

**Interview with Mrs. Bill Johnson**  
**July 21, 1978**  
**Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection**  
**St. Cloud State University Archives**  
**Interviewed by Calvin Gower and John LeDoux**

**Gower:** This is an interview conducted by Calvin Gower and John LeDoux for the Central Minnesota Historical Center on July 21, 1978, and we're talking to some people from the Bethel Lutheran Church. That's the correct title--

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Ah, near Brainerd. It's on South Long Lake. Is that by the--

**Johnson:** By South Long Lake.

**Gower:** South Long Lake Church. Okay John, why don't you just go ahead.

**LeDoux:** Okay. Ah, first of all, we'd like to get your names—full names on the tape. You're Mrs.--

**Johnson:** Mrs. Bill Johnson.

**LeDoux:** Bill Johnson. And you're Mrs. Soderman?

**Soderman:** Mrs. Rudolph Soderman.

**LeDoux:** Mrs. Rudolph Soderman.

**Gower:** How do you spell your name?

**Soderman:** R-U-D-O-L-P-H S-O-D-E-R-M-A-N.

**Gower:** Okay, fine.

**Soderman:** Uh huh.

**Gower:** Fine.

**LeDoux:** Okay. We'd like to start out by asking you both to give a little bit of your family background. Ah, a little bit about each of you. Mrs. Johnson, did you start out by—like were your parents born in this country?

**Johnson:** Ah, yeah. They were born in Iowa. And I was born and raised on a farm in Iowa and lived there through my high school years and then my husband was in the Navy in Second World War and so he came to the State—Ames State College and took up diesel engineering. And, of course, I met him there and we were married, and then we came back up here. He was born and raised here, just around the corner here on the highway. This was his home.

**LeDoux:** Hmm, I see.

**Johnson:** And that--uh huh.

**LeDoux:** What was their name then?

**Johnson:** Ah, it was Coulter.

**LeDoux:** Coulter. How is that spelled?

**Johnson:** C-O-U-L-T-E-R.

**LeDoux:** C-O-U-L-T-E-R.

**LeDoux:** Okay. And were you married now in this area, then?

**Johnson:** Yes. We were married here in—in Brainerd by Reverend Michaelson who used to be pastor out here at Bethel Lutheran Church.

**Gower:** But you weren't married in Bethel Lutheran Church?

**Johnson:** No—no we were married at the parsonage. Yeah.

**LeDoux:** Okay. And you've been a member since--of this church since about when?

**Johnson:** That's what we were talking now. I—I was not baptized as a child. I wasn't baptized until my husband and I came back here and started going to church. In fact, our oldest daughter was baptized before I was. And our second boy came along, and our second boy and I were baptized and became members down here. We would have to look that up in—in the records. That I don't know. And I have been a member ever since. Yeah.

**Gower:** So this would be since like 1950, or--

**Johnson:** Yes.

**Gower:** And you didn't go to any church before that you mean?

**Johnson:** Ah, yes I would go to church but I never belonged to a church.

**Gower:** So you were not—you didn't belong to a church?

**Johnson:** Yeah. In the little town that I lived in in Iowa as a child I went, you know.

**Gower:** Sure.

**Johnson:** Yeah, 'cause then I was close enough to go. But ah--

**Gower:** So you've—been in this church though for about 28 years, then?

**Johnson:** Approximately, I would say. Yeah.

**Gower:** Okay.

**LeDoux:** What does your husband do? What's his occupation?

**Johnson:** He's implement dealer and we farm.

**LeDoux:** I see.

**Johnson:** He used to work in the railroads and he quit there. He worked there for 18 years and then quit, and we took over the Allis Chalmers Implement Business and run that for 20 some years and then his health got a little bit on the rough side and that. So now we just used machinery and--

**LeDoux:** Uh huh.

**Johnson:** Short line.

**LeDoux:** Okay. Now, your husband's background, that would be Swedish then?

**Johnson:** Yes.

**LeDoux:** Is it Swedish extraction?

**Johnson:** His father came from Sweden at the age of 12.

**LeDoux:** I see.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** And he settled in this area right away?

**Johnson:** Yeah, they homesteaded here.

**LeDoux:** Oh.

**Johnson:** Yeah, he came over with his dad and then they sent for his mother and the two other brothers and that. So, then they homesteaded here and built up the farm—the first farm just around the corner from us here.

**Gower:** Were there quite a few Swedish people right in this area?

**Johnson:** I think so, don't you?

**Soderman:** Oh, yes.

**Gower:** Is it pretty heavily Swedish?

**Soderman:** No, Swedish and Norwegian.

**Gower:** Swedish and Norwegian.

**Soderman:** Mostly that.

**Gower:** Okay.

**LeDoux:** Okay. Mrs. Soderman, could you tell us a little bit about your back-ground – maybe your husband's? Now, were your parents born in Sweden?

**Soderman:** Yes, yes, they were. They're down from Iowa, too. Yeah.

**Johnson:** Just about that.

**Soderman:** From Huxley. Down around there.

**Gower:** What was your maiden name?

**Soderman:** Thompson.

**Gower:** Thompson.

**Soderman:** Uh huh.

**Gower:** Were—were you Swedish?

**Soderman:** No, Norwegian we are.

**Gower:** Norwegian.

**Soderman:** Uh huh. Both my folks were Norwegian.

**Gower:** Hmm--

**Soderman:** Uh huh. And they were from Iowa down there and they then again come up and we lived on the farm right just short—couple miles from here.

**Gower:** Hmm--

**Soderman:** Uh huh. And then we lived just about half a mile from there where my home place is. My daughter lives on my home place, she does. Uh huh.

**Gower:** Were you born here in this area or in Iowa?

**Soderman:** Yeah, I guess I-- No, I was born here.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** I had three sisters that were born down in Iowa before they moved up here. Uh huh.

**Gower:** And when did you become a member of this church.

**Soderman:** Always have been.

**Gower:** Always have been?

**Soderman:** Always have been. We've always lived right near the church there, just about a half a mile from the church. We've always been there--baptized and we was married by Reverend Michaelson too in the parsonage. That's where we always got married. Nobody went to churches then, did they?

**Johnson:** No, no. Just in the parsonage.

**Gower:** Oh, you didn't get married in the churches?

**Soderman:** No, we always went to the parsonage it seemed like. Uh huh.

**Gower:** Hmm--

**Johnson:** They didn't have those big weddings like they do today.

**Gower:** This is a more recent thing?

**Soderman:** Oh, a few years it has been. But we were married--

**Gower:** Oh, I didn't realize that.

**Soderman:** Oh, yes.

**Gower:** Was it because of the expense and so on?

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**Gower:** Now, they say they have more money and so on?

