Faith on the Prairie: by Ann Knecht

"Every seed is awakened and so is all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our beings and we therefore yield to our animal neighbors the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this land." - Sitting Bull

The original inhabitants of North Dakota were the Arikara, Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Crow, Chippewa, Lakota, Dakota Sioux, and Mandan tribes. They believe that the "Great Spirit" is a combination dominant Father Sky god and Mother Earth focusing around nature…

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." – Hebrew 11:1

Christianity, was introduced as the first settlers came sharing their faith on the prairie. Faith is defined as belief with strong conviction; firm belief in something for which there may be no tangible proof; complete trust, confidence, reliance, or devotion. Faith is the opposite of doubt.

Did you know? The Mayflower Pilgrims constructed a Christian Legal Document in 1620. The "Mayflower Compact" emphasized religious themes and political loyalties stating they came to the New World "in the name of God…for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." The document was proclaimed one of the most essential documents for the development of American.

"Be bold. Be brave. Be courageous." –Joshua 1:9

Just thinking: Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the Little House books, an American pioneer storyteller and a woman of vibrant faith found encouragement, strength and hope in her relationship with God.

Many immigrants settled in North Dakota for economic or religious freedoms. Norwegians were the largest group of immigrants in North Dakota. By 1910, about 60,000 ethnic Germans from Russia living in central North Dakota were the second largest groups of immigrants. It is estimated half of North Dakota's population has Russian-German roots.

Logan County organized September 1, 1884 with 28 townships. Each township boasts a history of immigrants and pioneers homesteading bringing their religious views and determination to created Christian communities. Many churches began humble gatherings in their homes, schools or business places that could accommodate the people until they could afford a church building and minister. The homesteader's faith was tested many times by prairie fires, blizzards, drought, hail and insects.

Depression and prosperity have come and gone, but the church goes on. Times of great trial and times of great blessing have come and gone, but church goes on.

"Christ having changed us from enemies to His friends gives us the task of making others His friends also." II Corinthians 5:18

The churches of Logan County:

Arvada Township had two churches, the Ebenezer Evangelical Church built about 1907 and a Baptist Church in 1926.

Zion Evangelical Church in **Blue Ball Township** had its beginning in 1914.

Bryant Township (Napoleon)

In 1892, the school house was used for church and Sabbath school services. In 1919 Napoleon Baptist Church was organized as a station church with Wishek, meeting at the high school building. The German language was used, revival meetings were held and a Baptismal service was held at Red Lake in 1919.

Grace Methodist was the first church established in Napoleon in 1886. A church was built in 1905.

Evangelical United Brethren Church now Salem United Methodist Church started services in 1914. The first church built in Napoleon with a Sunday school organized in 1925.

A Lutheran Free Church served Scandinavian settlers in the Napoleon area in 1905. A Ladies Aid organized in 1915. Salem and Emmanuel congregations become one congregation, the First Lutheran of Napoleon.

Peace Lutheran Church served by their first pastor in 1923 traveled by Soo Line Railroad to come for services. Churches merging in 1962 were Peace Lutheran, Salem Lutheran and Emmanuel, the Glueckstal Lutheran (1908) of Tappen and First Lutheran of Burnstad formed the Napoleon American Lutheran parish organizing Trinity Lutheran Church serving the Napoleon and Kintyre parish.

The Full Gospel Assembly Church began in 1973 is closed.

Cokato Township Scandina-

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vians settlers attended Salem Lutheran Free in 1905.

Finn Township (Gackle)

German pioneers belonged to Congregational, Baptist or Catholic churches; while Finnish pioneers were mostly of the Lutheran faith. The Assembly of God Church began July 2, 1973 belonging to the German District of the Assemblies of God.

Early 1920's the Church of God started in Gackle.

In 1908 the first meeting of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church was held, organized in 1909 with 18 members.

Emmanuel (Immanuel) Lutheran Church (ELCA) began in 1915 in private homes, then the old school house. German and English services were held. In 1939 Neudorf Lutheran Church (in 1900, six miles west of Gackle) and St. James Lutheran Church (organized 1902 eleven miles south of Gackle) transferred to Emmanuel Lutheran in Gackle in 1956.

First German Congregational Church of Gackle (1904) organized in 1906 and was destined to grow into the largest church in Gackle becoming the First United Church of Christ. In 2006 they celebrate 100 years of ministry in the community.

First Presbyterian Church of Gackle began in about 1904 meeting at the school house, pool hall, harness shop or depot, disbanding in 1952 transferring to Jamestown.

Grace Baptist Church also known as the Blumenfeld Congregation began in 1897. The first Baptist church in Gackle dedicated October 1905.

St. Anne's in Gackle

Saint Ann's Catholic Church held their first services in 1906 in the furniture display room of Haut and Marckel's store. A church building obtained from Nortonville was moved and named St. Anne's.

