

DENNY PARK LUTHERAN CHURCH

Seattle, Washington



One Hundredth Anniversary

1888 - 1988

THROUGH THE YEARS:

To speak in terms of one hundred years is to recall change, losses, gains, tears, joy, and not least, the faithfulness of God and his abundant love and mercy. Through the years, the faithful in the Lord have reckoned and come to terms with all of these elements and those that remain declare God's faithfulness.

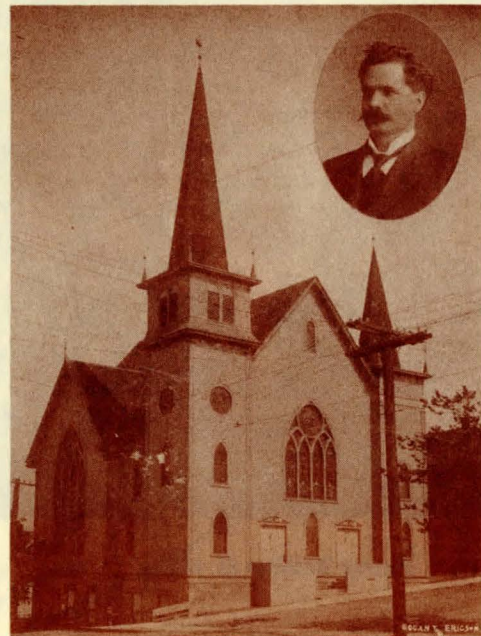
Denny Park Lutheran Church was organized in 1888, the year of the Great Blizzards and one year before Seattle's Great Fire. Pastor I. Tollefsen of Tacoma, who worked on behalf of the Lutheran Church as Superintendent of Home Mission work on the West Coast, met with sixteen people of Scandinavian heritage on April 19, 1888, for the purpose of organizing a congregation. Pastor Tollefsen presided at the meeting and was elected the first president of the congregation, which took the name "Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church." The Swedish Lutheran Church located at Third Avenue between Pike and Pine Streets was used for services. After six months, this optimistic flock of sixteen members purchased a building site on Fourth and Pine for \$2,000; and within a few months, the building was ready for occupancy. Meanwhile, the calling of a pastor became the first great event in the life of the congregation. Pastor C. O. Rosing from Minneapolis was called and installed in July 1888. Services were held in the basement of the new church until the entire building was completed. On February 23, 1892, the first incorporation papers were signed and only a few months later Pastor Rosing resigned.



First church home built at Fourth Avenue and Pine Street - 1890

For nearly two years the congregation had to be content with the temporary services of neighboring pastors until Pastor Richard Tollefsen of Port Townsend, Washington (a brother of Pastor I. Tollefsen, organizing pastor), accepted the call and moved to Seattle to serve the congregation until 1896, when he moved to Minneapolis to become the rector at the Norwegian Lutheran Deaconess Home.

This young and hopeful congregation was at this time to enter upon a period of severe testing. In 1897 Pastor B. A. Borrevik accepted a call to serve as pastor; and in 1900 he left to form a new congregation to be affiliated with the Lutheran Free Church Synod and located only a few blocks away, taking some of the members into the new fellowship. Consequently, those who remained turned over part of the church funds, which was likely quite limited by present-day standards.



*Building at Fifth Avenue and Wall Street - 1904
Pastor T. J. Gronningen (insert)*

In 1901 Pastor T. J. Gronningen from Bath, South Dakota, accepted a call and remained in the service of the parish until 1905. During this period the congregation sold its property at Fourth Avenue and Pine Street for the sum of \$19,000 and purchased a new site on Fifth Avenue and Wall Street for \$6,250. A new church building costing about \$12,000 was completed and occupied in 1904. Upon Pastor Gronningen's resignation in 1905, Pastor E. J. Hinderlie came to shepherd the flock until 1909. Another disruption came when the city of Seattle regraded the area where the church building was located. When the congregation was

forced to sell its church and parsonage and be moved to another location after only five years of occupancy, the event was, indeed, disheartening.



