a permanent part of the Viking Community. These people were not concerned with private affairs only, but also turned their attention to public and community affairs. As religious services were not yet available, Sundays were spent in visiting neighbors.

The early pioneers thought they had been blessed by God in a special way. Like the Bible's Abraham, they had left their childhood homes and gone into a new country which had been given them by the Lord. They were all from Christian homes and from communities with well-established Lutheran congregations and churches. Naturally, their thoughts centered on the establishment of a Lutheran congregation and a place of worship in their new home.

### REVEREND O.H. AABERG



**Rev. O.H. Aaberg**

The nearest Lutheran pastor, Rev. O.H. Aaberg, lived in Devils Lake - a distance of over fifty miles - and was one of

the first missionary pastors to be sent into this territory. On invitation, Pastor Aaberg conducted the first service for the Viking pioneers on the afternoon of July 19, 1887, in the small, newly erected frame house of T.L. Quarve. Though small, the Quarve house was the largest building in the settlement.

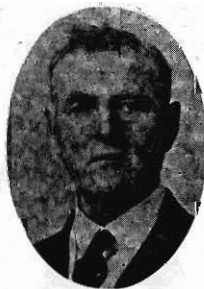
Rev. Aaberg conducted a second service October 2, 1887, at which the first baptism in the community was performed. The child was Hannah Marie Olson, the infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hans Olson of North Viking.

At this service the pastor sought to organize a congregation and call a pastor, but no immediate action was taken.



**Quarve No. 2, also referred to as the Aanderud School, served the congregation as a church from 1891 to 1903.**

## REVEREND O.T. LEE



**Rev. O.T. Lee**

Several ministers and missionaries visited the new congregation. One of them was Rev. O.T. Lee, who had been called to Leeds or Lake Ibson but had consented to serve the Viking congregation. His first service was held November 29, 1887.

The first death in the community occurred on November 2, 1887, when Peter Oscar Elken, the seven-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Gulbrand Elken, died. It then became necessary for the young congregation to provide a cemetery.

A committee consisting of Rasmus Wisness, Paul Moen and Ole Bloom selected from several plots of land offered the one donated by Andrew K. Gilbertson.

The afternoon of November 29, 1887, Peter Elken's funeral was held, officiated by Pastor Lee. Interment was held in the newly-consecrated cemetery.

During the months of December 1887 and January 1888, several meetings were held in the congregation for the purpose of writing a congregational constitution. Much care was exercised to avoid possible future controversies.

On February 16, 1888, the constitution of Viking Congregation was adopted. The following pioneers became charter members:

Rasmus Wisnes	Olof Hakanson
Gulbrand Elken	Martin Arne
Abraham Faleide	Ivar Larson
Bemt Grondahl	August Aanderud
Haakon Moen	Paul J. Moen
Knute Liudahl	Rasmus Stenerodden
Tosten P. Lommen	Albert Liudahl
Even Lamne	Timan L. Quarve
Ole Bloom	Ellef Ruud
Erick Hagen	Ole Wisness
Martin Arnston	Andrew Gilbertson

While the constitution of the church was being formulated and before the first meeting under the new constitution took place, Ole A. Bloom, Haakon J. Moen and Rasmus Wisness served, in that order, as chairmen of the meetings. Timan L. Quarve, August L. Aanderud, and Ole A. Bloom, respectively, served as secretaries for these meetings.

The new congregation elected their first officers following the adoption of the constitution on February 16, 1888. Those elected were Rasmus Wisnes - President (he later served in this capacity for 35 years), Timan L. Quarve - Secretary, and Martin Arnston - Hjalpesekreter (secretary's helper). Mr. Quarve served as secretary as long as he lived in Viking.

The first board of trustees elected were Knute Liudahl, Timan Quarve and Ole Bloom. Rasmus Wisnes was elected treasurer. Elected as "Klokker", or "Kirkesanger" (hymn leader) was Ole Bloom. Timan Quarve was selected to lead the opening and closing sections of the worship services.