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**Johnson:** I don't know.

**Soderman:** I don't know what it was.

**Johnson:** But they had to have this you know.

**Soderman:** It seemed like pretty near everybody was married in the parsonage. Uh huh.

**Gower:** Hmm—I had never run across this before.

**Soderman:** Is that right?

**Gower:** Right. I just--

**Soderman:** Is that right?

**Johnson:** They were six children in my family—I mean brothers and sisters of mine—and only my youngest brother was—had a big church wedding.

**Gower:** Now--

**Johnson:** Out of six of us.

**Gower:** Do you think that's peculiar to this church here though, or is that—was that a common practice in the churches?

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**Johnson:** They just—they just did.

**Soderman:** Uh huh.

**Johnson:** Even as a young girl, I don't recall going to big church weddings.

**Soderman:** No.

**Gower:** To—of other people in other churches?

**Johnson:** Of other friends, or—or relatives?



**Soderman:** Oh, once in a while there was. Uh huh.

**Gower:** But--

**Johnson:** But, I don't know why that was.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** I just never really thought about it really.

**Gower:** Yeah, that's interesting.

**Soderman:** There were seven of us in our family. There was two boys and five girls. There's only 1, 2—four of us left now though.

**Gower:** Hmmm--

**Soderman:** Uh-huh. Yeah-- (Inaudible)

**Gower:** What about your husband? Where--

**Soderman:** Oh, he lived just a mile or two from where I lived too.

**Gower:** Was he – were –

**Soderman:** And he's always been here in the church, too.

**Gower:** Always in the church also.

**Soderman:** Always right here.

**Gower:** Were his parents born in the United States?

**Soderman:** No, I think his dad was born in Sweden. I think his mother was born here though.

But he was -- his dad was born in Sweden.

**Gower:** Hmmm--

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** So, your husband is Swedish and you are Norwegian?

**Soderman:** Yup, uh-huh. Yeah.

**LeDoux:** And what was -- could we ask your date of birth?

**Soderman:** December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

**LeDoux:** 1910, okay.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** Ah, Mrs. Johnson, I forgot to ask you what your date of birth is.

**Soderman:** October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

**LeDoux:** Okay, did you have any questions about background you wanted to ask?

**Gower:** No.

**LeDoux:** Okay. Ah, okay, getting into a little bit of history of the church now, now the—was it the Swedes that originally settled this church then?

**Soderman:** Well, there was Norwegians and Swedes both it was. Just a lot of these -- well, about half and half I would think on this.

**LeDoux:** Oh.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Of the early settlers.

**Soderman:** Yeah, there was Norwegians and there was Swedes. That's about all there was, uh-huh.

**Johnson:** But now the first part of the church was given in Swede wasn't it? Isn't that what (indiscernible) said yesterday? That the—the sermon, I mean--

**Gower:** Was the sermon in Swedish?

**Soderman:** Oh, yes, Norwegian.

**Gower:** Or in Norwegian?

**Soderman:** No, it was Norwegian.

**Johnson:** Oh.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Here it says something about -- read during a celebration in Norwegian.

**Soderman:** Yeah, it was Norwegian. They—they had Norwegian service most of the time there too. Oh, I don't know. I think it says to when it was changed there.

**Johnson:** Because I know there's little hymnals down there that's in...I didn't know whether it was Norwegian or Swede, but it must be.

**Soderman:** Yes, I think it's Norwegian.

**Johnson:** Swedish hymnals and that are there and that's what they used for the—when the church first opened.

**LeDoux:** So, it was in Norwegian rather than Swedish?

**Soderman:** Yeah, it was Norwegian.

**LeDoux:** So, do you suspect they would have been predominantly Norwegian?

**Soderman:** Well, maybe that's the minister they could get I suppose.

**LeDoux:** I see.

**Soderman:** Or pastor—whoever they could get I suppose.

**LeDoux:** Maybe it started in Norwegian because of a couple of pastors and just stayed that way.

**Soderman:** I imagine so. I imagine that's about it.

**Gower:** Could those Swedish people understand Norwegian?

**Soderman:** I think they do. They -- it's quite a bit the same.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** I think it is. Yeah, it's quite a bit the same.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** Okay, about the early -- do you know how the early settlers came here or happened to arrive here to settle this area?

**Soderman:** I don't know. My dad was just, couldn't -- oh, they said he was crazy he went to Minnesota. But he made a good living he did.

**Gower:** Was he a farmer?

**Soderman:** Yes.

**Gower:** He farmed in Iowa and then he came up here to farm?

**Soderman:** We farmed—he farmed. Uh-huh, he farms here. Yep.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** We have too—we have a farm too.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** Of course, we're retired now, but we work just as hard as we did before.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** How is the farmland up here? Is it fairly -- considered fairly good or --

**Soderman:** Oh yes, uh-huh. It's some sand, but it's mostly heavier ground around here it is. So--

**Gower:** What did they raise?

**Soderman:** Oh, corn and oats and a lot of hay. That's about the average.

**Gower:** And did they have good crops through the years?

**Soderman:** Oh, yes.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** Last year, had real good crops. Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** Now did these early people who founded the church, did they start by having services in homes of members? Does the history say anything of that?

**Soderman:** I don't remember that. I don't remember if they had it in the homes or what. 'Pert near all them older people, they're gone now. But I don't remember if they had it in the homes or not.

**Gower:** Yeah, right here it says they decided to have church services in their homes until further plans could be made.

**Soderman:** Oh, uh-huh. That's what I said.

**Johnson:** I think there were six families who started -- if I remember correctly.

**Gower:** Six families, right. And this was 1881. Is that right?

**Soderman:** Yeah, they must have started the church then.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** On some of these questions, I'm—I'm not sure if they'd be answered by the book or not, but do you recall hearing if there was oh a bishop or some other religious figure who was like responsible for starting churches in this area—may have founded this?

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**Johnson:** I have never heard.

**Soderman:** I don't know at the time--

**Gower:** It doesn't really say.

**LeDoux:** It was probably--

**Soderman:** No.

**LeDoux:** It was probably just the people who felt they needed a church.

**Soderman:** Just -- yeah, yeah. Uh-huh, yeah.

**LeDoux:** Okay.

**Soderman:** My husband's mother was the first one that was confirmed here in the church.

**LeDoux:** Do they give a date for that?

**Soderman:** Let's see. Yeah, 1891.

**LeDoux:** Uh huh.

**Soderman:** Uh huh. August 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was four of them.

**Johnson:** How many years?

**Soderman:** His mother—my husband's mother was a—one of the--

**Gower:** Now this says the -- it was named the -- is it pronounced Egeland?

**Soderman:** Yep. Uh- huh.

**Gower:** Norwegian – Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Crow Wing County.

**Soderman:** That's what they must have started it with then.

**Gower:** And the word Egeland means oak grove?

**Soderman:** Uh-huh. That's just like in the --

**Gower:** Because of the setting?

**Soderman:** Yeah, it's all oak trees.

**Gower:** It's in an oak grove?

**Johnson:** Yeah, right around --

**Soderman:** It is just exactly that.

**Gower:** Now it's says Norwegian -- Danish.

**Soderman:** Well, there was some Danes. There was a few Danes I suppose, too.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** I suppose that they helped with...

