

# **“Walking a 125 Year Path”**

**125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
Groton United Methodist Church

## **Celebration Events**

10:00-11:00 Coffee & Fellowship

11:00-12:00 Worship Service

12:00-1:30 Meal & Fellowship

1:30-2:00 Pictorial Slide Show

2:00-3:00 Program

3:00-4:00 Coffee & Cake

*All Day Sat & Sun Walking Tour*

**September 18, 2011**

## Program

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| Opening Remarks & Introductions  | Carna Atherton-Pray                              |
| Welcome                          | Richard Krueger, Administrative Council Chairman |
| Dig or Die Brother Hyde          | Robert Snyder                                    |
| Special Music – “Blessings”      | Kari Hanson & Macy Knecht                        |
| Video Interviews                 | Senior Church Members                            |
| Congregational Hymn Sing         | Rev Matt Richards & Carna Atherton-Pray          |
| Shall We Gather at the River     | No. 723  |
| O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing | No. 57   |
| Holy, Holy, Holy                 | No. 64   |
| Video Interviews                 | Senior Church Members                            |
| Congregational Hymn Sing         | Rev Matt Richards & Carna Atherton-Pray          |
| Leaning on the Everlasting Arms  | No. 133  |
| Hymn of Promise                  | No. 707  |
| How Great Thou Art               | No. 77   |
| Reflections                      | Congregation                                     |
| Hymn                             | Amazing Grace No. 378                            |
| Closing Comments                 | Carna Atherton-Pray                              |
| Blessing                         | Rev Matt Richards                                |

*\*Organist Yvonne Lange*

## Honored Guests

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District Superintendent Marilyn Spurrell  
Rev Jack & Kathy Erickson  
Rev Dean & Susie Trapp  
Rev Emil & Penny Eberhardt  
Rev Jan & Don Price  
Rev Sheila & Carlyle Richards

## **Membership Angel Trees**

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There are a total of 1,604 angels on the three trees in the sanctuary. Each angel represents an individual member and the date they became a member of one of our three churches during our 125 year history. The two trees on the altar represent members from our second church. The three trees at the back of the church represent members from our first and third (current) churches. Think of the positive way our Groton church has influenced so many lives.

## **“Walking a 125 Year Path” Tour Includes**

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- **The Small Chapel:** Note the altar from our second church. Our book of Memorial Gifts is located here also.
- **The Library:** Enjoy the history shadow box on the wall by the door.
- **The Sunday School Rooms:** Rooms on both the north and east side have been decorated with crafts by our Vacation Bible School children using a theme of “The Bible: Through the Years”.
- **The Hallways:** Follow the historical path of pictures, personal memory letters, articles, memorabilia, etc. from 1886 to 2011.

## **“Dig or Die Brother Hyde” Book**

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It is an easy to read autobiography describing William J. Hyde’s religious journey beginning with his first ministry in Groton, SD. The book is packed with anecdotes and the simple joy of life in the Dakota Territory as well as life in the Groton community. Our church library has a limited number of copies and it may also be purchased through Amazon.com Books.

## **Video Interviews**

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We are very grateful to Justin Morehouse and our Groton UMYF for conducting interviews with our senior church members. It was a great way for our youth to learn about the history of our church and to see how involved our senior members have been in keeping our church and its mission vibrant and successful.

Thanks to the following members for allowing the youth to interview you: Robert & Marvel Johnson, Delores Knoll, Jerry & Ann Rix, Twila Ruden, Audrey Padfield, Don Walter, Marjory Townsend, Emery Sippel, Doris Strom, and Dick Ruden.

# **GROTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HISTORY**

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1886-2011

*125 years ago a young man from Canada came by train to start the Groton Methodist Church. On September 18, 2011 a celebration will be held to commemorate the event, and allow visitors to walk a 125 year path of historical displays and memories. The three trees of angels will be on display representing 1,604 members of the three churches over the years.*