A formal call was extended to Rev. O.T. Lee and was accepted by him at the services held in the Quarve home Sunday, February 27, 1888.

Two representatives from the recently organized North Viking congregation, Ole H. Myhre and Hans T. Olson, were present and asked if they might cooperate with Viking in calling the same pastor. It was decided the Rev. Lee would serve both congregations, with Viking's share of the pastor's salary to be \$50 a year.

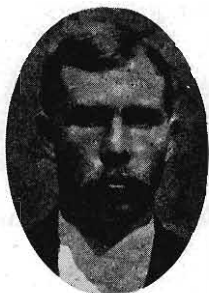
At his last service two years later (December 5, 1889), Pastor Lee performed the first Viking marriage ceremony. It was held in the Quarve home and joined Gilbert Hanson Gisleberg and Mathilda Josephine Rosendahl in marriage. Among the first to be baptized in the community were: Adolph, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Bloom; Alfred, son of Mr.

and Mrs. Knute Liudahl; and Christian Arnold, son of Mr. and Mrs. Timan Quarve.

During the vacancy left by Pastor Lee, Rev. R.J. Winess from Hickson, ND, who had served as spiritual advisor to the group, especially in the matter of writing the much discussed constitution, conducted services for the Viking congregation. This was in the spring of 1890, while on one of his many missionary travels. Rev. Aaberg also visited the congregation during the vacancy.

During 1889, new members added to the congregation were: Lars O. Bergsgaard, Lars Elken, Nils E. Gullerud, Andrew Nelson, Hans Paulson, Andrew Bloom, Brede Gulden, Peter J. Myhre, Johannes J. Bigseth and Helmer Gilbertson.

## REVEREND H.A. BLEGEN



**Rev. H.A. Blegen**

Rev. H.A. Blegen, second pastor to be called to the Viking congregation, preached his installation sermon in Viking on September 14, 1890, in the newly-built schoolhouse. This first school was built on a site donated by Rasmus Wisnes. The school now stands just east of the present Viking Church. It was originally known as Quarve School No. 2.

Rev. Blegen, who lived at Leeds, served the congregation for two and a half years for a yearly salary of \$50.00. His mission field became quite extensive, covering as much as 14 congregations in seven counties. Because of this, it became necessary to form a new parish from the St. Olaf, North Viking and Viking congregations. On March 10, 1893, a call was extended to Rev. Ivar L. Oksendahl to serve this parish.

## REVEREND I.J. OKSEND AHL



**Rev. I.J. Oksendahl**

Rev. I.J. Oksendahl accepted the call and began his duties in the spring of 1893. The new pastor was also able to file a claim in North Viking where he took up residence. Since he lived only eight miles from Viking, he was able to devote much more time to the call than the former pastor. His salary began at \$125.00, and was increased; first to \$150.00 and finally to \$250.00.

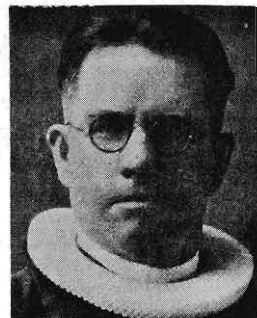
During this time, the schoolhouse served as a meeting place for the congregation until 1903. For a number of years, having a church building had been a dream and about 1900 some effort had been made to raise money for a church building. The Ladies Aid had been accumulating a fund for a number of years for furnishing such a building and which had, by now, grown into a considerable amount of money.

In December of 1901, the Viking congregation decided to build.

Committees to secure contributions from members were successful and a building committee was later appointed consisting of M.A. Wisness, T.P. Lommen, Andrew Faleide, Knute Liudahl and Rasmus Wisness. With the effort of the whole community, the church building was erected and the cornerstone laid October 18, 1903. Rt. Rev. Bjorgo, President of the Northwest District of the Norwegian Synod conducted the services.

