

ST. PEDER'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Celebrating 125 Years
1884-2009



"Evangelical"

St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church
4600 E. 42nd Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
(612) 722-8000
www.st.peders.net

St. Peder's Mission:

Rooted in our heritage and embracing the future, we joyfully live the gospel with open hearts, open hands and open doors.



St. Peder's is a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, affirming the welcome of God to all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.



St. Peder's Welcomes You...

To a community of faith nurtured by God's abundant grace, Christ's peace and the Spirit's lively presence! In response to such love, we open our hearts and hands and doors to joyfully serve our neighbor—whether it's you or someone across the world. We invited you to join us for worship or any activity at the little church on the corner of 46th Avenue and 42nd Street!

[picture]

Pastor Julie Ebbesen

A Brief History of St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church

The dream of forming a Danish-speaking Lutheran church in Minneapolis began in the early 1880s in the minds of Danish seminary students—no doubt sitting around drinking coffee. These young people were the first to envision inviting fellow Danish immigrants in the city to share in “a banquet of many gifts prepared for us by God’s gracious Spirit in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In February 1884, the dreamers wrote a Good News document and carried it to all parts of the city. It read:

“We, the undersigned Danish men of Minneapolis, have come together for the purpose of working toward the founding of a Danish Church. It is well known that or a long time a deep need has been felt for procuring a minister to gather us about the Word of God in our native tongue. It is therefore, our wish and prayer that our countrymen, who have interest in furthering the Lutheran teachings among Danes come forward to join and support us as far as possible in the establishing of a Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. All who wish to assist in this cause are asked to sign their names to this paper. A meeting will be held in the course of a month to which all are asked to come that action may be taken.”

Eleven men volunteered to go out among their fellow Danes to work for the establishment of a Danish Lutheran congregation. Within a few days, 90 more names were gathered. On March 13, 1884, St. Peder’s Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized and a constitution adopted. The charter members were from various Danish Lutheran backgrounds, including both men and women of strong personal convictions. Some had received their awakening and spiritual nurture in the Inner Mission movement in Denmark while others were part of the Grundtvigian movement. Grundtvigian philosophy centered around rejoicing in the goodness of God’s creation and cherishing the gift of human life redeemed and fully restored in Jesus Christ.

The first pastor was Adam Dan, who was called from Denmark and began working at St. Peder’s in October 1884. He began with great enthusiasm, and the influence of his ministry extended not only throughout Minneapolis but also to St. Paul, Stillwater, Hutchinson and Hudson, Wisconsin. Pastor Dan was a dynamic and eloquent speaker, lyricist and poet whose cheerful nature was looked on with suspicion by more solemn and orthodox Lutheran clergy.

On December 14, 1884, St. Peder’s Ladies Aid was organized at the home of Pastor and Mrs. Dan with 14 members. In 1886, the congregation bought a lot on the corner of 20th Avenue S. and 9th Street. There, Herman Petersen and Niels Jensen, along with volunteer help from other members, built the first St. Peder’s church, which was dedicated on June 29, 1887.

In 1888, the divisions sown in the mother country resurfaced in the young congregation. Many families aligned with the Inner Mission movement left to form Emmanuel Danish Lutheran Church. The split was a serious loss, causing much hurt and disappointment to Pastor Dan and those who remained.

St. Peder's second pastor, M. C. Jensen, came in 1891. Under his able and energetic leadership, the congregation grew both inwardly and outwardly. He served until 1895, when Pastor P. Jensen arrived. He served congregations in St. Paul and Hutchinson as well as St. Peder's and visited other groups in Stillwater and Hudson. All this was more than his health could take, causing his resignation in 1896.

Pastor J. C. Pedersen, a former missionary to Africa, served from 1896-1904. The language question now emerged in the congregation. Pastor Pedersen encouraged the use of English, but many in the congregation disagreed. In 1903, all but 15 families left to form Holy Trinity English Lutheran Church.