In 1886 the town of Groton was a five year old prairie town in Dakota Territory. The Groton Independent Newspaper records show the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) were holding a series of meetings in their church in Farmington Township east of Groton. It is unclear who contacted the Methodist Episcopal officials to request a minister be assigned to the town of Groton. A letter written by Dr. A.D. Traveller, presiding elder of the Dakota Territory, was received by the president of the college where William J. Hyde was a senior student. It read "The Church must keep pace with the government in opening up this new territory. This would be a job down at the very grass roots of society." The president read the letter to Mr. Hyde, who was eager right from the start to offer his services for work in Dakota. Groton was the place Dr. Traveller had in mind. Traveling by train from Canada to Aberdeen, Hyde met Dr. Traveller and then on to Groton. Quoted from Rev Hyde's book, *Dig or Die Brother Hyde*, he wrote "I stood on the platform of that little depot. I did not have to hurry. No one expected me. I had no place to go. I looked around. Flat. That was my impression. I stood under a hot sun and looked down the tracks, which, contrary to the geometry book, seemed to meet at some interminable distance. I looked in the other direction. A tall grain elevator rose at right angles to the flat earth. I looked at the town. One flat dusty street with a few stores and a few houses on each side." At twenty-two years old he stepped from the train, all alone, knowing no one and having no place to stay, walked into the hardware store and introduced himself to Mr. Axel Johnson.

The first service was held in the Presbyterian Church, having been invited by the Rev. Leon. This was the beginning of a warm friendship between these two churches that has continued through the years. The Rev. Hyde arranged to have services held in the G.A.R. hall, a room over a saloon reached by an outside ladder. Stated in the book, "Dig or Die, Brother Hyde," the pews were planks on nail kegs and the only hymnal was the pastors. Quoted by Hyde was "God was at the service that first night and the 60 persons present worshipped in the beauty of holiness, though they lacked the beauty of any other appointments." The Rev. Hyde worked diligently in the area with revival services in homes and schools as well as the meeting place. Services were held in the

G.A.R. Hall until the following spring, when the congregation moved to a tent during the warm summer months. When fall came in 1887, the congregation moved again, this time to a vacated general store building on Main Street. One hundred chairs were bought at 25 cents each, and hymn books for 10 cents apiece. A stove was set up for the winter. Twenty people were received into the church following a two-week revival meeting. The chairs were filled to capacity, and the room was too full for comfort.

The Rev. Hyde knew the congregation needed a larger building and at this time he wanted his own church. He was almost solely responsible for the fundraising to build the church. He spent many days at the Groton elevators, after the harvest in 1887, receiving contributions from farmers who brought their wheat to sell. Businessmen gave money also. The building was built on the land where the Groton Community Center now stands. The land was bought for \$250.00. The itemized bill for the lumber and materials totaled \$707.87.

The Board of Trustees at that time included H.A. Bartlett, J.W. Curry, J.M. Graham, Wm. Bowles, B.B. Miller, A.W. Johnson, John Burgard, S.J. Feller and J.S. Hatton. The church was dedicated on December 18, 1887. The Rev. J.A. Stafford, pastor of the First Methodist Church of Minneapolis, delivered the sermon.

Rev. Hyde moved his bed and books from the Johnson home where he boarded to the second floor of the church. On July 4, 1888 he married his girlfriend, Minnie, who had remained in Canada. Returning to Groton it was recorded by the late Lyman Matthews that after Hyde's marriage the hymn singing was greatly improved with the help of the young bride. She often sang solos with no organ accompaniment. The Rev. Hyde preached his farewell sermon in October 1888. After leaving Groton he attended the Methodist Conference in Yankton, not knowing where he would be sent next. The Groton Methodist Church now numbered 67 members.

The first parsonage was built after the first church was completed. It was built on the land which is now occupied by Paetznick-Garness Funeral Home. The Rev. Charles Sanderson was the first pastor to live in the parsonage. In 1900 William and Della Graham deeded a lot to the church and the parsonage was built there, which was just east of the church. No one remembers whether or not the original parsonage was moved and became a part of that parsonage or if the building was sold where it stood.

By the 1890's the Sunday school was well organized with officers and an average attendance of 76 pupils and officers. The Epworth League organized in 1892, entertained delegates from all leagues in the Aberdeen district. The Ladies Aide Society was organized and became a great help to the total church program.

After 25 years the congregation out-grew Rev. Hyde's church and a brick structure was erected on the same lot. John Townsend, father of Mrs. Norman (Marion) Berry, bought the old building and moved it to his farm. Mrs. George Clark (mother of John Clark, Sr.) recorded that the church was dedicated on December 3, 1911 and that morning Dr Huff preached a sermon from John 12:24-25. At the close, the debt of almost \$5000.00 was subscribed. The district superintendent and minister from Andover were there also. The Andover minister's theme was "The Kingdom of the World Hath become the Kingdom of Jesus Christ".

Wesley Bowles, who passed away in 1970, was the last of the members who were here when Hyde was. He joined the church on "confession of faith" in 1888 at the age of 14 years. Mrs. Emma Clawsen, who joined the church in 1896 knew 15 of the ministers and said, "Each one has contributed something of great spiritual value to my life, and I wish I could thank each one personally."

