

# History of Fredsville's Ladies Aid

## Written by Esther K. Johnson

### The Years -1901-1951

In writing the History of the Fredsville Ladies Aid since 1951, let us review briefly from 1901 to 1951, the Golden Anniversary. The Golden Anniversary, 50 years, was observed by a dinner celebration held in the Cedar Falls Women's Club House. Pastor S. D. Rodholm, Holger Nielsen and C. Stub were present. Esther Stage was the Ladies Aid president for the past 15 years. At this celebration, a skit entitled "Memories" was presented by seven of our members, Agnes Johnson taking the part as Anna Syndergaard; Mary Petersen as Henrietta Balmer; Christine Thuesen as Trina Larsen; Esther Andersen as Maria Nielsen; Helga Knudsen as Ingebor Kyhl; Ann Sturuntze as Christine Henningsen; and Nita Dall as Lisbet Aagaard. We are so thankful to have all of these ladies that were in the skit still with us, except Mary Petersen, who passed away in 1972.

Getting back to 1901, when the Fredsville Ladies Aid was organized, we note that seven women met on a very cold day in January at the home of Trina (Mrs. Rasmus) Larsen to begin the work that Pastor Rodholm thought was needed in the church.

This very energetic, devoted, small group of women; dedicated to service; made the church a stronger force and the community a better place to live and worship.

We cannot leave these first 50 years without touching on some of the accomplished projects during that period.

In 1903 the auditorium was built. In 1905 the first bazaar was held. With hard work and the help of the Lord's blessings, they continued to give generously.

In 1907 a baptismal font was placed in the church and is still used in 1976.

In 1909 they were strong enough to host the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Convention. Before this big event took place, they purchased new pews for the church at a cost of \$300.00.

The Ladies Aid helped with lightning rods, a furnace in the church and in 1917 a furnace was installed in the auditorium.

These years required so many things for a new organization. All sorts of equipment were needed like dishes, carpet, electric light fixtures, water system and a bathroom for the parsonage. It was also at this time individual communion glasses and a goblet were given to the church. The project of putting a full basement under the auditorium was a costly one, but with the help of the Aid, it was completed.

It is worth noting that the Aid contributed \$476.00 toward a Hammond organ in 1948. For years, only a dream, but finally it was installed and dedicated in May 1948.

These were all home projects, but let us not forget that they were also willing to help and support others away from the area. One example was at Dannevange, Texas where a storm had destroyed a part of their church. Money was sent to Muskegon, Michigan to help build a new church. Other congregations that were less fortunate than Fredsville were always remembered. Money was given to help support mission work. We especially supported Dagmar Miller's work in India. She was our dear old faithful missionary to India who is now in the Grandview Home for the Aged in Des Moines.

Sunday school material, help for ill and aged, orphan's homes, Grand View College, the Synod, and many other needs were always remembered with a gift of money. There were many hours of labor spent in the kitchen serving meals for guests and home folks. Much work and effort were put forth for conventions, weddings and serving dinners for different occasions.

It might be of interest to note that the Danish language prevailed until in 1936 when the first minutes of the church were written in English. And in 1941, the English was adopted as the official language. The Ladies Aid left the mother tongue of Danish and followed the church's decision and in 1953 the Danish language was quietly dropped.

In 1945 a group of women met and organized the Junior Ladies' Aid. This was for women under 40 years of age. They later became the Lutheran Guild and dropped the age limit. This reduced our membership from 78 to 50. Despite a smaller number, the Ladies Aid was always willing to serve and has indeed been aptly called "The Helping Hand of the Church". These deeds of kindness and service have all left fond memories for us to cherish and remember. This same faith and purpose of Christian fellowship prevail today. We thank God for the blessings and praise Him for those 50 years.

This takes us through the first 50 years of Fredsville Ladies' Aid History.

## **The Years - 1951-1976**

The history of the Fredsville Ladies Aid from 1951 to 1976 has brought a great many changes on our beloved hill, Fredsville, which means "Peaceful Village." In fact, we might say that we have acquired a new look, oh yes, and a new name, "Anna Circle." However, our purpose and desire to carry on as the women did in the first fifty years remains the same. We have kept our faith and love for God, and for one another, and are still called "The Helping Hand of the Church".

There was a new sexton's house built and completed in the spring of 1951. Plans were progressing for a new church. The fund was started in 1948 and in 1958, it had reached \$7,000.00. We

anticipated a new church. This gave our Ladies Aid a real purpose and a determination to work hard. We realized the need of many things for a new church like carpet and drapes and so our efforts were united toward this goal.

In 1961 our new church was dedicated. What a satisfaction to know that our Ladies Aid has a vital part in this beautiful new church.

A new parsonage was dedicated in 1963 and the women continued to be a busy group of ladies with many projects to help pay for the church and parsonage.

