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## Gran Lutheran Church to celebrate 150th anniversary with special worship service Sunday

Settlers' first order of business once they settled was to build a church in the image of the Gran Sister churches in Gran, Norway. Descendants of the first settlers still worship at the church.



Gran Lutheran Church, in rural Traill County, is celebrating its 150th anniversary with a special worship service Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023. All are welcome. Contributed



By **Pamela Knudson**

September 09, 2023 at 8:29 AM

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MAYVILLE TOWNSHIP, North Dakota — Gran Lutheran in rural Traill County will celebrate its 150th anniversary with a special worship service Sunday, Sept. 10.

After the 10 a.m. service, the church, located southeast of Mayville, North Dakota, will host a meal of scalloped potatoes and ham. A free will offering is suggested.

Everyone is welcome. The church address is 15603 County Hwy 13.

Paul Hanson, who has organized a week of activities leading up to Sunday's celebration, said the church was founded in the 1800s by young farmers from the Hadeland region north of Oslo, Norway. They left their homeland in search of new farming prospects in the United States.

They settled temporarily in Kilbourne, Wisconsin, where other Norwegians immigrants had congregated.

Their destination, however, was the Red River Valley, Hanson said.

"On June 24, 1871, their leader, Ingebret Larson, said, 'We have gone far enough. Let us settle here,'" Hanson said. "That was in section 12 of Mayville Township."

The settlers' first winter home was a dugout shelter on the banks of the Goose River, Hanson said. After laying claim to the land and building more permanent log homes, their first order of business was to build a church in 1873 in the image of the Gran Sister churches in Gran, Norway.

Descendants of the first settlers still worship at the Gran Lutheran Church, Hanson said.

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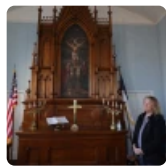
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One of the church's early pastors, the Reverend Bjug Harstad, helped to establish other Lutheran churches in the area, he said. Harstad started 18 nearby Lutheran congregations as well as the Bruflat Academy in Portland, North Dakota, and, later in life, he established Pacific Lutheran University in Parkland, Washington.

Gran Lutheran Church also served as the first school for area children, Hanson said.

To celebrate the 150th anniversary, other events this week have included a blood drive and a Bible study. On Saturday, Sept. 9, a family fun night, with singing and remembrances, is planned.

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