Rev. P. C. Pedersen became St. Peder's fifth pastor in 1904, and under his leadership, the congregation began slowly to recover. It was a sad day when he resigned in 1907 to return to Denmark. He was succeeded by Rev. J. Stensrup, who served until 1909. During his ministry, the congregation prospered enough to secure two adjacent houses. One became the parsonage, fulfilling a long-time wish of the congregation.

In 1911, Rev. A. Tarpgaard became the seventh pastor. This hardworking pastor not only preached and taught but visited both the church and unchurched in all parts of the city. It was not an easy time, and he often spoke of preparing for Sunday service never knowing if anyone would come. However, as the years went by, there was slow but steady growth, and although times were hard, the congregation became self-supporting and even added a basement to the church. During the First World War, foreign language churches operated under serious handicaps, but Pastor Tarpgaard and the congregation worked faithfully.

After the war, things were looking up until March 7, 1920. On that fateful Sunday, as the congregation gathered for worship, the church burned to the ground. All that was saved was the Christ figure (a replica of the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen's "Christus," which is now in the present sanctuary), the altar, the candlesticks, the altar cloth and the hymnbooks. The church bell was saved but cracked by the fire. This third crisis was an almost fatal blow to St. Peder's. But the congregation refused to quit. Instead, it sold the property and began a campaign to rebuild at a more desirable location. Gifts came from members and non-members. Out of a seemingly hopeless situation, the congregation was able to relocate and build a new church, parsonage and garage—a great accomplishment for a congregation with 43 contributing member families. The new church, located at 3149-35th Avenue S., was dedicated in May 1921.

Pastor Tarpgaard was succeeded in 1921 by the newly ordained and married Ottar Jorgensen. Pastor Jorgensen began what has been called “the second era of St. Peder’s”—membership grew, and there was a gradual transition to the use of English. Pastor Jorgensen left in 1926 to serve in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. J. C. Aaberg became St. Peder’s ninth and served for 20 years. The early years were prosperous, and the congregation continued to grow. Then the Great Depression hit. Many lost jobs, and it was very hard to make ends meet. In 1934, as the Depression began to lift, St. Peder’s celebrated its 50th anniversary with an inspiring and joyful festival. With normal economic conditions returning, the congregation moved forward again.

Although English was now the dominant language, as of June 1930, there were still 2 Danish-language services every month. By 1932, there was only one Sunday school class in Danish. Danish-language services continued to be conducted once a month as recently as 1959. Today, there is still a Danish service on Christmas Eve.

During Pastor Tarpgaard’s long tenure, he translated many cherished Danish hymns into English. It was his fondest hope that the English translations of the many fine old hymns would be preserved, sung and loved—a hope realized in the current ELCA hymnals. Many of these hymns remain St. Peder’s favorites today.

In June 1946, Pastor Tarpgaard preached his farewell sermon, and Ottar Jorgensen was called to return to St. Peder’s. He led St. Peder’s during a time of many changes. In August 1952, the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America became the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1954, St. Peder’s dropped the word “Danish” from its name. There were growing ties with other Lutheran synods, and eventual merger seemed inevitable. Because of the close proximity of these other Lutheran churches to St. Peder’s, the congregation decided in 1955 to relocate once again. In 1960, four Lutheran synods merged into the new Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

In 1959, the property at the present location, 4600 E. 42nd Street, was acquired. On August 13, 1961, following morning service, ground was broken for the new church. On April 1, 1962, the first service was conducted in the new sanctuary. The “Christus” sculpture and the hand-carved pulpit and baptismal font were all moved from the old church to the new one. The dedication celebration was on May 27, and the third era of St. Peder’s began. Pastor Jorgensen decided it was a good time for him to retire and for the congregation to call a younger pastor.

In January 1963, Peter Thomsen was called from his parish in Chicago to lead the third era of St. Peder’s—its transition to a community church. The church’s location at the border of a new residential development near the Mississippi River made this a natural, and membership grew as a result of neighborhood families joining the congregation. Pastor Thomsen was also part of a new era for the country, and St. Peder’s proudly remembers his leading by example by participating in the Civil

Rights March on Washington on August 25, 1963. He accepted a call to Detroit in 1972.