**Gower:** Uh-huh. But, it sounds as if it started as more of a Norwegian -- at least that's in the name and that's in the language—church.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Johnson:** Uh-huh, yeah.

**Gower:** Would that be your impression?

**Soderman:** There was a couple--

**Johnson:** I would think so really.

**Soderman:** A Jensen and Albertson. They were the only Danes I think around.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** There was just a couple of them.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** But they were helping you know and everything. So--



**Gower:** Uh- huh. Did the Norwegians come in here in larger numbers earlier than the swedes?

**Johnson:** I don't know.

**Gower:** Is that -- was that your impression?

**Johnson:** I don't know. Ah, just from the ones that I have known since then, I would say it's about equal.

**Gower:** Yeah, I think so.

**Johnson:** At least since we came.

**Gower:** I just wondered if--

**Johnson:** But before this, this I don't—I don't know.

**Gower:** I just wondered if the Norwegians might have preceded them a little bit—maybe just a few years only.

**LeDoux:** It's been a (indiscernible)

**Soderman:** It seemed like when one family would come and their—some more of their families would come.

**Gower:** Sure.

**Soderman:** And that's the way it would be it seemed like.

**Gower:** Right.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** When was the original church structure built? Do you have a date? Is there a date for that anywhere?

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**LeDoux:** Is this the original church structure?

**Soderman:** Yes.

**Gower:** Oh, this is it, huh?

**Johnson:** Oh, yeah.

**Soderman:** Yes.

**Johnson:** And we have added on to it now just this last year. But the original structure is still – is still there.

**LeDoux:** Is this the first addition that's been made since it was built?

**Soderman:** No, no. There's been a couple of additions.

**Johnson:** No, there's been--

**Soderman:** On both—on both ends it has been addition. And then now they just, oh well, we used to have to go outside to go into the basement. Now they fixed it so we can go right from the church right down into the basement—covers it all up. And then it was stuccoed this year, so we're really working on it now the last two years.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** We've put on a new roof and stuccoed it and oh, there was just lots of things to be redone. But, I mean there was no vandalism or anything in it all those thirteen years.

**Gower:** Gosh. That's remarkable.

**Soderman:** Isn't that something? It really is.

**Gower:** That's remarkable.

**Soderman:** I don't know. There wasn't even a window broke or anything.

**Gower:** Hmmm.

**Soderman:** You would wonder from all -- with all the rest of the vandalism. But, no they--

**LeDoux:** Is it fairly -- now we haven't been by the church -- is it fairly isolated from like other homes?

**Soderman:** No, no. There's a—there's a farm right across the road from it.

**Gower:** Ah, that would help then.

**Soderman:** Ah, do you want to go down there?

**Gower:** Yeah, we might go down there afterwards.

**Soderman:** Okay. We'll tell you where it's easy to find it.

**Gower:** Sure.

**Soderman:** So, you can just go down there and look.

**LeDoux:** We passed—we passed the sign on the way down.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** Off 18.

**Soderman:** You came off from 18 now, didn't you?

**Gower:** Yes.

**Soderman:** Up from Brainerd? Or--

**Gower:** Yes.

**Soderman:** Yeah, well it's down this here way. You don't have to look. We'll tell you, uh-huh.

**Gower:** Now, it was -- the church apparently was constructed by 1891 if not earlier according to this.

**Soderman:** By November 1881, the first annual meeting was held.

**Gower:** Yeah, that was in -- that was just, I think, probably in home and so on.

**Soderman:** Well--

**Gower:** Yeah. Then it says here, the first class to be confirmed in the new church were these people. Maybe that was one of the persons you mentioned— Hulda Erickson?

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Ellen Thelander?

**Soderman:** Yeah. That's, that's who-- My husband's grandmother or -- that's my husband's mother.

**Gower:** Carl Halvarson? Oh.

**Soderman:** That Ellen Thelander is my husband's mother.

**Gower:** Oh, that was your husband's mother.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** And see that was in the first class to be confirmed in the new church, it said.

**Soderman:** Yeah, well--

**Gower:** So that was 1891?

**Soderman:** It must have been.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Okay.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Now we have been joined by—what is your name?

**Sedlachek:** Mrs. Bud Sedlachek.

**Gower:** How do you spell that last name?

**Sedlachek:** S-E-D-L-A-C-H-E-K.

**Gower:** Okay. And you're the daughter of--

**Soderman:** Mrs. Rudolph Soderman.

**Gower:** Mrs. -- right. Okay, and you've been in this church all of your life?

**Sedlachek:** Yes, I have.

**Gower:** Okay. Ah, let's see. We were--

**LeDoux:** We were talking about the early settlement of the church, and we were getting most of the facts from the booklet. Now, is there -- are you -- can you tell us something about the early history of the church—just how it was settled or ah--

**Sedlachek:** Oh, I don't know anything about that—that far back.

**Gower:** Do you—do you have the impression that the church building was built in the late 1880s?

**Sedlachek:** Yes. I think my dad said 1881. So--

**Gower:** Oh, 1881.

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** You think the church itself was built?

**Sedlachek:** Right.

**Gower:** Oh okay. Okay, and--

**Sedlachek:** And then they had additions to it.

**Gower:** Uh-huh. They've had several additions to it over the years.

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh. Right.

**Johnson:** In other words, do you supposed that they met in the homes before this then?

**Sedlachek:** I can't—I can't remember. Or--

**Gower:** That's been the pattern that we've found in almost all of these churches that we visited.

**Sedlachek:** Don't you have that write-up?

**Johnson:** --that they had in the -- mentioned when they first (Indiscernible)

**Soderman:** I got it. I got it last time you were saying-- This is-- Yeah, I got the write-up.

**Gower:** Yes, right.

**Sedlachek:** Hmmm.

**Johnson:** -- in 1881 -- built the first part to the church more than likely.

**Gower:** Well, I get the impression from this that they were still meeting in the homes in 1881.

“They decided to have church services in their homes until further plans could be made.”

