

Throughout the coming year, as Bethel prepares to celebrate its 125th anniversary, we will be sharing bits and pieces of history and memories. Please help out by sharing your memories and pictures.
Wendell & Millie DeBeer and LeRoy & Geraldine Hassebroek

On May 6, 1903, the Bethel congregation decided to build a sanctuary.

On July 20, 1903, a severe hail storm struck the area leaving oats fields ready for harvest with no evidence of having been oats fields and barely an inch of corn stalks showing above the ground. A congregational meeting was held on July 23, 1903, to determine whether members of the congregation favored going ahead with plans to build. The vote was three members in favor of dropping plans and four members in favor of going forward with the building plans. An account written in German script Eastfriesland dialect by pastor Lorenz Ziegler states, "Today the 23 July 1903 we will in the name of the Lord laid the cornerstone for a house of the Lord." Because of the devotion of the members of the congregation and their great sacrifices in spite of such difficulties, the sanctuary was built for \$1760.00, of which \$700.00 was borrowed from the Board of Domestic Missions and the balance \$1060.00 being raised by members of the congregation.



Rev. Lorenz Ziegler served the Hope and Bethel congregations from 1903 until 1907. In 1910, Rev. George Veenker became a Classical Missionary for Pleasant Prairie Classis. Since Rev. Veenker lived in Sioux Falls, he would commute to Ellsworth via Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific passenger train on Saturday afternoon, spend Sunday with Bethel congregation, and return to his home by train on Monday forenoon. This arrangement helped to take some of the pastoral burdens off Rev. Ziegler of Hope Church.