This was certainly a "new look" but was much improved with a new wing which added a large fellowship hall and Sunday School rooms below. It was dedicated in 1968 and it made us all incredibly happy and proud. This made our work so much easier and what fun it was to cook dinners, serve lunches, host weddings, have funerals and many other fellowship activities in the new addition. The modern kitchen was appreciated as we all remember how small our facilities were in the old auditorium. Remember the steps leading outside to the south which were difficult to climb? We have beautiful memories of kind words spoken, many songs sung, a Christmas tree that reached to the ceiling and Sunday School classes taught in that old building. In our new educational building below the fellowship hall, our children now had separate rooms in which to meet. The Ladies Aid kept supporting and helping with materials to teach and train our children to take their place in the church.

How did we accomplish and achieve our goals? We were always helping at home with paying off debt. Like in the first 50 years we never forgot to help with mission work. We also sent money to needy and ill and supported our Synod, Old People's Home, and the Theological Seminary. We have been richly blessed at Fredsville in many ways and God has been good to us.

Our biggest project in the past 25 years has been our Annual Bazaar. The women who started this back in 1905, surely did foresee the benefits of this event. It has been our big source of income. It has been a homecoming for ladies in our neighboring churches and towns. We have many friends who enjoyed a Christian fellowship through these 25 years.

Our Aid has sponsored the bazaar until 1975 when it became a Lutheran Church Women's project. We still help with baked goods, namely coffee cake, and Danish Strips. Busy fingers before our bazaar make beautiful fancy work to be sold. A table with homemade candles and Christmas decorations and many other items are still gifts from the Anna Circle. We will continue our support to help this worthy project and make it as successful as in past years. We have kept the greeting cards as our Anna Circle project and sell them all through the year. Our biggest project years ago was the dressing of dolls. A group of women spent hours and hours of hand sewing and crocheting to dress a boy and girl doll in

the "Danish Motif" like the folk dancing costumes. They were so beautiful and in such big demand that they were sent all over the U.S. Members of our Aid and many others proudly display a pair of these precious dolls in our China closets or hutches today. This has given our treasury much money for home improvements and to support wherever there are needs. Another big project has been cookbooks with many good recipes from our members. These cookbooks have been sent to past pastors and their families in many different states.

We have been busy the past 25 years with our "New Look" but let us not forget our little white church across the road. It was so dear to us all. The bell in the tower is all that is left. What a precious memory for us to keep. It was given by the women back in the early 1900's and is still used to toll at funerals. This is a beautiful landmark on our cemetery. On the south side of the hill, we still can visualize the old auditorium. A little farther to the west we remember the old parsonage where our faithful ministers and their families lived and served our congregation. It has been "Changing Times." Today we truly have a "New Look" with our sexton's house, church, and parsonage on our hill.

In 1963, the Lutheran Guild, Evening Circle and our Ladies Aid were organized to coordinate the work of the three groups and to participate in the district, state, and national organization. We became the Lutheran Church Women, including all the women of the church. In 1974 we again re-organized and became five circles – Anna, Ruth, Naomi, Martha, and Ester. These five circles constitute the Lutheran Church Women at Fredsville. Our Aid wished to remain as previous and were privileged to be called the "Anna Circle", named in memory of our beloved Anna Stub.

This history must include more about the "Anna Circle". We used to meet in our homes with a large group in attendance. The latter years we have met at the church, in the overflow room. We meet the first Thursday of every month except January. In February we have a potluck dinner and invite our husbands and friends. We have a membership of 33 ladies and usually pay our annual dues at the beginning of a new year. They are \$1.20 a year and have been the same as in past years. We have had an average of 19 at our meetings in 1975. Each year, perhaps it will be a little less as we mourn the loss of older members. The oldest member at present is Carrie Nielsen who is 93 years old. Most of our members are 70 or older. We use the same lessons as the other circles, "Bible Studies for Lutheran Women." We thank Pastor Sibert for helping us in our study. We still have our coffee but quite a change from 1901. The ladies that organized the Fredsville Ladies Aid decided at their first meeting they would serve coffee and not more than four pastries. Today we have coffee and one pastry or dessert. Has this helped to make a "New Look" for us? We will leave that question unanswered. It has certainly been easier to serve at our meetings and we all appreciate this change.

God made the world and everything in it and has surely made our Fredsville Ladies Aid, now "Anna Circle" in union with Him. We thank Him for the close fellowship we have had with one another. Our footsteps are slower and perhaps a little less active, but we still are working for our church and Lutheran Church Women. We are so grateful for our younger women belonging to the other four circles and together we will carry on in faith and service as in the past 75 years. This has been a history of blessings. We thank our faithful Pastor Sibert and his good wife, Betty, for their help. A big thank you to Emily for all her kind deeds and work to help us to carry on our work. We pray and thank God and ask that he will be with us in coming years as in the past. We ask help to keep us dedicated in our purpose so we can continue to be aptly called "The Helping Hand of the Church."