**Johnson:** Oh.

**Gower:** Here are the minutes of the first annual meeting which was November 27, 1881.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** And they met at the Tellef—is that how you pronounce that? T-E-L-L-E-F?

**Soderman:** I think so, yeah.

**Gower:** --Paulson home.

**Soderman:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**Gower:** It says -- and so on. And he was elected as the chairman—Tellef Paulson.

**LeDoux:** Okay. Now, the church began as the Egeland--

**Soderman:** Egeland, yeah.

**LeDoux:** Egeland, ah, what was the full name?

**Gower:** Norwegian-Danish--

**LeDoux:** Evangelical--

**Gower:** Evangelical Lutheran Church of Crow Wing County.

**Soderman:** They have a big name on it.

**LeDoux:** Ah, now do you have any idea when this changed?

**Soderman:** Yeah, it says in here.

**Gower:** What is the present name of the church?

**Soderman:** Bethel Lutheran.

**Gower:** Bethel Lutheran.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Okay.

**Soderman:** Yeah. It's in there --down-- (Inaudible)

**Gower:** Oh, here it says -- ah, I guess in 1925 it was voted to have English services. Also, to change the name of the church to Bethel Lutheran Church.

**Soderman:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh. And then they wrote the minutes in English.

**Gower:** It was this time that they joined the Lutheran-free Church. Ah, why did they change to English services?

**Soderman:** Well, there was so many younger people that did no—that couldn't understand the Norwegian, I imagine. And there was different ones that wanted it in English.



**Gower:** Well, do you recall this—when that change occurred? You were quite young but--

**Soderman:** I don't know. I can't remember. I don't think so. No, I imagine that's why they wanted it changed so that -- you know there was never--

**Gower:** I just wondered about some of the older people though, who were used to Norwegian.

**Sedlachek:** They got the new pastor, Pastor J. R. Michaelson was called in 1925, and at that time it was voted to have English services.

**Gower:** Uh-huh. Now, why did they change the name of the church?

**Soderman:** Well, I don't know.

**Gower:** Oh, uh-huh.

**Soderman:** I don't know why. I can't—I don't know.

**Gower:** Was it because they were dropping Norwegian as the language, and so then they dropped the Norwegian title?

**Soderman:** There- -I think so. See that Egeland, that sounds Norwegian. Sure, I imagine.

**Johnson:** That's a Norwegian title.

**Sedlachek:** Egeland—it says up here that the word Egeland meant oak grove.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Sure. But it – it was Norwegian-- that word.

**Sedlachek:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** That's a Norwegian word. Sure it is.

**Gower:** So that's probably part of it.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Now, did it -- the fact that they changed the name have anything to do with their joining this Lutheran-free Church?

**Soderman:** No, I -- I don't think so.

**Gower:** Hmm.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh. But that was -- well just like -- whereas of the A.L.C. now -- this we go to -- so--

**Johnson:** It's an exchange for a free church -- the A.L.C.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** Was it largely then a synod change do you think? Because we were talking to some folks down in Glendorado in Santiago Lutheran Churches, and they were members of the Evangelical -- Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran group, and I think that was in the 40s or something that they dropped the Norwegian officially from the title.

**Soderman:** Well, that's it. There was so many younger people that didn't, you know don't talk Norwegian, and couldn't understand it.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh. And this Pastor Michael--Michael--

**Johnson:** Michaelson.

**Soderman:** Michaelson.

**LeDoux:** Michaelson.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** He was kind of the sparkplug for the whole thing then? He was the one who got – got the change going then?

**Sedlachek:** Evidently.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Sedlachek:** He was called in '25 and that's when they changed to English services.

**LeDoux:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**Gower:** And--

**Sedlachek:** And changed the name of the church also.

**Gower:** And Carl Soderman, is that your husband?

**Soderman:** No, my husband's brother.

**Gower:** Oh. He was the first secretary to write the minutes in English, it says here.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** Has the congregation remained fairly stable in size through the years? Were there any periods where it would drop down or grow large? Or -- how—what do you remember?

**Soderman:** Well, there wasn't too awful many before you know.

**Johnson:** No, it didn't grow very fast.

**Soderman:** I don't know how many families -- there wasn't too many.

**Sedlachek:** But it stayed about the same.

**Soderman:** Yeah. I think -- I think it did.

**Johnson:** I think it was very--

**Sedlachek:** Until the time—shortly before it was closed.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Not too many families—what do you mean by that?

**Soderman:** Well--

**Johnson:** There was just--

**Gower:** Fifty families?

**Sedlachek:** No.

**Johnson:** Oh, no.

**Soderman:** Oh no, there wasn't that many.

**Gower:** Oh, there wasn't?

**Johnson:** I don't think at one time there was no more than about fifteen, was there?

**Soderman:** Well--

**Johnson:** Or twenty of us at the very end there before it closed.

**Soderman:** Even twenty-five.

**Sedlachek:** Oh right before it closed, no. But before that, there was probably thirty, thirty-five families.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Hmm.

**Sedlachek:** And then when the -- well, they couldn't get a minister to come out. I mean they were -- they built the new church in town and—and they didn't have the time to spend to come out to the country for services. So--

**Gower:** Oh, this church out here preceded the church in Brainerd?

**Soderman:** Bethlehem Lutheran—we're the same with -- uh-huh.

**Gower:** Oh, and this one was before that?

**Soderman:** Uh-huh. See, the minister used to come out from in Brainerd. He would come out to our church here. So then it got to be so they wanted him in there all the time. They didn't want to let us have him.

**Sedlachek:** Share the minister.

**Gower:** Oh, I see.

**Soderman:** They wouldn't let us have him come out you know more than—well it was every three Sundays for several years.

**Gower:** Just coming out every third Sunday?

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** They felt in Brainerd then that there was no need to have this church going—that they could just as well come into town?

**Soderman:** That's it.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** They wanted us to come in there and help share in there instead of sharing their minister to come out here with us. Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** I see.

**Soderman:** That's how we got separated.

**LeDoux:** That's the—that's the major reason this church closed because the—the bishop or the--

**Sedlachek:** Minister.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh. The president, I suppose.

**LeDoux:** Well, was it the synod that pretty much decided to close it, do you think, or was it kind of local move?

**Soderman:** Well, I think it was their congregation right in town.

**Sedlachek:** I think it was just a local move. Yeah.

**Soderman:** Yeah. It was the local congregation in there that didn't want to share him.

**Sedlachek:** The minister resigned by coming—by not coming out here.

**LeDoux:** Oh.

**Sedlachek:** And we had no other way to go. We tried. We--

**LeDoux:** Were, excuse me, were more and more and more people gradually going into Brainerd?

**Sedlachek:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Sedlachek:** Well, the biggest share went right away. And then what was left tried to keep it going. But then when the minister couldn't come out anymore. Well then there was nothing. We tried, but the head of the church--

**Soderman:** Yeah. Well, there wasn't enough members to pay a minister either you know, because so many had left and going into Brainerd they were.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** Okay. So this church then closed in 1963. Is that correct?