Pastor E. B. Slettedahl

1909 - 1913

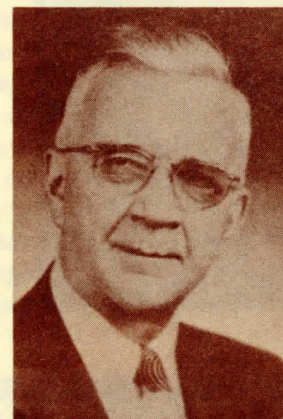
In 1909 the Rev. E. B. Slettedahl, pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Tacoma, was called to the congregation. Pastor Slettedahl was a "church planter" in more modern terminology. Previous to coming to Seattle he had been instrumental in establishing many congregations in the Midwest as well as in California. He brought with him a spirit of urgency for renewal, which resulted in a spiritual awakening and outreach. In 1913 Pastor Slettedahl resigned upon receiving a call from the United Synod to become the area evangelist and, subsequently, the Superintendent of the Home Mission work of the church on the West Coast with headquarters in Seattle. During 1913-14 the Rev. G. A. Larson, who at that time was Superintendent of Home Missions on the West Coast, served the congregation on an interim basis.



Building at Boren and Virginia - 1912

In 1909 the congregation worshipped in a rented church at John Street and Howard (now known as Yale) while the congregation negotiated the purchase of a parcel of land at Boren Avenue and Virginia for the sum of \$15,000, and what was considered a temporary building was erected and occupied in 1912.

A Greenwood Ladies Aid was organized in March 1913; and with the help and encouragement of the Rev. and Mrs. G. Larson, the Bethel Norwegian Evangelical Church was organized in 1914. The Mission Board sent Pastor Odd Gornitzka, a recent seminary graduate, to take over the work. By January of the next year, Pastor Gornitzka had accepted a call to our congregation with the promise that he would continue to hold services in the afternoon of as many Sundays as possible. Eventually—within a short time—the Mission Board sent another pastor to the Greenwood location.



Pastor Odd Gornitzka

1914 - 1922

It must be noted that the Rev. Slettedahl had done a preliminary canvass with the help of interested lay persons in both the Greenwood area and an area in West Seattle, which resulted in what are now known as Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church and First Lutheran Church of West Seattle. Pastor Gornitzka also preached and performed pastoral duties in both of these congregations until they had resident pastors. Phinney Ridge Lutheran dates its incorporation to 1915, and First Lutheran of West Seattle to 1918. (Pastor E. B. Slettedahl was the founding pastor who signed the documents of incorporation.)

Pastor Gornitzka's ministry lasted for eight years whereupon he was called to the Lutheran Bible Institute in the Twin Cities (St. Paul and later, Minneapolis, Minnesota).

Synodically, our congregation was first affiliated with the Norwegian-Danish Lutheran Conference. However, when this body in 1890, together with two other church bodies, formed the United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, we became members of this new synod; and in 1917, when the UNLC merged with the Hauge Synod and the Norwegian

Synod, forming the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, we followed. In 1919 the name of our congregation was changed to First Norwegian Lutheran Church of Seattle.

When Pastor M. L. Nesvig entered the ministry of our congregation, he brought with him considerable influence from the Hauge Synod, which called for simplicity in the order of the service and liturgical form and vestments. During his term of service, the congregation began to outgrow its quarters and a substantial building fund was started. Upon a call from the NLCA to become its city missionary in Seattle, he resigned in 1936; but he and his family continued membership in the congregation, contributing service and ministry for many years.



Pastor M. L. Nesvig

1922 - 1937

The Rev. B. T. Gabrielson from Detroit, Michigan, was called to serve the church and was installed in 1937. With his ministry we sensed a continuation of the Hauge Synod influence.

