



The composite drawing of the three Good Hope sanctuaries by Dan Schuster depicts the first sanctuary (back left), the new brick sanctuary (back right) and the current sanctuary. (front)

A Brief History

This area was a vast prairie, dotted with sloughs that abounded with fish and angry swarms of mosquitoes, storms, droughts, grasshoppers and severe winters with their howling blizzards, these were the tests of endurance for the early settlers.

They had dreams of owning land and of a better life in America, but they missed their Sunday services and the religious training for their children. In this new land, there were no churches and very few pastors to administer the sacraments, confirm the young, and to comfort the sick and dying.

The Joint Synod of Ohio sent pastors into this area. Memories exist of a J. Christianson, but the early history of Good Hope starts with H.G. Koenig, who came here in 1898. He lived in Wesley and held services in various schoolhouses in Kossuth and Hancock Counties. The first services were held in the Eden School. Later they moved a few miles west to Buffalo No. 5, so that a small group from Portland Township could join them. All of this early group had originated from the province of Pomerania, Germany. Later they were joined by others from other provinces.

Changes were appearing in the area. A railroad was coming into the territory, and a new town was being surveyed at the end of that railroad. The community would grow with expanded markets and more people. The small band of Lutherans began to dream of a regular church building. Then came the offer from George Dieckman. He would give the group two lots in the new town, if they would build within a year. Surely God was opening doors for them. So with this conviction, they began their plans.

On January 4, 1900, the following men met in the Titonka Depot to organize a new congregation: Albert Rakow, Carl Callies, George Frank, William Callies, Theodore Reik (Rike), August Schroeder (Schrader), William Doege, and Carl Fritz. Mr. Rakow was appointed spokesman for the group. In the original minutes we read, "That through the Word of God and prayer, they called H. G. Koenig to be their pastor."

These men, on January 8, 1900, filed Articles of Incorporation in Kossuth County for a society to be known by the name of "Deutsche Evangelisch Lutheresche Gutte Hoffnungs Gemeinder, ungraenderter Augsburgischer Confession."

In a meeting dated January 30, 1900, they discussed the size of a new building. It was to be 36 feet long and 24 feet wide, with the steeple and choir loft to be self-supporting. On February 22, they chose George Dieckman, Claus Heesch and William Doege to act as a building committee. They were to gather information on obtaining rock and lumber and on prices of material and carpenters. On March 3, all specifications were read and approved with minor changes. Queal Lumber Company was to furnish all the lumber and Tommy Reibsamen was chosen as the carpenter. The next entry in the secretary's book is an itemized bill for "St. John's Lutheran Church", total cost, \$2,176.33.

The cornerstone was laid on May 17, 1900, with Pastor Lange preaching the sermon and Pastor Koenig laying the cornerstone. The next entry states, "The dedication of St. John Lutheran Church, Good Hope Congregation was held on August 12, 1900. Preachers were J.D. Meyer, William Lange, and A. Wellner with H.G. Koenig performing the rite of dedication."

In 1902, a house, barn and chicken house were built on the lot next to the church at a cost of \$754.52. (This included the \$30.00 paid for another lot)

On June 14, 1903, the congregation joined the Ohio Synod and for many years was faithful in sending its pastor and delegates to the district meetings.

An annual meeting on December 27, 1903, opened with a note of optimism. They were growing in numbers, their net worth had doubled and they were progressing well in the payments of debts. A letter from the synod's president stated that due to the shortage of pastors, the synod could no longer supply a pastor for Good Hope. He suggested that they share Immanuel's pastor. The congregation voted unanimously to keep Pastor Lack and pay his salary of \$400.00 without help from the synod.

For several years they had talked about establishing a church cemetery, and finally it became a reality. John Heesch died of typhoid fever in the fall of 1906. His parents, Mr. And Mrs. Claus Heesch, gave one acre of land to the congregation, and their son was the first to be buried in the cornfield he helped plant that spring.

In 1907, a two-story addition (16'x24') was built onto the parsonage. The first floor was to be used as a schoolroom and the upstairs was to be extra bedrooms. It was built at a cost of \$665.00. In the following years, the minutes recorded the growth of the congregation and the struggles to balance its budget.

The congregation continued its steady growth and prepared to celebrate its 25th anniversary on August 25, 1925. The Ohio Synod, the Buffalo Synod, and the Iowa Synod began merger plans in 1926. Good Hope joined in these studies and it also began to plan for a new church because the old church was becoming too small. On March 19, 1926, the final plans were made, and the church was dedicated on December 9, 1928. The new brick building was built at a cost of about \$17,000 with a \$2,500 debt remaining at dedication. In 1930, the merger of the three synods was finalized and the American Lutheran Church came into being. All meetings and minutes were recorded in German until 1934, and some German services were held until April 18, 1943.

Records of the annual meeting held on January 8, 1933, give a glimpse of how the depression affected the people. Pastor Schoenlein asked that his salary be reduced by \$200. The congregation responded gratefully and offered to cut and trim trees on the church property for firewood. The promises of God remained ever faithful as the people continued to grow spiritually and in numbers.

A Kimball pipe organ was purchased in April 1939. In 1940, the Ladies Aid purchased a white altar to replace the one purchased in 1900. The old altar, pulpit and baptismal font were given to Ingham Lake Bible Camp in 1965.

With the continued growth of the congregation, more Sunday School and worship space was needed. In May 1959, the ground was broken for a new church building, with the intention of using the old building for educational purposes. On August 7, 1960, the new house of worship was dedicated in a service that also included an observance of the 60th anniversary of Good Hope. With a great deal of donated labor, the building cost was approximately \$148,000.

On May 15, 1965, the new Parish Education Unit was dedicated, thus completing the work, which was started in 1959. The total cost of the remodeling and the furnishings came to about \$23,000.

Good Hope has always had a fervor for World and American Missions. The congregation has assisted in several new starts here in the United States, and has had a history of sponsoring missionary families who are in the foreign fields. Our own Marilyn Welhousen DeSalvo was a lab technician in the New Guinea Mission fields. Marilyn passed away in 1996.

We are capping off the 100 years with major renovations to the entire church building and the installation of a new public address system in the sanctuary. We look forward to the new millennium and are thankful that Good Hope will be able to proclaim the gospel for an indeterminate period of time.

Good Hope began the project to enlarge the front entry and add an elevator on August 11, 2008. It was dedicated on June 29, 2009. The elevator is a wonderful addition to our building making it handicapped accessible.

Good Hope pastors: H.G. Koenig, 1900-1901; Ernest Lack, 1901-1909; Peter Mueller, 1909-1924; H.W. Schoenlein, 1924-1937; M.A. Schultz, 1938-1942; Alfred Mardorf, 1942-1951; Burton Schwerin, 1952-1962; Albert F. Gertsman, 1962-1966; Herbert C. Hanson, 1967-1977; Thomas J. Hunt, 1977-1988; Merlin K. Norris, 1989-2000; James L. Berka, 2001-2008; Wayne Garman, 2009-2013; Trudy A. Peterson, 2014-2019; S. Kim Peterson, 2014 - current.

Good Hope has ordained three young men into the ministry. They are John A. Pannkuk, 1934; Merlin H. Bartelt, 1961; and Kent Mechler, 1987. James Mayland, Jr. was ordained in 2016. In 1956, Marlys Stecker Randick was commissioned as a parish worker; and Marilyn DeSalvo was commissioned as a Lab Technician in New Guinea.