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh. That's right. '63, was it?

**Soderman:** 1963.

**LeDoux:** Opened in—what was it '76 again? So--

**Gower:** You were closed 13 years.

**Soderman:** '78. No, yeah—'76. When did close?

**Sedlachek:** '76.

**LeDoux:** That article-- I believe it was '76—that was in the Brainerd paper, I believe.

**Soderman:** '76.

**Gower:** That's when it re-opened.

**Soderman:** When it re-opened, yeah.

**LeDoux:** Then it re-opened again, right.

**Soderman:** Well, it was 13 years it was closed.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Sedlachek:** '63--

**Gower:** And a number of you people out here did not want it to close?

**Sedlachek:** No.

**Soderman:** No. We didn't want it to close.

**Gower:** You just felt you didn't have any alternative.

**Soderman:** There wasn't anything else. We couldn't afford a minister then because there was so few families. We couldn't afford that.

**LeDoux:** Were there -- did you make several efforts to keep the church open? Did you like talk to the people in Brainerd and -- what happened with those efforts?

**Sedlachek:** Well...

**Johnson:** That I don't -- what happened with those. But there was letters that was written to the bishop at that time. And for some reason, they were never followed up on—ah, to attain a pastor,



or be able to connect him with another church so that there could be a pastor. I have read letters on this since.

**Gower:** Was there a shortage of ministers do you think, so that they would feel that they had to cut -- close down some of the smaller churches?

**Johnson:** I don't think so really.

**Gower:** Hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah, I think it was just the idea that he didn't want to have to travel that far from Brainerd -- I -- which isn't that far really.

**Gower:** No, it doesn't seem--

**Johnson:** It's only about 6-7 miles. And--

**Sedlachek:** Right.

**Johnson:** Yeah, and I think he felt that we out here could come in there easier than for him to--

**Gower:** So, you think it maybe more was the individual minister at that time?

**Soderman:** Well, him and the rest of the congregation. And the counsel you might say too. So he didn't--

**Johnson:** I think he got his directions from the counsel in town.

**Soderman:** Yeah. He didn't -- it wasn't just his doings. It was more the counsel and the whole congregation I think, that wanted more of us to come in there. Other than that--

**Gower:** Now what I was the organizational thing here? Was your church part of that counsel of that church too or--

**Soderman:** Not the counsel.

**Johnson:** Individual counsels.

**Sedlachek:** No.

**Gower:** Individual counsels. But you were like a--

**Johnson:** Just like a sister church.

**Sedlachek:** Just shared the minister

**Gower:** A sister church—just sharing the minister.

**Soderman:** Yeah. That's about it. Yeah.

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh.

**LeDoux:** Had this been done for some time—sharing the minister with Brainerd?

**Sedlachek:** All the time.

**Soderman:** We always have.

**LeDoux:** It had always been done?

**Soderman:** We always have.

**Johnson:** 'cause Michaelson had the church in town before we had--

**Soderman:** Oh, yes. He was in there. Yes, sure.

**Gower:** His name is pronounced Michaelson?

**Soderman:** Yeah. That's the way he pronounced it.

**Gower:** Not Michaelson?

**Soderman:** No, they never went by that name.

**Gower:** Okay.

**Soderman:** That was the name.

**LeDoux:** Okay. How did you decide to begin the move to re-open the church?

**Soderman:** Well--

**LeDoux:** Why after 13 years was there a move to re-open it?

**Sedlachek:** Well, they kept talking about they wanted a church open again. And I think the rest of us could probably tell you that she was on the -- one of the ones on the committee that got going on it and got a hold of the bishop and went from there.

**Soderman:** Just went right at it.

**Gower:** Hmm.

**Soderman:** And it didn't take too long.

**Johnson:** We had a meeting down here at the church. See the cemetery is right along with the church. And after we had called a meeting down there and all of them that were interested came to this meeting down there. And we had quite a lively discussion that evening, and so we just made a pledge that we would try to re-open. And so we got a hold of the bishop, Cecil Johnson from Dakota, which really gave us a big help. And he met with us then. After this we asked him to come and meet with a group of us, and he did. And he gave us some names to follow up on as pastors, and so we did. And of course, we called upon Ray Williams to come and meet with us,

and he did. And he made us meet with him about 6 or 8 times before he would accept, to really be sure that we knew what we were doing—what we were getting ourselves in for—before he would accept the call.

**Gower:** Now in the meantime, had all of you people gone into the Bethlehem Lutheran Church?

**Sedlachek:** Most of us.

**Soderman:** Most of us had. Most of us had.

**Sedlachek:** Maybe there was just 2-3 families that hadn't transferred.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Oh, uh-huh. So, you had retained that link there, but now you wanted to re-establish this church out here?

**Johnson:** Yes.

**Gower:** Now is Mr. Williams the minister of that church in there too?

**Johnson:** No.

**Soderman:** Oh no.

**Gower:** Oh, I see.

**Soderman:** Oh no. He's kind of retired or semi-retired. 'Cause he had a—such a big church in Bemidji that he had -- kind of his health -- he had to quit.

**Gower:** Hmm.

**Soderman:** And then he sells Lutheran Brotherhood, and then he just—he accepted to come out and be our pastor.

**Gower:** Oh, I see.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** That's how it -- that's how we got him.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** He's very good.

**Gower:** Is he a -- does he live in Brainerd?

**Sedlachek:** Yes.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh, yeah.

**LeDoux:** So, the -- this Bishop Johnson then was quite receptive, would you say, to -- or quite supportive of opening or re-opening the church here?

**Johnson:** Yes, I do. I really do say so. Because with the enthusiasm he said that we had, and we had kind of compiled a number of people that would be coming back to church there. And in fact, there was members that came back that hadn't been to church all these years.

**Sedlachek:** A lot of them.

**Johnson:** Yeah. And so he was very, I think, cooperative.

**Gower:** So you did have some -- a number of people who had not gone into Bethlehem Lutheran?

**Soderman:** Oh, we had several that haven't been to any churches that are coming out here now.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** Yes we have.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** So the congregation is -- includes most of the people who were members before? And also, then there's a new influx of people.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Sedlachek:** Right, a lot of them. There are some that had transferred that didn't transfer back. Half a dozen families or so.

