



Highlights of Becker Baptist Church History

The history of the Becker Baptist Church can be traced back to 1892 when people began meeting in homes for worship. In the early years the Jesdahl family, who lived at the site of the old parsonage, opened their home for Sunday school and services. Hymns were sung and the Scripture was read and taught in the Swedish language by the late Mr. Jesdahl. Simplicity and faith marked these early services. Soon others began to invite the Sunday school to be held in their homes. Occasionally, a pastor traveling through the community would have services. The spirit of revival permeated these early services. People gave heart-warming testimonies and sang joyfully to the accompaniment of the guitar.

In the early part of 1900, two lady missionaries moved into the community. They held meetings at the schoolhouse and in various homes. Then in 1909, a number of Christian people expressed a desire to organize a church. There were twelve who testified of their faith and trust in God and agreed to form a church. They all joined hands as the Conference Secretary, Rev. Gardh, led in prayer at an organizational meeting in the Peter Olson home.

In 1910 the members completed the church building on a site donated by one of the charter members. It became known as the First Swedish Baptist Church. The debt of the church was soon paid for through pledges by members, gifts of money from people of the community, proceeds from the potato crop and contributions from other churches. It was a time of great rejoicing for the people and gratitude to God for all of His blessings.

With the completion of the church building, the Sunday school was formally organized with the lady missionaries in charge. The ministry of the church was under the leadership of both student and full-time pastors. The student pastors were men who ministered on Sundays while attending Bethel Seminary in St. Paul. Their zeal in the work of the Lord, youthful vigor and inspiration proved a blessing to the church. The pastors left a lasting impression on the congregation by their deep spiritual leadership, wisdom and knowledge of the Word.

As the work of the church progressed, growth necessitated several building additions and remodeling projects. In 1949 the building was doubled and a full basement put under it. Extra Sunday school rooms, restrooms, mother's room and kitchen facilities were added. Later these facilities were not found to be adequate for our needs. In 1957 the church purchased a nearby residence as a parsonage for the pastor.

Early in 1976, the members of the church began to realize they had come to an important crossroads in their history. With attendance averaging ninety percent of the existing church space, should the church expand at its present location or move to a new location more centrally located in the community? After thoughtfully and prayerfully considering all factors, the church decided to move, feeling that greater opportunities for growth and service were in God's plan for our church.

In 1977 they purchased 4.2 acres of land in the city of Becker for \$13,000.00. The church hired a building construction consultant and began planning a new building. Signs of God's presence were surely with our congregation as difficult and at times almost impossible obstacles were overcome. God's stamp of approval was felt as the financing was successfully completed with a public offering of bonds for \$225,000.00.

In July of 1979 the building project was started. The design and construction were closely monitored by the building committee. Untiring effort was shown by everyone to see that the plans would be brought to completion. Many of the congregation contributed time and labor skills to the project.

All of the bricks used in the building were from the old Becker school and were hand cleaned brick by brick. Quoting from former pastor Jonathan Larson, "Can old bricks live again? Travelers from Egypt have reported that old stones from the pyramids have been used to build homes. What does that have to do with Becker? Well, bricks from the old Becker school, recently torn down, are living again in the new Baptist church building." Pastor Larson commented that the bricks say something significant about the church whose beginnings go back to 1892 "Every one of these 30,000 bricks is preaching a little sermon about who we are. They are saying we believe in this community. They are also saying that we believe there are values from the past that need to be reshaped, preserved and built into life today. While in some ways we are a changing church, we remain rooted in those enduring spiritual values. What is so delightfully surprising is that out of the debris of the old school came something as elegant as the walls of this new building. In a very real sense we dedicate ourselves to God's purpose."

The total cost of our church (less the land cost) was \$284,000.00. The first Sunday church service was held on February 3, 1980 with a formal dedication service held May 18, 1980. The former church building was sold and converted into a single-family residence.

One of the goals included in our decision to move to Becker was a desire to expand our ministry to the youth in our community. We are thankful that on Wednesday evening we have many from our community attending both our AWANA and youth programs. Also, we count it a privilege to make our facilities available for community church services.

On October 11, 1998 the members of the Becker Baptist Church decided to proceed with the construction of the two-story addition and the remodeling project that had been on the drawing board. New construction called for 6,000 square feet on two levels, a total of 12,000 square feet of new addition for a cost of approximately \$950,000.00. This new space includes a new entry, child-care area, elevator, classrooms, and large foyer.

As we look back we see God's loving and powerful hand leading, guiding and weaving strands of life together, honoring our church's commitment to preach and to teach God's Word. As we "press on toward the goal" our church will always be a beacon of light in our community and the world around us as we fulfill the ministry God has chosen for us to accomplish.