St. Peder's then called Pastor Dan Pearson from Cannon Falls. Pastor Dan, as he was usually called, was the first non-Dane to lead St. Peder's and served until 1994. Under his leadership, St. Peder's expanded its service to the community and throughout the world. After the Vietnam War, St. Peder's actively participated in the LCA's sponsorship and resettlement of refugee families. As the congregation grew, it also prospered. The parsonage two doors down from the church was built in 1965. In 1983, the mortgage on the new church was burned.

In 1984, in commemoration of the congregation's 100th anniversary year, the sculpture "Christ and St. Peter" was created by sculptor Nick Legeros and installed at the church entrance. It represents Peter's doubt and fear during the storm and his plea to Christ for help. A model for this commissioned work was purchased by the Koinonia group and presented to Pastor and Mrs. Jorgensen for the duration of their life. Since they passed away, the model has been presented each year at the annual meeting in January as the Rev. Ottar Jorgensen Service Award to recognize members who have made outstanding contributions to St. Peder's. The recipients selected by the Council since 1988 are listed at the back of this booklet.

A second 100th anniversary initiative was the creation of Tabitta Kassen as a social ministry outreach fund. "Tabitta" is Danish for Tabitha, the biblical woman from Joppa who did good works for the poor. In 1984, it was discovered that early women's groups at St. Peder's had used that name, and it was resurrected as the name of a new endowment dedicated to local, national and international benevolence. The interest income has been donated annually depending for local, national and international needs, a reflection of St. Peder's strong commitment to service in the greater community. Funding to any single organization is limited to three years. The endowment currently has a value over \$500,000. Last year, \$12,000 in interest income was dispersed.

Upon the death of Pastor Emeritus Jorgensen in 1988, a second endowment was established, the Jorgensen Fund. Interest income from this fund may be used for education scholarships for the pastor, staff and both adult and youth members to broaden knowledge or skills to help St. Peder's fulfill its mission. It also provided the funding for a bell tower over the entrance to house a bell (cast in 1883), donated by the Moir family. A third benevolence fund, the Grundtvig Fund, is named for N. F. S. Grundtvig, the Danish theologian and hymn writer who inspired the immigrant founders of St. Peder's 125 years ago. Interest income from this fund may be used internally to assist members in need. The current value of each of these two funds is about \$30,000.

In 1988, the LCA merged with the American Lutheran Church and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church to become the ELCA. In the early 1990s, St. Peder's led

the ELCA in adopting the “All God’s Children” policy, allowing anyone to be able to take communion regardless of age or denomination.

Over the years, St. Peder’s has celebrated three ordinations: Hans Jorgensen, Cheri Anderson Danielsen and Michael Vetsch. Two (Pastors Jorgensen and Vetsch) are children of St. Peder’s whose families are longtime members.

Pastor Ann Rabe was called as a second part-time pastor (and St. Peder’s first woman minister) in 1988 and served until 1989. Pastor Dan retired in 1994. St. Peder’s called Pastors Bob and Mary Albing to share a new 1.5 position. Mary Albing resigned in 1999, and Linda Willette was called as associate pastor in 2000 to serve with Pastor Bob. They served until 2005, when they accepted other calls.

A Transition Team was formed in 2005 to lead planning for St. Peder’s future. Julie Ebbesen was selected as interim pastor that year. In 2006, she was offered and accepted St. Peder’s call to be its pastor. Under her leadership, instead of a second part-time pastor, a new half-time position of director of outreach and faith formation was created to focus on youth activities and joint activities with three other Lutheran congregations in the Longfellow Parish.

In 1999, St. Peder’s adopted a new mission statement: Rooted in our heritage and embracing the future, we joyfully live the gospel with open hearts, open hands and open doors. It also voted to become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, affirming the welcome of God to all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Today, while a solid core of Danish families remain (including some going back four generations), St. Peder’s is now a vibrant neighborhood church. The many non-Danes are happy to embrace as their own such originally Danish traditions, such as Aebleskiver Sunday, the annual codfish and meatball dinner and singing and dancing around the Christmas tree. Music is a focal point of congregational life. In addition to an enthusiastic choir and our great long-time organist, Rita Juhl, many musician members share their talents during worship services year round.

