



Round Lake Presbyterian Church

Church History

Round Lake Presbyterian Church History as written by Clyde Nelson including an account by Hazel Sorenson. This was written for the dedication service on May, 20 1990 for the new church which was built after the original burned down.

The Round Lake Church was built in 1923 but it had been in the hopes and dreams of the early pioneers of the area since the early 1900's. The ladies especially were concerned for the spiritual needs for themselves and their families so it was they who first went to work to make their dream of a church a reality. The early beginnings are best told by an account written by Hazel Sorenson on the occasion of the mortgage burning in November of 1954. The following is a reprint from that account.

“In the early summer of 1903, several of the early pioneer women in this neighborhood formed a sewing club, which eventually developed into the Ladies Aid of the Round Lake Presbyterian Church. It all started this way.

Mrs. Josephine Blomberg who lived on the southwest side of Rice lake, now known as Lake Minnewawa, with Mrs. Sophia Badgerow, later Mrs. Power, came to talk over a plan for a sewing circle with Mrs. James Barott. I assume they walked as it was not over three miles. The idea seems to have struck fertile ground as more ladies were notified and the first meeting was held. . Mrs. Blomberg was elected president and Mrs. Cayo secretary-treasurer.

They called themselves the “Willing Workers”. In those days, they met in the homes before noon, had dinner, and planned and worked all afternoon. They went in lumber wagons drawn by horses or oxen, and no one thought a thing about it if they had to walk three or four miles. Usually they were accompanied by their husband and children and there were good times had by all. Later, with better roads and cars, the meeting was changed to the afternoon.

The activities of that first sewing circle were many and varied. They started out with a voluntary contribution of 50 cents with which to purchase fancy work. These articles were later sold at a bazaar and with the returns more material was purchased for future articles. They had basket socials, dances, they raffled quilts, they served innumerable chicken dinners, gave plays and sponsored programs and picnics.

Accurate records are unavailable but it seems an even dozen women signed the charter roll including Mrs. Josephine Blomberg, Mrs. Sophia Badgerow (Power), Mrs. Rosa Barott, Mrs. Marion Sargent, Mrs. Lydia Devlin, Mrs. Ethel Cayo, Mrs. Johanna Barott, Mrs. Bertha Jacobson, Mrs. Dina Hammond, Mrs. Lena Anderson, Mrs. Martha McGarvie, and Mrs. Fidella Fisher.

About this time the first Sunday School was organized in Rice Lake School and later in the Pine Ridge School. Rev. S.A. Blair and Rev. Jamieson had been preaching at the school house for some time, staying first at one home and then another. The Sunday school and the ladies sewing circle grew up together so it came as a matter of course that the ladies assumed the responsibilities of financing and supporting the religious activities in the community.

In 1904, Edward Obernolte, donated two acres for a cemetery near Round Lake. It was organized on a cooperative basis. Each person purchasing a lot, became a member of the association and responsible for the appearance and upkeep of the plot. The loved ones buried on the wooded hillsides near the farm homes were disinterred and placed in the new cemetery. The plot was laid out with no thought for a site for a church building and this later became a controversy in the community.

We have no accurate records of dates available when the idea for a church building began to materialize in the minds of the Willing Workers. As the bank roll increased, so their mission became greater, until they envisioned a church building,



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centrally located, where all might worship God. It was to be a People's Church, where any denomination would feel free to hold services. Better then, that they call themselves a Ladies Aid and so it was.

By dint of much energy and saving, their goal of \$1000.00 in the treasury was in sight when the all-important question of where to build the church arose. Some favored building in the cemetery which plot was available, but by far the majority did not want the site located there. Interest lagged for a time due to this indecision.

Later, with forthright determination which characterized all those first women, Mrs. Ethel Cayo wrote to Pine Tree Mfg. Co. for a donation of land next to the cemetery for the church site. They were willing to donate up to five acres but they stipulated that the church would have to be incorporated and affiliated with some church organization.