Pastor Oksendahl was a quiet, unassuming person who won the love and respect of all as he served Viking for 16 years. He tendered his resignation because of ill health, but this was rejected in the hope that his health might gradually improve. One year later his resignation was accepted and he moved to Stanwood, WA.

## REVEREND IVAR HAVNEROS

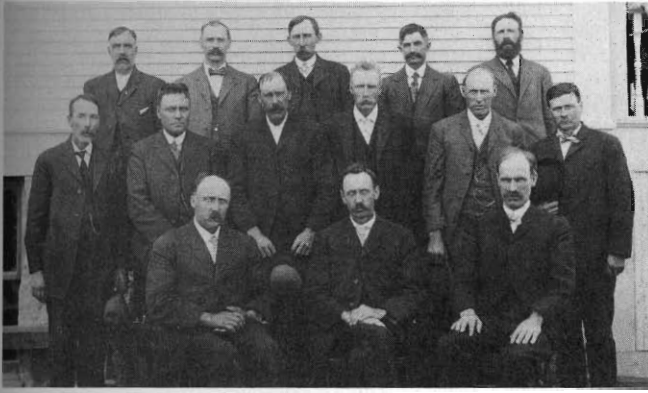


**Rev. Ivar Havneros**

Rev. Ivar Havneros was called to fill the vacancy left by Pastor Oksendahl and conducted his first service on May 2, 1909. He arrived in time for the meeting of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod held June 16-24, 1909, at the Viking Church. This was a week of great significance for the congregation as many members and about 50 pastors attended the meetings and, on June 20, 1909, saw the formal dedication of the Viking Church. Assisting in the services were the Rt. Rev. V. Koren, then president of the church body, and several of the neighboring pastors. This event marked an important milestone. It had been almost 25 years since the settlement of the community and the beginning of a period of successful church work and material prosperity in the community.



# Viking Church



## Pioneer Founders of the Viking Congregation

**Back Row, L to R: Gulbrand Elken, Timan Quarve, Knute Liudahl, August Aanderud, Olaf Haakenson; Middle Row: Tosten Lommen, Paul J. Moen, Rasmus Stenerodden, Ole Wisness; Front Row: Rasmus Wisness, Albert Liudahl, Andrew Gilbertson. Original Founders not pictured: Haaken Moen, Martin Arne, Elef Rud, Iver Larson, Ole Bloom, Eric Hagen, Martin Anrston, Even Lamén.**

On Nov. 6, 1887 the founders pictured above, having already established themselves in a community settlement the year before, met to establish a church and school. The group had established their homesteads. A store, blacksmith and post office had been established to provide them with consumer services and the community was given the name of Viking - thence they gave the congregation the same name. An itinerant missionary pastor, Rev. O.H. Aaberg, from Devils Lake, held service in the home of Timan Quarve on July 19, 1887 and returned again on Oct. 2, 1887 to baptize Hannah Marie Olson, daughter of the Hans Olsons of North Viking and it was at this October service he was asked to assist them in establishing a congregation. The school played an equal part in the planning because they knew that the school would probably be used as the congregational meeting place until the church could be built. Rasmus Wisness donated land for the school that was built in 1890 and the structure served a dual purpose of a church as well for 13 years. It was located eight miles south of Maddock on Hwy. No. 30 and then, in 1992, was moved to the site east of the Viking church.

During the organizing meetings for the church, the following questions arose: What synod to belong to? Where should the church be located? Where should the cemetery be located? Who had the right to vote and speak at congregational meetings? The decisions to these questions were answered by committee and prayer under the guidance of scripture. "And so my brothers, by all means be ambitious and prophesy, do not suppress the gift of tongues, but let everything be done with propriety and in order." I Corinthians 14:40 And, "I may be absent in body but in spirit I am there among you, delighted to find you all in harmony and to see how firm your faith in Christ is." Colossians 2:5