There is strong support from the whole congregation for a wide range of community outreach, including the Paint-a-thon, Meals on Wheels, serving meals at the Dorothy Day Center, making meals for the LSS Safe House for homeless youth, supporting annual school supply drives for Hiawatha School, Gift Sunday at Christmastime (with gifts for adults served by the Center for Victims of Torture and children through the Division of Indian Works and Plymouth Youth Center), the Minnehaha Foodshelf and battered women’s shelters. Many participate in the Rice Dinner Project, benefitting Feed My Starving Children and other hunger charities, which was originated by member Rita Juhl and now emulated by congregations throughout the ELCA. St. Peder’s was a founding supporter of Lutheran Health Care Bangladesh and provides continuing financial support annually.

For 125 years, St. Peder's, like a ship, has been on a journey through both rough and smooth waters. This year we celebrate those 125 years of ministry and the mission of Christ's gospel that has carried us from 1884 to 2009. We give thanks for the gift of this long and rich journey and pray for God's guidance as we sail into the future.

Artwork at St. Peder's

On the outside front doors: The sculpture "Evangelical," by sculptor Nick Legeros was installed in 1992. The birds represent our spirits leaving the church to go out and teach the word of God. It was given in memory of Thomas Juhl.

In the entryway:

The sculpture "Christ and St. Peter," commissioned for the congregation's 100th anniversary, was created by sculptor Nick Legeros. It represents Peter's doubt and fear during the storm and his plea to Christ for help. "It is easy to relate our own personal difficulties to Peter's," writes Legeros. "We see ourselves sinking with him into waves of guilt, fear or sin, only to cry out to the only One who can possibly save us."

The stained glass window adjacent to the door, installed in 1974, was designed by artist Arensa Aaberg Thomsen in memory of her father, Pastor J. C. Aaberg, who served St. Peder's from 1926-1946. The design was inspired by the Danish hymn, "Our Father Has A Light in His Window."

In the sanctuary:

The sculpture is a replica of "Christus" by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. It has had an honored place in each of St. Peder's three churches. The original is in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The stained-glass windows, dedicated in December 1979, are by artist Richard Van Heule (Van Heule Studios, Frederic, Wisconsin). The theme of the windows is the glory of God as revealed throughout the world of nature. Laced through the windows are symbols suggesting creation, travel through life and life after death with God. In the first window at the back of the church are the words Gloria Dei (glory to God). Succeeding windows include symbols of the universe (the sun, moon and stars, suggesting the presence of the Holy Spirit) and the natural world (the seed and the seasons, suggesting the miracle and cycle of earthly life), the nativity star, the seashell, cross and water (as symbols of the living water and baptism of Christ and beginning of another life), the flame (meaning inspiration and youthful fervor), musical instruments, the quill and scroll representing poetry and the Danish

flag representing the people of the early church. Closer to the altar are sacramental symbols: the candle (the light of the world), the cross and alpha-omega with crown (Christ as the beginning and end of all things), the pointed cross and red cross (death and sacrifice), the butterfly (life after death) and the cross and orb (Christ's triumph over the world).

Pulpit, baptismal font, chancel chairs and other woodwork: The pulpit was designed and built for the second church by Jes Schmidt, a Danish farmer and woodcarver from Luck, Wisconsin. The hand-carved images of the apostles embellishing the pulpit typify his work, which was much in demand by Danish churches of the Upper Midwest. The pulpit and font were moved to the present location, along with two of the three carved chairs in the chancel and portions of the present communion rail and altar, all of which he also carved. The third chair in the chancel was carved to match the first two by Schmidt's grandson, Ed Petersen, in 1996. The advent wreath/flower stand, by Pohlmann Design and crafted by long-time member Laurie Austin, was added in 1987.