**Soderman:** Yeah, there was.

**Gower:** How many families do you have now, do you think, in your church?

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**Sedlachek:** Forty-six.

**Johnson:** Forty-six families.

**Gower:** Forty-six families.

**Johnson:** Yep.

**Gower:** So it's a lot bigger than it was before.

**Soderman:** Oh yes. The church is 'pert near full every Sunday now.

**Gower:** Gosh.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Sedlachek:** Was it thirty-six? Now we have forty-three.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Sedlachek:** And then we had three more this spring.

**Johnson:** We have gained ten families since we opened.

**Soderman:** We have a lot of visitors, you know, people around the lakes here -- summer is--

**Gower:** Oh, that's what John was going to ask you.

**Soderman:** Uh, huh. A lot of them come.

**LeDoux:** Of these ten families or so that have become members since you re-opened, they're... now do they reside in Brainerd or have they moved into this area, or just where do they come from?

**Soderman:** In the neighborhood.

**Sedlachek:** In the neighborhood.

**Soderman:** In the neighborhood.

**Sedlachek:** And in the lake area. There's some who have transferred from other churches. That -  
- some were in the cities and transferred or have moved to--

**LeDoux:** --yeah, I was wondering if it was a case of families who would choose to live out in the country but work in Brainerd, or work in some other place. We've run into that in several locations where a country church will gain membership because people want to return to living in the country, but they still work in like—like in the city or something. That isn't the case here?

**Johnson:** I don't think so.

**Sedlachek:** No, I don't think so.

**Johnson:** Because we do have some that live in town that come out here, yeah, and live on the other side of the town. We have some that drive quite aways.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Johnson:** As far as twenty some miles.

**Gower:** Now would you say that back 30 years ago the church membership here was pretty much from farming families right here?

**Soderman:** Yes, yes.

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** But now it's much different then?

**Soderman:** Yes, it's spread out a little bit more now.

**Sedlachek:** Lake people, retired people, farmers, businessmen--

**Gower:** Much bigger occupations. Oh, uh-huh.

**Soderman:** Yeah.



**LeDoux:** So, you draw quite a bit of the congregation members from the resort business around here?

**Sedlachek:** Not the resort business.

**LeDoux:** The lakes?

**Sedlachek:** But there's a lot of cottages down on the lakes.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh. Are these year-round?

**Soderman:** Summer—summer people you know.

**Gower:** But you also get some summer people?

**Soderman:** Oh, lot of 'em. Lot of them summer people.

**LeDoux:** So, the church would kind of swell in membership during the summer then?

**Sedlachek:** Well, it kind of stays about the same because a lot of people are on vacation and then the others fill in. So, it doesn't--

**Gower:** Oh.

**Johnson:** Ours go and they come.

**Sedlachek:** Yeah.

**Gower:** So, are those summer people members or do they just attend the church?

**Sedlachek:** No, just attend.

**Soderman:** No.

**Johnson:** No, just visiting.

**Gower:** And you meet every Sunday now?

**All:** Uh-huh, 9:00.

**Gower:** 9:00 every Sunday.

**Soderman:** We got to get up on Sunday too.

**Johnson:** Even if our pastor's gone, we still have services.

**Gower:** Well how do you have the services then?

**Johnson:** Our president of our counsel conducts all of the service except the regular sermon part of it and our pastor tapes it all and we run it. We have a P.A. system that we had put into our church now, and we just sit there and listen, and it's just like he was in there but we can't see him.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Johnson:** It's unique.

**Gower:** That's great.

**Johnson:** It is, it's very good. And we like that better than going out and trying to find another pastor to take his Sunday for us.

**Gower:** Now, what is the age group in your church? Do you have some younger people in there so this will keep on going as years pass, and so on?

**Johnson:** How many babies have we had baptized now?

**Soderman:** There's some. There's quite a few. They have Sunday school.

**Gower:** Oh, so you have quite a wide age group represented?

**Sedlachek:** We had about 40 for Bible school this summer—35-40. Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Oh, gosh. See, we were talking to the people up at—up at a church up north in Cutler.

**LeDoux:** Pine Lake.

**Gower:** Pine Lake.

**LeDoux:** Right.

**Gower:** And their church was pretty much just older people.

**All:** Oh.

**Gower:** And they didn't have much of a Sunday school and so on.

**Soderman:** No, we have--

**Gower:** They were sort of concerned about that.

**Soderman:** I bet so.

**Gower:** But this sounds as if yours--

**Johnson:** Oh now, ours should keep on going.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**Soderman:** It should.

**Gower:** Uh-huh, yeah.

**Sedlachek:** Yeah, it always was here actually.

**Gower:** Sure.

**LeDoux:** Have there been women's groups active in the church since the beginning—pretty much since the beginning of the church?

**Soderman:** Yes, we had a Lady's Aide.

**Sedlachek:** We kept our Lady's Aide from before.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Sedlachek:** When the church wasn't meeting, we still had our Lady's Aide meeting.

**Gower:** Oh, you still had your Lady's Aide meeting?

**Soderman:** Yes we did. Every month.

**Sedlachek:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Oh.

**LeDoux:** What kind of activities did you undertake when the church wasn't going out here?

**Sedlachek:** We still had some bake sales for a while, but then we--

**Soderman:** Oh, once in a while.

**Sedlachek:** I guess that kind of died down because we had no real projects that we were making the money for.

**Johnson:** You still kept your flower fund though, didn't you?

**Soderman:** Oh yes, we kept the flower fund.

**Johnson:** (indiscernible) of the Lady's Aide so that if anyone from the neighborhood was in the hospital they still--

**Gower:** Oh, that was part of the Lady's Aide activities?

**Soderman:** Oh yes. Uh-huh.

**Gower:** And then you raised money through—like here it says chicken suppers.

**Soderman:** Yeah, we used to.

**Gower:** Ham suppers and so on.

**Sedlachek:** We didn't have any since the church had been closed.

**Soderman:** No.

**Sedlachek:** But now since it's re-opened--

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** But now we have crafts and kind of rummage sales and craft sales.

**Sedlachek:** And bake sales.

**Soderman:** Bake sales, which we had all together.

**Sedlachek:** Twice a year, yeah.

**Soderman:** And we made real good on those sales.

**Gower:** The main idea of your Lady's' Aide group is to raise—help raise money for the church, and also to do things like providing the flowers for people in the hospital.

**Sedlachek:** Yes.

**Soderman:** Yes.

**Gower:** And then do you do things like if there's a funeral, you help serve sandwiches.

**Sedlachek:** Our Lady's Aide helps serve sandwiches -- and family (indiscernible)

**Soderman:** Yeah, we always do.

**Gower:** Sure.

**Soderman:** We always serve lunch.

**Gower:** Same way if there was a wedding?

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Sedlachek:** We were in a couple of those.