The decision was made to become members of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. They chose the land offered by Anders K. Gilbertson on which to eventually build the church and cemetery, in spite of other land offers by T.P. Lommen and Timan Quarve. The selection of the cemetery site was hastened

by the death of seven-month-old Peter Elken, son of Gulbrand Elken, on No. 25, 1887. The constitution of the Viking church, and the determination of who had the right to speak and vote at congregational meetings was limited to the following: 1) males 21 years and older, 2) those contributing to the congregational expenses, unless exempted, 3) those not members of secret societies, 4) those for other reasons, according to the congregation's decisions, are denied these rights. It was decided that Pastor O.T. Lee be called as the first pastor. He was also serving the Leeds and Lake Ibsen congregations. They decided, also, that during the busy time of the year he would hold two services on Sunday, but at other times of the year he was to alternate Sunday services and a second service on a weekday between the North and South congregations (North Viking and Viking).

The church building, still standing and in use, was built in 1903, through the generous gifts of the Viking Ladies Aid and by subscriptions from members. In December 1901, when the Ladies Aid contribution reached \$2,051.93 and subscriptions reached \$800, it seemed sufficient to the membership to begin erecting a building. By February of 1902, subscriptions had reached \$3,200. The building began in 1902 and by the Christmas of 1903 was ready for the first service. The furnace was installed on Christmas Eve and work was completed by midnight. The smoke and bad odor from the new furnace and pipes nearly drove the people out of church on Christmas Day. The total cost of the church building minus any fixtures, except the bell, cost \$8,112.20. The only other convenience the parishioners had was that of hitching posts on two sides of the newly constructed church building.

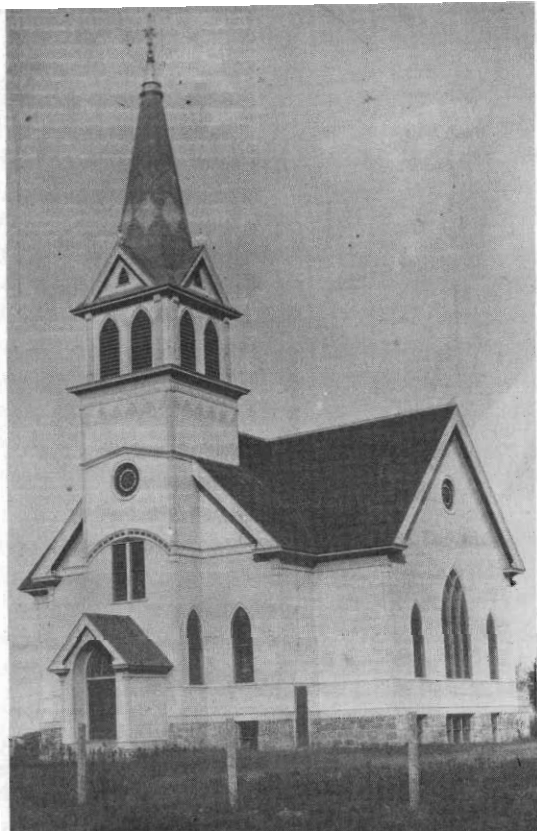
During the first 50 years, much effort went into furnishing God's house to make it an inviting and pleasant place to worship. Groups, such as the Ladies Aid, Luther League, and Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation, worked diligently and committed themselves to this cause. Also, organizations with the church were established. The Luther League was established in 1905. The East and West Ladies Aid groups began in 1894. The Sunday School and the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation were established in 1927. The Lutheran Brotherhood began in 1934.

Since Rev. O.T. Lee, the first pastor called in 1888, Viking has shared a pastor with North Viking, at Maddock. In 1893-1909, it was a three point parish, also including St. Olaf. In 1909-1918, Rev. Ivar Havneros served not only Viking and North Viking, but also Fron and, occasionally, Hamberg and Flora. In 1968, the parish realignment added Klara, Immanuel and Flora to the parish; however, Flora dissolved in 1972. The alignment of four parishes (North Viking, Viking, Klara and Immanuel) continued until 1997, when Klara withdrew, and Immanuel closed in 2001.