The Rev. L.C. Benson launched a promotion campaign to increase church attendance in 1932, at a time when the automobile encouraged Sunday drives. His message, no doubt, was shared by other pastors, "All roads lead to church on Sunday. Start on time, and head the car in the right direction. We will miss you if you are not in church, and you will miss something too." Reverend Benson served the Groton Methodist Church from 1929-1948.

In 1956 when Groton celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, a special morning service was held (the church's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary), followed by a fellowship dinner, before members joined all of the other churches in the city park for a combined service.

The early 1950's brought talk among the members and ministers of remodeling or building a new church. The fund-raising for this was started in 1950 with Rev. MacKenzie as minister. Members planned a "talent program" based on the parable of the talents. A building plan was eventually selected with Richard Ruden as chairman of the building committee and Donald Walter as chairman of the building fund committee. Ground breaking and site consecration took place on November 19, 1961, with the Rev. R.P. Nielsen presiding. Land consisting of a full city block on which to build had been donated by Mrs. Ethel Ragels. Several other lots nearby were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Art Thurston. They were sold and the proceeds used for the building project. The first stage of the building was completed and consecrated on June 17, 1962. Dr Harvey Sander delivered the morning sermon. The building was declared an educational unit and temporary sanctuary. Jay Swisher was Sunday school superintendent and Merrill Rix was the chairman of the official board.

The second stage, a sanctuary, was started in 1966 with Robert Wehde, chairman. This part was ready for use on April 7, 1968, and was consecrated with a morning

sermon delivered by the Rev. L.A. Kruckenbert and an afternoon sermon by Bishop Garrison. Rev. K.O. Brekke was pastor at this time.

Building of a new parsonage west of the new church was to complete the building program and on October 28, 1970, authority was given by the Groton-Bath congregations. Dr. Robert Snyder and Jay Swisher were co-chairmen and the completed building was consecrated in the spring of 1971. The Rev. Larry Moore family was the first to occupy the new parsonage.

In the early years, the Annual Conference moved pastors often. Following Rev. Hyde were T.S. Fowler, David Gostelow, John A. Ellis, W.D. Deeble, F.T. MacDuffee, Thomas Sanderson, P. Ingersoll, O.W. Butterfield, Louis L. Lane, J.E. Lombard, S.E. Brown, C.B. Harrold, Albert Hart, Paul A. Gardner, Fred Ray, John Norris, L.C. Benson, Fred G. MacKenzie, Harvey Sander, R.P. Nielsen, K.O. Brekke, Larry Moore, John Maines, Jack Erickson, Wayne Tieszen, Dean Trapp, Emil H. Eberhart, Richard F. Collman, Grant Piehl, Janet C. Price, Robert Moorlach, Sheila Richards and the present pastor, Matthew G. Richards.

Women have always had a large role in Methodist history. When the Reverend Hyde had conducted services in Groton for a year and was able to get the first wooden church building constructed, his wife and other women were busy raising money by sewing and social events. When the new brick church was built in 1911, the M.E. (Methodist Episcopal) Ladies held bake sales at Miller Mercantile to raise funds. For years they held monthly Methodist suppers, similar activities continue today.

On December 14, 1900 a M.E. bazaar was held at the Opera House in Groton. The Groton Independent and other sales bills advertised that the public was invited to visit the bazaar and see the decorations and displays free of charge, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. After 4:00 pm a fee of 10 cents would be charged at the door. At 5:00 pm a chicken pie supper was to be served at a cost of 15 cents. There was entertainment and an autographed quilt with 380 names on it was given away. The Independent reported that the quilt went to the B.B. Miller family.

In 1938 it was advertised in the Groton Independent that a 25-cent May breakfast would be served at the M.E. Church on May 4<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. Mrs. Vance E. Miller was to be called for reservations. The next year the ad read; "M.E. Ladies Aid is sponsoring a May Breakfast on May 17 to be served from 11:00 to 2:00 pm. Call Mesdames Milton Sippel, Norman Berry or Fred Frommel for reservations." From these beginnings, the May Breakfast has become an annual event for the Groton United Methodist Women, always held on the first Wednesday in May. May Breakfast programs have centered around mission themes until recent years when music and popular activities of the era have become the focal points. Menus have always featured

many and varied homemade delicacies from the kitchens of members. The 25-cent charge has risen over the years, but it remains one of the Groton area social highlights.