Rev. Elwyn Channer of the Presbyterian church was our first pastor at the time and he and his family lived in the manse in Tamarack. A committee of ladies was assigned to confer with him and with his assistance and cooperation, plans were made to affiliate with the Presbyterian Church. Arrangements were made to borrow money from the Home Mission Fund.

In 1923, after 20 years resulting in the coveted goal of \$1000.00 in the treasury, a suitable site secured, and all requirements met, the Ladies Aid decide to borrow \$700.00 from the Mission Fund. \$400.00 of this amount was in the form of a note to be paid off as soon as possible. \$300.00 was given from the Loan Grant and this sum need not be paid back unless conditions warranted. The interest was to be kept up and paid every three years. If, some time later, when funds permitted, the Ladies Aid were able to clear up this \$300.00 indebtedness, all well and good. It would then become available for some other struggling parish.

With the magnificent sum of \$1,700.00 on hand, the actual building of the church was begun in the Spring of 1923. It is impossible to remember the names of all who helped to build or those who gave money and materials. They came one or two or a dozen at a time to clear the site, dig the basement, and pour cement, lay the floor and sheathing, and roofing. They came from all over Shamrock Township and Haugen and Balsam too, and even from other churches. Here the men did most of the work but the women had a hand in serving food for the men. Suffice to say, the Round Lake Church was built up like the cemetery was, with willing hands and willing hearts.

Those of you who knew Rev. Channer know what a powerful inspiration he was to all of us. I need not tell you of his tireless efforts urging us all on. He spent many hours himself in the actual construction of the building. Round Lake Church owes much to him and to Rev. Blair and Rev. Jamieson and others who were instrumental in securing this house of worship. This church was dedicated in 1924.

Not long ago at one of the meetings of the present Ladies Aid a bill for over \$10.00 was brought up for consideration. It stated that it was interest on a loan and everyone was puzzled. The \$400.00 note, borrowed from the Presbyterian board had been paid long ago and that mortgage had been duly burned. Here was interest on some loan of which we knew so little. No one seemed exactly sure what it was all about so inquiry was made. It was the \$300.00 loan from the Loan-Grant fund and with the cooperation of Rev. Peters, the present Ladies Aid set to work to pay this debt also.

It marks a tremendous milestone of this organization. This loan was made so long ago that we, the children and grandchildren, even forgot about it. But, we paid it in appreciation of the efforts of those early workers. Our debt-free church stands as a tribute to their vision.

We, the children of those early pioneer women, our hair already grey, pass on the challenge to the grandchildren and to those newcomers who are so welcome in our community. I feel very sure you will accept the challenge to continue in the



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faith and spirit of God and in service to this house of worship. If someone asks you , as they did me, what keeps Round Lake Church going, tell them the story I have just told you. Tell them about the women who sacrificed so much and toiled so many hours. Tell them of what wonderful God-Filled Spirit of determination and faithfulness to an ideal for the benefit of young and old. Such a spirit could never die!”

This account from Hazel Sorenson, clearly shows the large part the ladies played in our church. That tradition has continued through the years and is still very evident today. It is my firm belief that without the continued aid of the ladies group, this church would not have survived the many lean periods over the years.

In the intervening years between Hazel Sorenson’s account and the present time there have been many hills and valleys. Some of the time we were served by ordained ministers and some of the time by lay ministers. There were times when so few would attend church services that in the winter time we held services at the homes and would alternate so it was at a different home each Sunday.

The membership of the church has never been large and all of them have not always been active members but there was always the faithful few who would keep it going. It seems quite evident that God wanted this church to be here and would always make it possible to keep it alive.