**Soderman:** We had three, wasn't it three or five weddings? Just a few months after the church opened we had three or five weddings. We were just -- a couple months.

**Sedlachek:** We only served one reception, yeah.

**Soderman:** Yeah, but -- oh my--

**Gower:** Now, were you married in the church?

**Sedlachek:** No, we married in town.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Sedlachek:** In '59.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** We were talking about this before you arrived. They were both married in the pastor's--

**Soderman:** Parsonage.

**Sedlachek:** Oh.

**Soderman:** Yes, we was--

**Gower:** And they were saying that there weren't church weddings to tier knowledge as much then.

**Soderman:** No, there wasn't.

**Gower:** And I didn't realize that.

**Soderman:** No, there wasn't.

**Gower:** You know, because the weddings now seem to be almost always in the church.

**Soderman:** Sure.

**Sedlachek:** Well, with the little church like that and the same minister, everybody that...the younger people that got married, they went to town to have their wedding because there was so much more room.

**Gower:** Oh, in the church in town here?

**Sedlachek:** In the church in town.

**Gower:** Sure, I see. Sure.

**Soderman:** But now after it opened here, we've had three-four weddings.

**Gower:** Oh, you had three or four weddings?

**Soderman:** Yes, they were tickled to death to come to a little country church and get married.  
Yeah.

**Gower:** Yeah, that would be an attraction there.

**Soderman:** It was.

**Gower:** That's interesting.

**LeDoux:** Are there any special customs or services that are observed here at this church that would be, oh, unique to the church? Either like a Scandinavian service or custom?

**Soderman:** No, we've never had any of that.

**Gower:** And you didn't have it earlier either that you recall?

**Soderman:** We haven't had any Norwegian services for years.

**Gower:** No, but I mean like would you have any kind of a special activity like at Christmas time, for example related back...

**Soderman:** Oh, they had Christmas (indiscernible)

**Gower:** But related back to the Norwegian or Swedish--

**Soderman:** No, I don't think so.

**Gower:** Oh.

**LeDoux:** What was the one celebration that was the May thing?

**Gower:** Independence Day for Norway.

**LeDoux:** That was celebrated in May.



**Soderman:** No, we never had that.

**LeDoux:** Norwegian--

**Gower:** You never did have that?

**Soderman:** No, we never -- as far as I remember any way. No.

**Gower:** Was there a fairly -- it sounds to me as if maybe there was quite a rapid blurring of the ethnic thing here—not as much emphasis on Norwegian or Swedish background. Is that—would that be correct or not?

**Soderman:** No.

**Johnson:** I don't know. You're—you mean that you don't think that it was more predominant?

**Gower:** What I mean is I don't think they emphasized it was much maybe as in some other churches that we visited, for example.

**Johnson:** No, I don't think so.

**Sedlachek:** No.

**Soderman:** No. Usually in some churches they just go for one thing, but not -- (indiscernible) -- here.

**Gower:** That didn't seem to be the case here.

**Soderman:** No.

**Gower:** I still wonder if maybe it wasn't partly because you had a greater number of, for example, Swedes who came in and joined the Norwegians here, and so then maybe there was less emphasis upon Norwegian services.

**Soderman:** That's possible.

**Gower:** John, you got some more there?

**LeDoux:** I was wondering, do you have any knowledge of other churches in the area? Now, are there a number of small churches in the area?

**Johnson:** There's Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

**Soderman:** I think there is one other one.

**Sedlachek:** But I don't know, I don't think they're going to get to keep going either. They're down to about ten or thirteen families.

**Soderman:** They haven't got any minister now at all. I just don't know.

**Johnson:** Their pastor will be down now.

**LeDoux:** This is Emmanuel Lutheran?

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** And this is located about where now?

**Soderman:** Platte Lake, it's called you know.

**LeDoux:** Platte Lake.

**Soderman:** Well--

**Gower:** Still south of here?

**Johnson:** About ten miles from our house then?

**Soderman:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**Sedlachek:** Yeah, at least ten miles.

**Soderman:** At least it's ten miles.

**Sedlachek:** At least.

**LeDoux:** And they're running into trouble down there?

**Sedlachek:** Yeah. That's --they're connected with the First Lutheran Church in Brainerd.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**LeDoux:** Oh, uh-huh. And, it's just as far as you know dropping membership there that's hurting them?

**Johnson:** No, it's happening the same way. The pastor from -- connected with the two churches again.

**LeDoux:** Oh. And it's a case as with yours, that it's a local situation but the synod just pretty much acquiesces to the wishes of the pastor then?

**Sedlachek:** Right.

**Soderman:** That's how it is, you know.

**Soderman:** And see they can't afford—they couldn't afford a full-time pastor there unless they could get one like we have, you know semi-retired or some -- a minister that has other income. They had that a few years ago, but I think that fellow died.

**Johnson:** Did he?

**Soderman:** Uh-huh. See he used to come way from--

**Sedlachek:** Yeah, Milaca.

**Soderman:** Gee, Milaca or Onamia he'd come here—long ways. He was an old fellow, but he came here for several years he did. And now, I think he died.

**Sedlachek:** He wasn't able--

**Soderman:** --better off. He wasn't able to come anymore, he wasn't--

**Johnson:** Otherwise, that's the only other small church here around close that I know of.

**Soderman:** There isn't any more here.

**LeDoux:** Now, there's a concern—was there a concern by the counsel in Brainerd at the time that this church was being discontinued that you wouldn't—you wouldn't be able to pay the pastor? Was that part of it? Was that part of it, that they thought well—you would have a hard time supporting the--

**Sedlachek:** No, they just...no, that wasn't the trouble at all because this church has always been on top.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** We always paid him when--

**Sedlachek:** But they didn't--

**LeDoux:** No, but I mean were they -- did they -- were they afraid of that—that eventually there'd be too few member to--

**Sedlachek:** I don't think that was their concern.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Soderman:** I don't think so.

**Sedlachek:** No.

**Soderman:** I don't think so.

**Sedlachek:** They thought that -- well, they needed more members and they didn't want to share their minister, I guess, is what the main thing was.