During the last 25 years, the following pastors have served the congregation: Pastors Russell Wierschke, 1972-1976; Chris Hallanger, 1973-1976; Dale Seffrood, 1975-1991; Reinhold Miller, 1977-1978; Duane Neugebauer, 1979-1985; Richard Budd, 1986-1988; Brad and Lorie Keyser-Boswell, 1991-1997; Paula Knutson, 1998-2000; and William Twynham, 2000 to present.

Throughout the past 25 years, the congregation has had to take under prayerful advisement many issues affecting their church from a national perspective, a parish perspective and those of an individual congregation.

On the national level, they have made a transition in synod



**Viking Church**



**An early photo of the Viking Church**

affiliation from the American Lutheran Church (now defunct) to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America; participated in the mission of the church during the farm crisis of the 1980s and 1990s; and are currently considering the meaning of the historical episcopate to their rural church.

Because of changes in parish pastorship and the moving from a four-point to a two-point parish, Viking church had reviewed



**Viking Lutheran Church, Cemetery and surrounding area**

and reconsidered their church needs in view of these changes in the parish. They have moved from having two pastors filling one and one-half positions, to having one pastor in 1998 and that one person handling three congregations, to one person handling two congregations. In 1986, they also had the opportunity, as a parish, to nurture and protect the Tay Chay family, a Cambodian refugee family placed within their community.

On the Viking church level, as an individual church, it has been important to uphold the faith of their fathers. They have sought to do that in various ways as follows:

1) In 1979, the church was placed on the National Register of Historical Places.

2) Music, having always been a part of worship and praise to God of this church, was further enhanced by the opportunity to start a memorial fund that allowed for the acquisition of handbells. The church now has three full octaves of bells. Harlan Hellerud, a parishioner, was the impetus behind this.

3) In 1987, they held their 100th Anniversary of the church. The Centennial both celebrated the community and the church with a two-day celebration. The Sunday Festival Service with communion was presided over by Rev. Dwight Stensgaard, son of Marion Swenson and the late Lloyd Stensgaard, and stepson of Thorsten Swenson. Dwight is the only son of Viking church to enter the ministry.

4) In 1992, the congregation again wanted to celebrate its heritage and changes and did so by a traditional Norwegian Worship Service. On the Saturday of that weekend, the musical, "Quilters", was presented on the outdoor stage with Pastor Lori Keyser-Boswell as one of the participants. And, among other things, people enjoyed Norwegian goodies, historical exhibits, entertainment, and crafters' displays throughout the day.

5) In 1997, Pastor Elmo Anderson, a former pastor, was the guest speaker present to help the Viking congregation celebrate



### Viking Church Board - 2001

**Back Row:** Kent Pranke, trustee; Stacey Bergrud, secretary; Dean Hagen, trustee; Matt Gilbertson, financial secretary; **Middle Row:** Lowell Anderson, historian; Tom Gilbertson, president; Renee Summers, WELCA president; Janelle Hvinden, memorial secretary; Sheila Erickson, treasurer; **Front Row:** Linda Faleide, trustee; Carman Paulson, trustee

110 years of spiritual life in their church. Celebrating the milestones of one's life as a church is important, especially as changes are viewed as imminent. With the decreasing number of elderly in the church, and the passing of the Saints that have spiritually nurtured the people who have grown up in the church, future numbers to support the church are unsure, but the faith of the remaining remains unflinching.

As of now, Viking church has 75 church families, 161 baptized members, 135 confirmed members, and 12 Sunday School students. This year and for the next two years, there will be one confirmand each year. These numbers are a far cry from what this church once served and ministered to. In total numbers, the congregation may not have changed from the very beginning in 1888, but the composition of those numbers has reversed - there are fewer youth and more elderly and the 1887 population probably was predominantly under 35.