Since there never seemed to be enough money from the offerings to keep the bills paid and keep the building in repair, it would always fall again to the ladies to come up with the needed funds. They used what ever means available to them to raise money. These included bazaars, ice cream socials, rummage sales, etc. At one time in about 1956, they used a shirt on which one would sew on a patch that would contain whatever donation they could give sewed under the patch. This would then be passed on to the next person and they would do the same. At the same time they also started what they called a traveling basket. Some small useful articles would be placed in the basket. The first person to receive it would select an article and then place a donation in a decorated oatmeal box that went with the basket. They would then place in the basket some useful article of their own for someone else to buy. These two fund raisers were pushed all summer and when the ladies met, “unpatched” the shirt and removed the donations and emptied the oatmeal box, they came up with a grand total of \$158.30. Not alot by to days standards but quite a sum at that time.

We have been fortunate to have had several ministers who have served us well throughout the years. It would be difficult to tell of each of these so I will write a little of the one I remember the best. This was Rev. Herb Peters, who served both Round Lake and Tamarack for several years and was our moderator after he moved to Grand Rapids. “Herb” as most of us knew him, was small in stature but tall in the eyes of all who knew him well. Truly one of God’s dedicated workers. He helped through many of our valleys. He would hold summer Bible Schools each year and would personally drive his little bus around the country each morning to pick up the children so all would have a chance to attend. He was the one who suggested and encouraged us to undertake the task of building an addition to our church in the late sixties. He helped raise funds for it and would come up with donations from unknown sources and give generously of his own time and help with the actual building. I have great admiration for this man and will never forget him.

There are many stories that could be told of memories where the church played an important part in our lives. These would include memories from childhood through Sunday School, Bible School, church services on Sunday, funerals, weddings, cemetery clean up days, social gatherings, picnics, building bees, and help and donations from people who have moved away, but still feel ties to our church. We had groups from other churches from as far away as Cincinnati, Ohio, who came up and spent their vacation time helping us build the addition to our church. God had somehow created a bond between all of us that kept us going and through it all the church was there in its peaceful setting among the pines to serve all who would come-----until March 7, 1989---the day our church burned to the ground. I still remember the shock



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and disbelief when I heard it. It just couldn't be that this building built so long ago, with all its loving memories, could really be gone.

Little time was spent in grieving over our loss and we set about deciding what to do. A meeting of the session was called and we had already received several offers from other area churches to use their facilities so we could continue our Sunday services. We accepted the offer from Grace Lutheran Church at Sandy Lake as they had space available and we could keep our same time of worship. The session members were in favor of rebuilding if the congregation would also wish to do that. A congregation meeting was set up and many people expressed their feelings on the matter. It seemed that most everyone felt that we had lost our building but not our church, so we should rebuild. We already had a building and ground committee so they were given the task of formulating a plan and to get cost estimates. We did have insurance coverage and although perhaps not enough, we felt that we could come up with a usable building with funds available and let the "nice to have" items come as we could afford them. We all agreed that we would not go into debt if at all possible.

The building committee, after several meetings, much planning, and many cups of coffee, came up with a floor plan that seemed to please most everyone. These plans along with estimated cost figures and choices as type of building, heating, etc., were presented to the congregations at a meeting called for that purpose. The differences in the types were explained and questions were asked and answered. The choices were voted on and decided that day and the committee was authorized to go ahead with the building of the church. We set about making the necessary arrangements. We got the formal permission to build from the Presbytery, along with assurance that we could get a loan if that proved to be necessary.

The site preparation was taken care of partly by hired help and partly with volunteer labor. The exterior shell along with insulation was contracted by Morton buildings and erected by them in the later part of July and August. The electrical work and the taping and texturing of the sheet rock were contracted. Most all of the interior work was done by donated labor from members and other local people. All of this represents many hours of work.

We received many donations of money from local residents and from people from other cities and states who used to live here. Several churches and organizations also made donations of money and materials. Fund raisers such as an auction of donated items, the meatball supper, and the usual help from the ladies group all helped make all this possible. We are very grateful for all the help we received.

Today we have a church we can be justly proud of. It will never be quite the same as the old one to some of us "old timers" but the Round Lake Church was meant to be. It is back again and will continue to be a place for God's people to gather and worship. Along with all the struggles and hardships along the way, the rewards have been many. God has been kind to us.