**Soderman:** They wanted us to come in there. Yeah.

**LeDoux:** Now was this Bishop Johnson—was he bishop in '63 when the church broke? He wasn't at the time?

**Soderman:** I don't think so. I don't think so.

**Johnson:** He's only been, I think probably the last five—six years he's only been bishop. They re-vote those too (indiscernible)

**Soderman:** He hasn't been too many years.

**LeDoux:** So perhaps the change in bishops too, that possible made a difference.

**Soderman:** I don't know.

**LeDoux:** --in the decision to -- well, at least you said this present bishop was quite supportive.

**Johnson:** Uh-huh, yeah.

**LeDoux:** Uh-huh.

**Johnson:** He even tried to check back to see if he could find any leads whatsoever, you know, of (indiscernible) to help them out. And he couldn't find anything in the records, so what had

happened to them I don't know. And he didn't know either. Yes, I would in some ways say that if the bishop at that time would've been like Bishop Johnson was, maybe he—they could've located a pastor that would've come to them. I don't know.

**Gower:** What do you mean by no record of (indiscernible)? You mean there weren't even any efforts made to get a minister here?

**Johnson:** No, they did. They made efforts to get a pastor. But from the head office, he couldn't find any records where the head office had tried.

**Gower:** Oh, I see. Yeah.

**Johnson:** That's what he told us. But no, the people of the church at that time--

**Gower:** The people here were trying but--

**Johnson:** I wasn't in it—active 'cause I hadn't belonged to it that long and ah, yeah, but they had tried to get a pastor.

**Sedlachek:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** But if—what'll you do when Reverend Will-Williams, is that his name?

**Johnson:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** --when he has to discontinue his services?

**Soderman:** I don't know. We don't want to think about that.

**Sedlachek:** It would be sad.

**Johnson:** We don't think of that.

**Gower:** Oh, oh I see.

**Soderman:** I don't want to think about that.

**Gower:** Oh, I shouldn't have brought that up.

**All:** No.

**Soderman:** No, but--

**Sedlachek:** That'd be a sad day.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** If you would see him you'll—you'll think he'll live forever just like the rest of us 'cause he just is--

**Soderman:** He is such a good pastor.

**Johnson:** He's a marvelous—a marvelous human being besides a great pastor.

**Gower:** Hmm.

**Johnson:** He knows his Word.

**Soderman:** I don't think there's anybody gone to sleep in church since he come either.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** Oh, you can stay awake and listen to him.

**Gower:** Uh-huh.

**Johnson:** He's a very moving person.

**Sedlachek:** Well, he told us before he came. He said he could say as much in forty-five minutes as you want to, or he could string it out for an hour and a half. He didn't care.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** So, when he says--

**Sedlachek:** So, usually forty-five minutes is from start to finish and he's... he gives your 12 to 15, 18 minute sermon and--

**Soderman:** That's it.

**Gower:** And all the rest would be--

**Sedlachek:** And the ah--

**Johnson:** Liturgy.

**Gower:** Liturgy and so on.

**Sedlachek:** Yeah, except on Communion Sunday it does run into an hour. But ah--

**Soderman:** Yeah, but--

**Sedlachek:** Other than that, the—he apologizes if he goes over the forty-five minutes.

**Soderman:** Yes, he does.

**Gower:** Hmmm.

**Sedlachek:** He doesn't want to. He said you can say as much in 12-15 as you could in a half an hour, if you want to.

**Gower:** Sure.



**Sedlachek:** And I believe it.

**Johnson:** Just as much.

**Sedlachek:** Just--

**Johnson:** It's more meaningful really.

**Sedlachek:** Sure it is.

**Soderman:** You really can.

**Gower:** Uh-huh, sure. Okay John, have you exhausted your questions there or...

**LeDoux:** I just have one—one more question.

**Soderman:** One more.

**Gower:** Gosh, they're going to be late to their meeting.

**Sedlachek:** Yes, we're going to be late.

**Gower:** You'll have to blame us.

**Soderman:** Yes, we are.

**Gower:** Blame us. That's okay.

**Soderman:** Alright.

**LeDoux:** I was wondering, do you have any knowledge if there -- if now there is any movement or any policy by the synod regarding its rural churches? Now you mentioned this Emmanuel one is in trouble, and it seems like any church that would not have a minister that's willing to come

would also be in trouble. Do you have any knowledge of any policy or what they synod's attitude toward it is—towards the rural church as it might be faltering?

**Johnson:** No, I don't. I have gone to some of our Brainers conference meetings. We -- which are -- the Brainerd conference has five a year and I have attend all of those.

**LeDoux:** Oh.

**Johnson:** And as far as the A.L.C. part of it, we had a discussion one evening on this certain topic, and kind of sounds like that maybe this is a better solution—to have your smaller churches than ah, than your bigger churches. Because, really, the smaller churches aren't in as much trouble as your bigger churches are because -- and one thing, you have better fellowship by far in a smaller congregation than you do a larger congregation.

**Gower:** You have better fellowship?

**Johnson:** Yes.

**Gower:** What do you mean by that?

**Johnson:** Everybody knows everybody. And you take time to visit, where your bigger congregations you come to church--

**Gower:** Oh, impersonal?

**Johnson:** That's right.

**Soderman:** And we have coffee--

**Sedlachek:** And the parents stayed up--

**Soderman:** And we have coffee and cookies every Sunday in the wintertime after church.

**Gower:** Oh.

**Soderman:** And everybody stays.

**Sedlachek:** With the Bible study.

**Gower:** Oh, with the Bible study.

**Johnson:** Yes, and everybody goes down in the basement and we have such a good--

**Gower:** Oh.

**Sedlachek:** During the kids have their Sunday school classes.

**Soderman:** Uh-huh.

**Gower:** Do you have any potluck dinners, and so on there too?

**Soderman:** Oh yes, once a month.

**Sedlachek:** Oh yes.

**Gower:** Oh, once a month. Oh, yes.

**Soderman:** Yeah, yes we do.

**Sedlachek:** Except in the summer.

**Soderman:** Yeah.

**Gower:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** But even so, people stand in the church yard and visit afterwards.

**Gower:** Just standing around and visiting.

**All:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** And of all the years that I went into Brainerd, I could come and go and not speak to too many people.

**Sedlachek:** Nobody knew you.

**Soderman:** Nobody knows you in them big churches.

**Gower:** Yeah, yeah, I bet that is hard.

**Soderman:** We even had a Sunday school picnic here just a month ago or so. We had such a crowd and we had such a good time, everybody did. Yeah.

**LeDoux:** So to sum it up then. The rural churches aren't in trouble as long as there's a kind of a community spirit to--

**Johnson:** I think this is the main thing.

**LeDoux:** This is the (indiscernible).

**Soderman:** It seems that way. It seems that way, yeah.

**Johnson:** Uh-huh

**LeDoux:** Okay, is there anything that you'd like to add that we haven't asked you or--

**Soderman:** I can't think of it now.

**LeDoux:** Okay, that concludes this interview.