## The Viking Church Women

Landseekers settled in the Viking community in 1887, which was before North Dakota became a state. That same year a Lutheran congregation was organized, and decided on a permanent pastor, Iver I. Oksendahl, who accepted the call.

In early 1894, Pastor Oksendahl hitched up his horse, Prince, to his two-wheel cart and visited people, and he encouraged the women to organize a Ladies Aid.

Their first meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Timan Quarve on a Thursday, June 26, 1894 at 2:00 PM. Not many came, but the seven there became the charter members. The meeting date would be the last Thursday of every month at 2:00. They took in 60¢ income. That did seem like a good beginning for a fledgling organization. At their second meeting, their membership grew to a total of 15. The making of items, to be sold later at auction to earn money to help pay the church needs, was decided on at this time.

In these days, the dwelling houses were not modern or large.

Most were sod shacks, standing as a sentry, standing guard over the lonely inhabitants calling this home. These "one room" homes always had room for the Ladies Aid meetings, plus the serving of a large lunch to all.

When the congregation decided to build a church, the Ladies Aid said they would do their best to help with the financing.

The first auction sale the ladies held took in \$80. Not satisfied with that money income amount, they held a basket social which did bring in \$15, and another later brought in \$45. Quilts were sewn and sold, bringing in a large sum, to the delight of all.

The money earned by the women was loaned to the men of the congregation at a rate of ten percent interest. So this worked out well for both parties. Other lending places would certainly have been higher in interest. This was a visionary way to earn a little extra money, with their hard-earned dollars.

The Ladies Aid did purchase the church bell. The price was \$292.75, but they could save two percent if it was paid in 20 days,



### Viking Church Women (Ladies Aid) - 1900

**Back Row:** Mrs. Albert Olson, Mrs. Helen Rosendahl, Laura Bergsgaard, Mrs. Paul Moen, Mrs. Andrew (Gena) Faleide, Mrs. Mike (Inga) Paulson, Mrs. Nick (Siri) Morken, Tilda Aanderud, Mrs. Claus (Maria) Aanderud, Mrs. Peter (Lena) Aanderud, Maria Paulson; **Front Row:** Mrs. Anton (Agnette) Ellingson, Mrs. Helmer Gilbertson, Mrs. Alfred Larson, Mrs. T.P. Lommen, Mrs. Ole Kopperdahl, Mrs. Jens (Rekka) Nelson

which they did. The reduced price was then \$286.90, plus freight of \$30, making the total cost \$317.59. It was placed in the church yard, near the newly-built church basement.

The bell rang for the first time on Memorial Day, May 30, 1903, for the funeral of Mrs. Aasine Hellerud, and was rung by Lars Elken.

The bell was inscribed with a verse written by M.A. Wisness in Norwegian, as follows:

"Jeg alle til kirken	"I to the church
Byder at komme	The living call
Og kaler til graven	And to the grave
Naar tiden er komme."	Do summon all."

English translation is from the back of the Viking Church 100th Anniversary Plate, created in 1987.

In 1903, the first service was held on Christmas Day, a most joyous occasion for all in attendance.

In 1904, on June 15, the first wedding was held, uniting Mike Paulson and Inga Oseth.

The ladies transferred as a gift into the building fund \$1,189.69 on Dec. 29, 1904. More money was donated in the next couple of years, so in all the sum of \$2,051.93 was given to the church building project. They also paid \$165 for painting of the church exterior.

In 1905, two Aids were formed, because the long distances going to each other's homes had become difficult. They became known as the East and West Aids.

The altar with altar picture (an outstanding oil painting done by Herbjorn Gausta, a Norwegian American artist from Minneapolis, MN), including the altar ring and kneeler cost \$263.67, and was purchased by the Ladies Aid. The altar service, candlesticks for the altar, as well as the baptismal font, chairs for the pastor and "klokker", chairs for the sacristy, and the carpets, plus more, were purchased by the Ladies Aid.