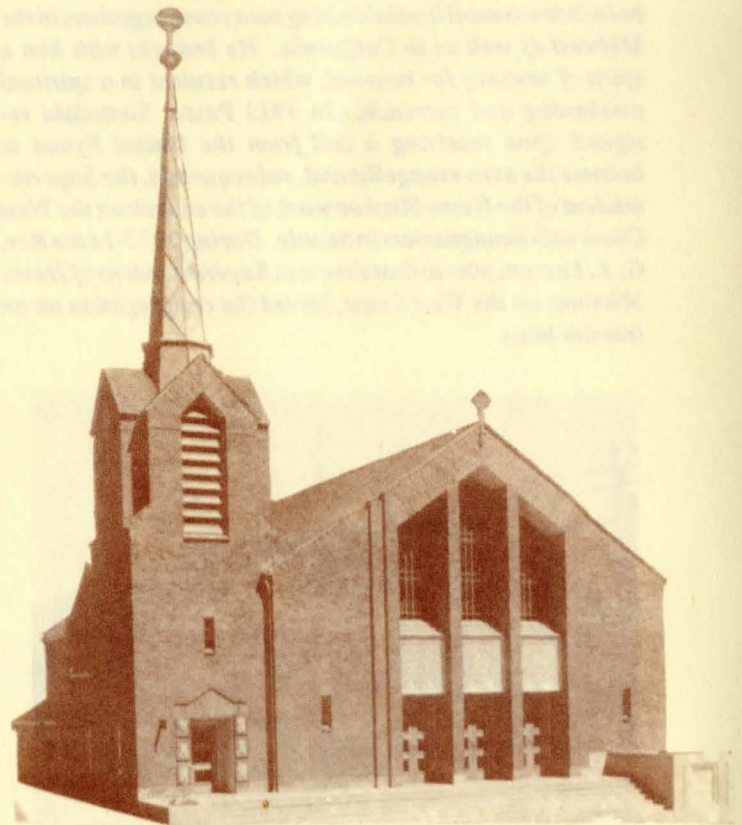
One lot, 60 x 120 feet, was purchased on February 4, 1939, at the corner of Eighth Avenue and John Street. In the meantime the church building at Boren and Virginia was sold, and the congregation held services in Harmony Hall at Eighth and Union Street for the next seventeen months. When the plans for the new church building were considered, it was obvious that the 60 x 120-foot lot would be far from adequate. In the midst of the dilemma, the Fremad Young People's Society, which had been in existence in the congregation since 1890, presented the adjoining lot to the congregation as a gift.



Pastor B. T. Gabrielson

1937 - 1955

On October 6, 1938, Pastor E. B. Slettedahl, now retired and a senior deacon of the church, inspired the Board of Deacons to hold a historical meeting on the recently purchased lots. This meeting became a jubilee of prayer and dedication. The cornerstone for our present worship center was laid August 20, 1939; and the following December 17, the building was opened for services. However, the service of dedication did not take place until April 21, 1940.



*Church at present location before adding new unit
Dedicated April 21, 1940*

In April 1937 our church inaugurated the every-Sunday broadcast of the Lutheran Gospel Hour. This ministry was continued until the late 1970's with reports of much blessing to many who could not attend a worship service.



Radio staff at work in tower radio room

The demands of the labor force in the shipyards and the airplane industry brought many to our area during World War II. Many were young people dedicated to serve their country in the military or in industry. A fair number of these young people sought fellowship in churches of their choice; and our congregation became somewhat of a "mecca" for many Midwesterners, some of whom stayed on and established homes.

In 1945 the name of our church was officially revised to identify its location and became Denny Park Lutheran Church.

The Denny Park Bible Camp was started at Lutherland in the summer of 1941 with Mr. Art Grimstad as the Camp Dean. From 1941 to the mid-1970's hundreds of children and young people benefited and grew spiritually through the ministry of Mr. Grimstad and Pastor Gabrielson, faithful deacons, Sunday School teachers, and women who helped with the cooking.

The Rainier Vista Sunday School was organized in a housing project in south Seattle in 1941. The work prospered under the leadership of many faithful lay teachers and continued until home mission churches absorbed the work and ministry.

When the radio ministry was discontinued in 1976, it was replaced by a tape ministry, which is faithfully continued by

others of like expertise. The Lord has called unto Himself several who served in this area, the latest one being Homer Toombs, who died February 22, 1988.