German Township The Flat churches: 1893 Ebenfeld Reformed; Hope Evangelical in 1905; Baptist Church in 1905 became part of Gackle Grace Baptist Church; Seventh-Day Adventist in 1915.

Gutschmidt Township named for Jacob Gutschmidt one of the founders of the St. James Lutheran Church built in 1900.

Apostolic Lutheran Church or Old Apostolic Lutheran Church, 10 miles south of Gackle, was built in 1925.

Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church organized July 28, 1907 was seven miles south of Gackle. Lightning struck the church July 22, 1984. A marble stone was erected at Saarie Cemetery.

Fredonia is in **Haag Township**. In 1898 the first church organized as the Nazareth Congregational Church with services held in member homes. In 1906, the First German Congregational Church (Nazareth) built a 28 x38 foot church building costing $800.00.

Christ Lutheran Church - Evangelische Lutherische Parochie and Christus Parish reorganized to St. Johannes located north of Fredonia became part of Martin Luther Lutheran Church. By 1959 German services ended. Ladies Aid organized in 1924 disbanded in 1959. Rev. Randall Schlecht was the first member to be ordained into ministry (1975).

In 1916 the Fredonia Baptist Church was built. A Ladies Aid organized January 27, 1920, dissolved 1948.

The first and only church built in **Hills Township** was Salem

Old Apostolic Lutheran Church

Shrine on Hwy 3

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Lutheran Church in 1910, closed in 1950. One of the most historic and religious structures erected is the roadside shrine on ND Hwy 3. The shrine is a reminder for all religious people to pray for peace.

In **Hillsburg Township** in 1909 King Lutheran Church - Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church was located at the King Settlement.

Hollandsworth Township - Jehovah Lutheran Church

Church at the Logan County Museum

The first church services were held in school houses in **Janke Township.** The first church built was St. John's Lutheran and was relocated to the Logan County Historical Museum in Napoleon.

Friedenstal German Congregational parish was established in the late 1890's; 1934 church joined the Fredonia Congregational Church.

Most of the early settlers in **Johannesdale Township** were of the Protestant faith. Johannesthal Reformed Church was built in 1907 and sold in 1940.

Part of Lehr lies in **Koepplen Township**. The first residence built was the Evangelical parsonage in 1899. The first church built in Lehr was the Evangelical United Brethren in 1904 for

$3400.

No church was ever built in **Kroeber Township** because it was close to Napoleon and St. Boniface Church.

The first church in **Lautt Township** was erected during the summer of 1898 as a German Baptist church (disbanded in 1934).

The Evangelical Church (Tabor) erected in 1910 (closed in 1950) was furnished with kitchen chairs, a round cast iron stove and a rough altar.

Moos Township had one church, Emmanuel Congregational merging with the Gackle Congregational.

Nathan Township Finnish and German people met in their homes or school house for worship. Services and Catechism instruction were conducted in the German language. The Homola or Finnish Old Apostolic Lutheran Cemetery is located in this township.

The Orthodox Catholic (Russian) Church referred to as the 'Russian church' used Old Slavonic language in worship (1918).

Neudorf Lutheran was located in **Neudorf Township** joined Emmanuel Lutheran in Gackle.

Red Lake Township had no rural churches. In 1907 Burnstad was a mission of Napoleon Catholic Church. Mission of Saint Clare's Catholic Church was the first church built in 1910. The Baptists used the school in town. Union Church was used by the Lutherans and Methodists. Each summer a large tent was erected on the east shores of the lake for revival meetings.

A few of the early homesteaders in **Shell Butte Township** were Norwegians of the Methodist faith and some of the Seventh Day Adventist faith. Catholic Germans from Russia came later.

Only one church was established dating to 1897, the first Catholic Church in Logan County named Saint Anthony of Padua. A church custom in all German Russian descent, the men sat on the right side and the women on the left with the children up front.

In 1911, St. Anthony Church funded a two room school near this church, discontinued in 1915. The building was used as a summer school to teach German; and Franciscan nuns used the school to teach catechism during the summer.

In **Weigel Township** the only church/school was built about 1907.

Dixon Township, Glendale Township, Grenz Township, Ketterling Township, Sealy Township and Starkey Township no church history found.

Our God's awesome presence can still be felt across the prairie, beckoning us to our religious roots of faith. Amen.■

References: Logan County History of Townships 1889-1989; Churches-Logan County, North Dakota by Allen E. Konrad; Napoleon Church History's; 75th Anniversary 1884-1959; Centennial 1884-1984; 125th Anniversary 1884-2009; Gackle Church History's; Golden Jubilee 1904-1954; Diamond Jubilee 1904-1979; Centennial 1904-2004; Fredonia Church History's; Golden Jubilee 1904-1954; Diamond Jubilee 1904-1979; Centennial 1904-2004