The Methodist ladies groups were missionary societies. In early years the women's groups were known as the Methodist Ladies Aid. When the name of the church changed from Methodist Episcopal to Methodist in 1939, the women's group became "The Women's Society of Christian Service." The 1940 Discipline stated, "In every local church there shall be an organization of Methodist Women." In 1968 with the merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Churches there came another name change, and they are now known as the United Methodist Women. The Groton United Methodist Women meet monthly on the third Wednesday at 2:00 pm. Its annual budget includes a specific pledged amount for missions, camp sponsorships and vacation church school.

As the church enters the twenty-first century, the morning worship service remains the focus for the congregation. In addition, the men's and women's Bible study groups are going strong, attended by members of our church as well as by citizens of the Groton community. The May Breakfast, Fall Festival, and Men's Dinner continue to be successful annual events. Monthly worship services and fellowship are held at the Golden Living Center to support those who are not able to attend our weekly services. Realizing that the children and youth of our church will be our future strength, we support many activities to help them grow in their Christian faith. Confirmation classes, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, middle school and senior high youth fellowship groups, church camps, and sponsorship of the local Boy Scout Troop are ways in which we support the youth in our church and community.

As the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration concludes on September 18, our church will be looking toward the future. The present pastor Matthew Richards states, "We as members of the Groton United Methodist Church are asking ourselves, "What's Next?" Jeremiah 29:11 reads: *For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.* The Groton United Methodist Church seeks to serve the communities of Groton and surrounding areas through our efforts in ministry. We strive to be relevant in the troubled world; reaching peoples of all ages and making Disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. We are living in changing times and God is asking us to remain incarnate and relational to a secular world. And so we will boldly go out to Enrich Spiritual Lives through Christ."

The celebration of our 125 years will be on Sunday, Sept. 18. The day will begin with Sunday morning worship services at 11:00 am, including reflections from former ministers who served the Groton church. A meal of chicken, barbeques, potato salad, baked beans and watermelon will be served at noon following worship. A continuous



pictorial slideshow will run in the sanctuary from 1:30 to 2:00 pm. The celebration will conclude with a program at 2:00pm followed by fellowship, coffee and cake. As a tribute to the ladies of the church, a cookbook was compiled and will be available for sale. The public is welcome to attend any of the events planned for the day and enjoy “Walking a 125 Year Path. “ Anyone interested in attending the noon meal is asked to make reservations.

## Clergy Record

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|                         |      |      |                     |       |       |
|-------------------------|------|------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| William J Hyde          | 1886 | 1888 | Luther Clyde Benson | 1929  | 1948  |
| Thomas S Fowler         | 1888 | 1889 | Fred G MacKenzie    | 1948  | 1953  |
| David Gostelow          | 1889 | 1890 | Harvey Sander       | 1953  | 1959  |
| John A Ellis            | 1890 | 1891 | R P Nielsen         | 1959  | 1963  |
| William Daniel Deeble   | 1891 | 1896 | K O Brekke          | 1963  | 1969  |
| Frank C MacDuffee       | 1896 | 1898 | Larry Moore         | 1969  | 1974  |
| Thomas E Sanderson      | 1898 | 1901 | John Maines         | 1974  | 1985  |
| Perry S Ingersoll       | 1901 | 1902 | John Tyler Erickson | 1985  | 1988  |
| Otis Wesley Butterfield | 1902 | 1904 | Wayne Tieszen       | 1988  | 1990  |
| Louis Layton Lane       | 1904 | 1907 | Dean Trapp          | 1990  | 1996  |
| James Edwin Lombard     | 1907 | 1909 | Emil H Eberhart     | 1996  | 1999  |
| Samuel Elwood Brown     | 1909 | 1915 | Richard F Collman   | 1999  | 2002  |
| Curtis B Harrold        | 1915 | 1922 | Grant Piehl         | 2002  | 2005  |
| Albert D Hartt          | 1922 | 1924 | Janet C Price       | 2005  | 2008  |
| Paul A Gardner          | 1924 | 1925 | Robert Moorlach     | 2008  | 12-09 |
| Frederick H Ray         | 1925 | 1927 | Sheila Richards     | 01-10 | 06-10 |
| John Luther Norris      | 1927 | 1929 | Matthew G Richards  | 2010  |       |

## Thank You

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On behalf of the Groton United Methodist Church, we would like thank each and every one of you for joining us to celebrate our 125<sup>th</sup> year. We are grateful for God’s blessings over the years and look forward to continuing our long and rich history in the future.

With sincere appreciation for all the help so graciously given to make this a memorable celebration,

Marjorie Overacker & Jeanne Wanous  
125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Co-Chairs