GENESIS LUTHERAN CHURCH, PIEDMONT, SD

“In Christ, there is always a new beginning”

The small congregation of Genesis Lutheran Church, led by Pastor Evelyn Johnson, had its beginnings in Rapid City, SD back in December, 2010. At that time a handful of families formed the NALC congregation, with the expectation that there would be an exodus from the ELCA churches in the area. That did not happen, yet the faithful members of Genesis Lutheran continued to meet.

Securing a location was difficult, so the early services were held in church member’s homes. However, it wasn’t long before the use of a building was offered by a church member, rent free! Remodeling the space to suit the needs of the congregation was all done by the church members themselves. The large cross for the front of the sanctuary, the altar, the pulpit and the baptismal font were all hand made. The building of the church was truly a labor of love.

In the summer of 2015, hoping to find a more centralized location, the church moved to a building in downtown Rapid City. It was a good move – members learned that they could afford the rent added to the operating budget. The space worked well as a sort of out-reach center to get to know several of the support groups in the area. However, without warning, the owner of the building made plans to put up more walls to increase his rental opportunities. Construction began in April 2016, with walls going up around the worship area. As a result, members felt the space seemed very restricted and confined.

At about the same time, without any idea of the owner’s plans, a church member was looking at real estate in and around the Rapid City area when he found a little white church (3200 square feet) for sale in the small town of Piedmont, 15 miles north of downtown Rapid City. The building was no longer in use. Members met the owner and walked through the property on April 17. They were impressed with the building. It had a worship space that was open and bright with nicely upholstered chairs, and came complete with a sound system throughout both floors. With an office and bathroom upstairs, plus a newly remodeled kitchen, fellowship area, Sunday School room, bathroom and lots of storage downstairs - members were thinking how wonderful it would be to have so much space! Before leaving that afternoon, the members, together with the owner, formed a circle and prayed that God’s will be done.

Here’s the exciting part – When members first looked at it, the building was listed for sale at $79,700. The next day, the price was lowered to $79,200. Upon talking with the owner, he came down to $79,000. Genesis Lutheran members (13 people – 5 couples, plus 3 men) held a meeting on Tuesday, April 19. One couple offered to put up $50,000, no interest, no payments! Little slips of paper were passed out and the other members wrote down what they could afford to give. The treasurer totaled them up - $14,600. Over the phone, the council president did some wheeling and dealing – and the owner came down in price to $67,000!! The very next day, Wednesday, the men put $1,000 down on the purchase of the building and on Friday, the president and vice president went in and bought the church! A cash deal! No mortgage!! Needless to say, Genesis Lutheran members were all shocked! In awe! Grateful to God!!

After worship service in the downtown location on April 24, the members packed up and moved everything to their new, permanent church home. The first service in Piedmont was held on May 1st. The move has already been a blessing to Genesis Lutheran members as they become familiar with the new location, in a new town.

Improvements, such as repainting the exterior and making the building handicap accessible, have been completed. A float was made for the 4th of July parade. It took 1st place and brought home a trophy! Free root beer floats were handed out after the parade and some of the parade watchers went in for a tour of the church. VBS was held for the first time in July, and a dedication service and other events are being planned for later this fall.

Beautiful, original stained glass artwork depicting the landscape and scenery of the area has been made by a member of the congregation. The two pieces hang in the window area above the front entrance door of the church. The first says “Go In Peace”, the second ”Serve The Lord”. And that is just what the members of Genesis Lutheran Church intend to do!!

The little white church in Piedmont,

A local landmark so it seems,

Holds the hope for our congregation’s future,

And the foundation of our dreams.

God saw our needs and he met them,

And thankfully we took our place,

Now blessed with this house of worship

We will grow in His love and grace.