During World War II, five of our young men gave their lives for their country. In the Vietnam conflict, one young man gave his all to his country. Blessed be their memory!

By 1949 the Sunday School had outgrown whatever quarters were allowed when the present church was built. A temporary annex building was erected on the three lots that had been purchased in 1946 at the corner of Dexter Avenue and John Street. With the flight to the suburbs and aging of the congregation, the building is now used by the Redeemer Lutheran Church for the Deaf (LC-MS). The addition to the church building, known as the Youth-Education Building, was dedicated in April 1957 and is now used in large portion by the regional office of the ELCA.

Pastor Norris W. Stoa from Illinois was installed as pastor on March 27, 1955, and continued a faithful ministry until 1974 when he accepted a call to the chaplaincy of the Lutheran Seamen's Center. During his years of leadership of the congregation, the Youth-Education addition was erected (1957), a new church office and radio room were completed and the sanctuary of the church was refurbished with new carpet, pews, and flooring (1961). The Seminary internship program begun in 1942 and discontinued after two years was resumed, and our congregation enjoyed the ministry of a number of fine young men preparing for full-time pastoral work.



Pastor Norris W. Stoa

1955 - 1974

HISTORICAL MILESTONES

- April 19, 1888* Sixteen members organized the **NORWEGIAN-DANISH LUTHERAN CHURCH**. Worshiped in the Swedish Lutheran Church, Third and Pike. The Rev. I. Tollefsen, Pastor.
- July 1888* The Rev. C. O. Rosing, Pastor.
- 1889 - 1890* Built our first church at Fourth and Pine.
- 1893 - 1900* The Rev. B. A. Borrevik, Pastor.
- 1901 - 1905* The Rev. T. J. Gronningen, Pastor.
- 1904* Sold church and built a new one at Fifth and Wall.
- 1906 - 1909* The Rev. E. J. Hinderlie, Pastor.
- 1909 - 1913* The Rev. E. B. Slettedahl, Pastor.
- 1909* Denny Regrade forced sale of property. Bought lot at Boren and Virginia.
- 1909 - 1912* Worshiped in a rented church at John and Yale.
- 1912* Church built at Boren and Virginia.
- 1913 - 1914* The Rev. G. A. Larson, Interim Pastor.
- 1914 - 1922* The Rev. Odd Gornitzka, Pastor.
- 1922 - 1937* The Rev. M. L. Nesvig, Pastor.
- 1937 - 1955* The Rev. B. T. Gabrielson, Pastor.
- April 1937* Sunday radio broadcasts began.
- September 1938* Present site purchased.
- February 1939* "Fremad" gave the church the adjoining lot.
- April 21, 1940* Dedication of new church.
- 1941* First Denny Park Bible Camp at Lutherland.
- 1941* Rainier Vista Sunday School organized.
- 1945* Carillon bells installed.
- 1946* Purchased three lots at Dexter and John.
- 1949* Built Sunday School Annex.
- 1955 - 1974* The Rev. Norris W. Stoa, Pastor.
- April 21, 1957* Dr. F. Schiotz dedicated the Youth Education Building.
- October 1963* Seventy-fifth Anniversary Festival.
- 1973* Senior Fellowship organized.
- 1974 - 1979* The Rev. Conrad Greenquist, Pastor.
- 1976 - 1980* The Rev. Hilary Bitz, Associate Pastor.
- 1979 -* The Rev. William H. Hutter, Pastor.

A number of our members have been ordained or commissioned for full-time service in the kingdom of God in the church in the homeland and in foreign countries. Through the years it has been our privilege to give prayer support and a measure of financial assistance. At present we are represented in Kenya, Africa, by Janice Larsen.

REMEMBER OUR SPECIAL CENTENNIAL GOAL OF \$10,000!!

Suggested recipients include Sno-King Lutheran Schools, Seattle Lutheran High School, Lutheran Bible Institute, World Mission Prayer League, Union Gospel Mission.