The immense amount of work the ladies living in this Viking community at this time had done, to accomplish these items being donated, is truly amazing. They are still to be commended highly. The need for a place to be "In the Lord's House" was strong then, even in their harsher lifestyle.

The Viking Church was dedicated in June of 1909.

The Ladies Aid gave money in 1914 toward a new furnace and, in 1916, they paid for the painting of the basement and also donated \$100 to paint the parsonage.

In 1925, Pastor Mikkel Lono was the new pastor, stern and businesslike. He gave the opening prayer, then saying, "I s'pose you don't have any songbooks?" Mrs. Jens (Ricka) Nelson replied, "We had songbooks before you were born." They sang a chosen song with assured knowledge of both words and melody.

The 50th Anniversary of the Viking Church was held Nov. 5, 6 and 7, in 1937. The women paid for and installed a floral carpet in the sacristy. They had house guests and provided food for the special event most willingly.

In the "Dirty Thirties", on into the 40s, and into the early 50s, a yearly large meal was served for the public. The church was not yet modernized, so water had to be heated, plus all the other cooking went on endlessly for the long lines of people who came to enjoy the meal the Viking women were known for serving.

On July 9, 1944, the Golden Anniversary for the Ladies Aid was held, with a special service, followed by a chicken dinner. The adults paid 40¢ a meal and the children paid 25¢. They served 800 people at this event.

In the early 1950s, the women took part in doing radio programs in Devils Lake, ND. It was a way to tell of the Lord and His importance in their lives.

1957 was the year to paint the church interior, sand floors and refinish, with Aid members helping by participation and financially, as always.

The two Aids rejoined in 1959, after 34 years of being the East and West Aids.

Major remodeling of the church was begun in 1960.

The 75th Anniversary of the Viking Church in 1962 was the biggest event in the church's history. A sod house was built and became the main attraction. It made us realize what the pioneers had lived like, back in those early years. June 15, 1962 was the confirmation banquet, serving 200 confirmands and their spouses, totaling 325 people fed. The ladies served this special meal in great style.

The women had made a cutout replica of the church, with windows of blue inserts. Inside the booklet was the table grace, the menu, hymns and the program for the evening. They made 350 of them, to be sure that everyone would receive one.

The scroll type register the confirmands signed that evening is still on display in the church. This was signed in place of a guest book. Pastor Olderr was very involved in the preparation of this exciting occasion, so was there when Thelma Paulson decided the edges of the scroll should be burnt slightly, to make the scroll look very old. He lit a part of the edge - and did it ever burn! Thelma's trying to put out the burning, but he also lit the other edge, so had to get that side stopped as well. To this day, when looking at the scroll, some remember that "burning event".

On Saturday, June 16, 1962, the covered wagon came in from its long journey to here from Hickson, ND. Bertrum and Francie Berg and their children, Kathy and Ricky, were on board. They were in the parade later that day, which several hundred people enjoyed watching. The women of the Ladies Aid served a turkey dinner on Sunday, the 17th, following the special sermon and services.

In 1969, the Viking Ladies Aid passed another milestone, celebrating their 75th Anniversary on August 10th. A skit about the

first day the pioneer women met was performed.

In 1976, the United States of America had their Bicentennial and this found the ladies in long dresses on their float in several communities.

On May 4, 1977, lightning struck the Viking Church. A carpenter, Wayne Nelson, was in the church kitchen when this occurred. He could not believe the sound this made. The next day quite a gathering of men and a few women were up at the church to survey the situation. Hazel Vinnard and Thelma Paulson found burnt marks by a vent in the basement and they went outside and looked at the steeple. They couldn't believe their eyes. About a third of the steeple was gone and, if it hadn't rained so hard in this storm, the church could have burned to the ground.

July 13, 1980, the Viking Church was accepted into the National Registry of Historical Places. We reflected on those with clear vision in the many years before us, who had placed the stepping stones, one by one, into the final accomplishment for this honor.

