

North American Baptist Heritage Commission

# Church Histories



**Current building**

## **First Baptist Church, Eureka, South Dakota**

Having arrived in the area in April 1886, Brother Berthold Matzke was instrumental in organizing the First German Baptist Church with a group of 21 believers who had come from Russia. Brother Matzke obtained a homestead and built a house for his family. Imagine his dismay when, a mere month later, a fire destroyed this home and all its belongings. After rebuilding, Matzke served this group until 1888, the year in which the first church building was constructed. By the early 1900's, this church had several stations and preaching locations, with a total membership of 304 members. The services continued to be conducted in the German language until 1955, when, with the coming of Pastor Adolph Reeh, members felt services should be in the English language. With the increase in members, the existing building became inadequate and a new building was erected on the same location as the previous one.

Throughout the years many, many changes have taken place. The church has had several groups acting in various capacities. These included a very active Men's Brotherhood, ladies' organizations, young people's groups and Sunday School classes. Twenty-six pastors served the First Baptist Church of Eureka from 1886 to 2011. The church has also supported several missionaries during these years. A number of native sons and daughters were also called into the Lord's service. In 2011 the church celebrated 125 years of worshipping God and being a testimony in His honor in the community. The theme of the 2011 celebration was "We've Come This Far by Faith."

-----Written by Phyllis Harms, NAB Heritage Commission [September, 2015]

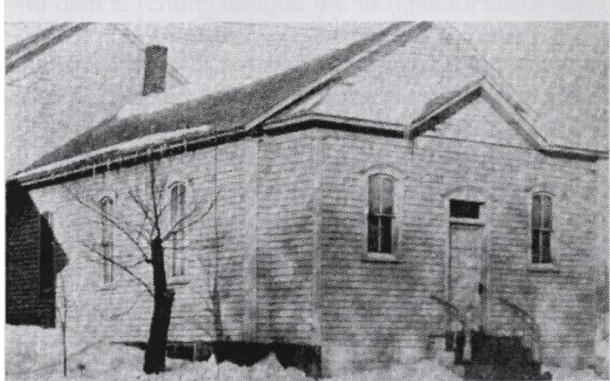
1886

**Bibliographical sources: [Published articles – Baptist Herald & Other]**

Bergman, Gary. "First Baptist Church Celebrates 125 Years." Northwest Blade: June 2011.  
(Most historical information taken from 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Book: "This Far By Faith, 1886-2011")

**Archival sources in North American Baptist Heritage Center**

Assorted anniversary booklets, programs, Church Constitution booklets, Church Directory/Financial Statements, Men's Brotherhood booklets, photos



First German Baptist Church of Eureka (1886 - 1951).



The new Eureka First Baptist Church 1951-1968. (Notice the parsonage to the south of the church, on the left side of photo).