

NEWS

One of ND's oldest churches, St. John's in Galchutt, marks 150-years this weekend

St. John's Lutheran Church started their congregation in 1872.



St. John's Lutheran Church on Highway 81 near Galchutt, ND. Drone video by photojournalist Ryan Longnecker.



By **Kevin Wallevand**

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GALCHUTT, N.D. — When our ancestors arrived here in North Dakota and Minnesota, three things got built in a hurry: a church, a school and sod house.

This weekend, just south of Fargo, the people of Galchutt, North Dakota will celebrate one of the state's oldest churches, that served immigrant families and their loved ones for 150-years.

St. John's Lutheran Church on Highway 81 near Galchutt, ND is one of those prairie churches in our region that makes everyone stop and look. It's been here since the congregation started in 1872.

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"We do a lot of work and we are very very proud of it," Scott Fixen, church member, said.

This building came a few years later, serving Norwegian settlers who arrived. People like Peder and Mari Johnson.

"I am so grateful for the Galchutt Lutheran Church for maintaining this property, it is such an important icon of the prairie churches and it is evidence of a community they built 144-years ago," Eric Johnson, great-grandson of Peder and Mari Johnson, said.

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The church stopped services in the 1940's. Nearby Galchutt Lutheran still maintains the church. Baptisms and weddings have been held here. This ornate pioneer church is complete with its original heating system.

"We were joking the other day, you didn't want to be the one who was late to church and had to sit right next to the hot stove. You wanted to be in the middle somewhere," Fixen said.

So think of the decision to buy this chandelier back in the 1880's for \$70. Quite the purchase back in those days.

"It is because there were candles in there, they had to put out enough light to do any good of course," Fixen said.

150-years-ago, the new immigrants built this church. It still stands, the stories still shared and families with roots running deep are vowing to keep this church's story going, so the next generation can still call it home.

"It means a lot to me, my parents, grandparents are all buried here and they helped take care of this, so it means a lot to me," Fixen said.

That celebration service is set for this Sunday at 11am at St. John's Lutheran in Galchutt.

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