The ship hanging in nave is a gift from Lis and Iver (Whitey) Jorgensen in the 1970s. The ship is a traditional symbol of the church in seafaring nations: "Bless those in peril on the sea." There is written evidence of such ships in both Danish and Swedish churches as far back as the Reformation. More than 1300 churches in Denmark today still have such ships, the earliest dating from 1710. The symbolism of the ship depends on who's telling the story. Scandinavians were often seafarers or fisherman, and the ship was a gift of thanksgiving after a particularly long or difficult journey or a prayer of blessing for a safe journey. The ship is also said to represent the church that carries us over life's calm and stormy waters, or a symbol of life as a journey.

In the lounge: The tapestry mural depicts the history of St. Peder's in three panels. Panel 1 represents early immigration from Denmark, including a Viking ship, buildings, costumes and fishing vessels indicating life in Denmark, the rural life in America early immigrants found and the first St. Peder's church, which burned to the ground in 1920. Panel 2 depicts the establishment of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Grand View College (the focal point for the Danish Lutheran Church in America) and the second St. Peder's church. Panel 3 depicts the current St. Peder's as a community church in the heterogenous urban environment of Minneapolis. The mural was designed by fiber artist Marjorie Pohlmann (who also designed many of the church paraments) for the church's 90th anniversary in 1974 and lovingly embroidered by 19 women members.

In the courtyard: The sculpture "Sovereign Son," by Nick Legeros, was commissioned by the congregation and installed in the courtyard in 2000. The birds represent the presence of our community as they uplift our children toward the heavenly Father.

Recipients of the Rev. Ottar Jorgensen Service Award

1988	Harry Lindstrom
1989	Bob & Ardis Vetsch
1990	Delores Griep, Lee & Polly Henderson
1991	Kristi Erickson & Steve Fahrner, Don & Karma Hansen
1992	Evelyn Johnson, Roy & Eileen Jaspersen
1993	Wayne & Marveleen Peterson, Cedric & Gerda Lyon
1994	Mel Hansen, Rolf & Cindy Olson
1995	Jerry & Margaret Lundell, Liv Rosin
1996	Lili Nielsen, E. Rose & Marvin Nabben
1997	Martha Pearson, Dick & Rita Juhl
1998	Wes Swanson, Chuck & Thea Wetzler
1999	Dan & Karen Vetsch, Randy & Kirstie Gullickson
2000	Laurie & Lenore Austin, Doug Lund
2001	Marilyn Johnson, Ed & Lorie Gleason
2002	Alice Bekke, Greta Gantriis
2003	Harry & Carol Lindstrom, Gene & Marilyn Paulson
2004	Ford & Karen Droegemueller, Kathy & Steve McLane
2005	James Austin, Ernie & Jean Haemig
2006	Michael & Allison O'Day, Craig & Marcia Rocheleau
2007	Leif & Sine Duus, Tom Goodoien
2008	Bruce & Lisa Rovick, Cameron & Pat Jamison,
2009	Forrest & Liz Bentley, Leslee Nestingen

Pastors of St. Peder's

1884-1891	Adam Dan
1891-1895	M. C. Jensen
1895-1896	P. Jensen
1896-1904	J. C. Pedersen
1904-1907	P. C. Pedersen
1907-1911	J. Stensrup
1911-1921	J. A. Tarpgaard
1921-1926	Ottar Jorgensen
1926-1946	J. C. Aaberg

1946-1963	Ottar Jorgensen
1963-1972	Peter Thomsen
1972-1994	Daniel Pearson
1988-1989	Ann Rabe (Associate Pastor)
1994-1999	Mary Albing (Co-Pastor)
1994-2005	Robert Albing (Co-Pastor; Senior Pastor)
2000-2005	Linda Willette (Associate Pastor)
2006-present	Julie Ebbesen (Senior Pastor)

[insert Anniversary Hymn]

The text for the Anniversary Hymn was written by Pastor J. C. Aaberg, who served as St. Peder's pastor from 1926 to 1946. The music was written for the 1984 centennial celebration by Minneapolis composer Robert Wetzler.







[Jesus-trimmed.jpg.webloc](#)



[Jesus-trimmed 2.jpg.webloc](#)