Farm life became difficult for many in North Dakota and elsewhere. Some did actually lose some or all of their farms in the late 70s and early 80s. It happened to those who had owned land several years, as well as to those who lived on land owned by several previous family generations. More and more women than ever have jobs outside the home; life changed in a huge way for many families. People moved elsewhere so membership, in turn, did decline in the Viking area.

There was a much smaller group of people to work toward the 100th Anniversary of the church. In the middle 80s the history book committee began its long assignment. Women such as Hazel Hagen gave endless hours to this task. Many women on the many committees and the officers gave untold time.

In 1987, a sod house was again built for the 100th Anniversary Celebration. Endless souvenir items were offered for sale. It was a huge success, but the attendance was much less than had been for the 75th, held in 1962. Joyous memories of the 100th Viking Celebration will be with many for years to come.

Bells for a bell choir had been a dream of several; the first ones were purchased in 1987 and the last two were obtained in 1994, with memorials and gifts as finance for the project. Men, women and children play the bells. Any event they are able to ring at is a very special and enjoyable time for all attending.

The carpeting was changed in time for the 100th Anniver-

sary of the church. The Ladies Aid paid for this, costing about \$8,000. The women again accomplished a major purchase, much as the pioneers before them, in a labor of dedication to the Lord, a witness in its own way.

The pew cushions everyone enjoys had the women paying part, along with memorials and other gifts, paying a total of \$5,200. People with vision built the Viking Church and people today are continuing with their vision.

The Viking LCW have done much of their work each year by supporting and working for missions, home and worldwide. During these many years, they supported missionaries on mission fields in many lands. Gifts of world relief quilts have been a huge project. The ladies made layettes, health and school kits. They have a Mission Sunday in the autumn. Too many activities to mention are an ongoing event with Viking's women.

The women of Viking have not lessened their need to work for the Lord. Bible studies are given by many and enlighten all who are there to hear; many of their women are musically talented and



**Ladies Aid 100th Anniversary - 1994**  
**Fritz and Doris Olderr, Arland and Thelma Paulson**



**Viking WELCA - 2001**

**Back Row: Helen Berg, Thelma Paulson, Betty Jacobson, Carmen Paulson, Bernice Ellingson, Sonja Dahl, Lillian Hegland, Bernice Wisness, Hulda Faleide, Deborah Jacobson, Noreen Bergrud, Tish Gilbertson; Middle Row (on bench): Joan Gilbertson, Selma Sundet, Inga Grondahl, Ruth Nelson, Ruth Wisness, Josie Kolsrud, Bernice Aanderud; Front Row: Arlyss Bergrud, Linda Faleide, Gail Grondahl**

the entire congregation benefits from their sharing the jubilant music on many an occasion. Organists are a talented group as well, of whom they are proud, such as Gena Wisness, Mrs. Estrem, Josie Kolsrud, Marge Faleide, Sheila Erickson, Joann Bergrud, Lisa Faleide, Arlyss Bergrud and others. Organists are a dedicated type of people, who will do this service year after year.

The Viking women teach Sunday School, Bible School, become Sunday School Superintendents, choir members and janitors, as Sonja Dahl has been for many years now. This work was done well in the pioneer era, but still continues to this day.

The women of Viking want to thank the men and children for their help and support. The blessings of the Lord have been witnessed in the Viking area for the past 100 years. A full century of love shown from 1901 through 2001 to the Viking Church Women.

A century is a very long time - a long time for a country to grow, a long time for a statuesque building to stand on North Dakota prairies, a long time for neighbors to worship the God we know, within its walls. Time has changed many things, but not the need for the Viking women to stand tall and work on, in the Lord's name. The one thing that will never change is our Lord



### **Viking WELCA Executive Board - 2001**

**Back: Sonja Dahl, vice president; Doris Ambers, secretary; Front: Helen Berg, treasurer; Renee Summers, president**

and Savior - He still cares for each and everyone as He did then, is now, and will in the tomorrows to come.