

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church  
other names/site number Our Savior's Lutheran Church; Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church; 32 WD 1587

**2. Location**

street & number one mile north of State Route #50 and one quarter mile west of Ward County Highway #1  not for publication  
city or town Coulee/Spencer Township  vicinity  
state North Dakota code ND county Ward code 101 zip code 58734

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title *Merlan E. Paaeverud, Jr.* 12-30-04  
Merlan E. Paaeverud, Jr. Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper *Edgar No. Beall* Date of Action 2/13/05

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
(Check as many boxes as apply)	(Check only one box)	(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions	Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)	(Enter categories from instructions)
<u>RELIGION: church</u>	<u>VACANT: not in use</u>
<u>FUNERARY: cemetery</u>	

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification	Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)	(Enter categories from instructions)
<u>LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque Revival</u>	foundation <u>Wood</u>
	<u>Stone</u>
	walls <u>wood</u>
	roof <u>Wood</u>
	<u>Asphalt</u>
	other _____

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**  
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS):**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
  - previously listed in the National Register
  - previously determined eligible by the National Register
  - designated a National Historic Landmark
  - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
  - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary location of additional data:**
- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other

Name of repository:  
In author's private collection

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
- ETHNIC HERITAGE/EUROPEAN
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1907-1954  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1907  
\_\_\_\_\_  
1931  
\_\_\_\_\_  
1962  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Harald M. Grenvik, Sr. (1883-1963)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church  
Name of Property

Ward County, North Dakota  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 2.18 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	13	711841	5382489	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sandra M. Burke

organization N/a date October 2004

street & number 7578 NE Bergman Road telephone 206-842-6654

city or town Bainbridge Island state WA zip code 98110

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery Association

street & number 53300 - 352<sup>nd</sup> Ave telephone 701-848-2284

city or town Kenmare state ND zip code 58746

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

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## Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church Ward County, ND

### Description

Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church is a landmark located on a flat plain, visible for miles. The site is enclosed on three sides by a barbed wire fence, separating it from a vast agricultural landscape. Wire fencing with a metal-framed entrance arbor identifying "Our Saviors Lutheran" mark the entrance from a gravel section road. A stable to shelter horses during services was once located across the road on a one-acre property donated to the church. It is not extant and the property no longer belongs to the church. Neither trees nor plantings exist on the site, nor does oral and pictorial research indicate these or other landscape features ever did. Thus the landscape continues to enhance the original setting of Our Savior's.

Our Savior's is a single-story, wood-framed building built in 1907. It is a vernacular front-gabled form with a vestibule tower in front. A small brick interior chimney protrudes from the northeast gable-end. A slightly narrower hip-roofed section extends from the east end. The building is of strict symmetrical design except for a later cloak room addition to the south side of the vestibule. This addition appears in an early photograph which includes 1930s-era automobiles. Research could not provide an exact construction date for this addition. The foundation system is wood post on stone footings with a dry-laid stone perimeter wall. The exterior is clad in wood clapboard siding. Wood and asphalt shingles cover the roof. All construction materials except the shingles appear to be original.

On the west elevation, the facade is dominated by a square projecting entrance vestibule tower terminating in pyramidal roof skirting and an octagonal steeple pierced by eight gable-roofed, round-arched openings. The original bell remains and is operational. The steeple is roofed in shaped-wood shingles laid in a pattern and is topped by its original weathervane. The central main entrance has replacement double doors with an original tripartite fanlight surmounting them. An early photograph shows the original four-panel doors to be in place as late as the 1930s. A small circular window in the upper part of the steeple tower is a primary feature. The cloakroom addition features a high, fixed, rectangular window with three vertical muntins on its west elevation and a plain paneled door on its south.

On the north and south elevations, four, four-over-four, double-hung wooden windows with half-round, tripartite, colored-glass transom lights are symmetrically spaced. Protective plywood boarding covers the windows at present, but the original windows are intact beneath. There are no openings on the east elevation.

The main interior space of the building consists of a large open nave separated from a raised altar area by a cased arch. The nave's only entrance is via unpainted, wooden, four-paneled double doors from the vestibule (entered either directly through the front doors or through the cloak room). The doors are framed by a molded casing with corner and plinth blocks. The varnished trim of the windows matches that of the doors. The walls are painted plaster on lath with unpainted beadboard wainscoting on the lower part. The narrow-board floors have a worn varnish finish. All interior finishes appear to be original. Interior photos are not available, as the windows are boarded over and electricity does not run to the building currently.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

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**Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church  
Ward County, ND**

**Description (continued)**

Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery lies to the east of the Church. It was surveyed and dedicated to public use on October 31, 1931.<sup>1</sup> It contains approximately 131 graves and is arranged in a rectilinear grid. Approximately 19 non-member graves are located at the western boundary of the site. Both areas are still in use for burials. There is a mixture of flat and upright headstones, some footstones, but many graves remain unmarked. The earliest headstone date is that of a small child, dated 1902. Since the land was not purchased for the church and cemetery site until 1906, it is assumed that this grave was moved from elsewhere. The graves of the builder, Harald Grenvik, Sr., his parents, wife, and several of his children are located here.

A non-contributing single outhouse, originally one of two joined by a woodshed, stands to the southeast of the church.

Integrity

Soon after the congregation disbanded in 1962, the elaborate altarpiece, handcrafted by Harald Aktaai Grenvik, Sr., was removed from the church and donated to the Historical Society at Powers Lake, North Dakota, where it remains on display (photo #8). The recently restored altar statue was given to Nazareth Lutheran Church in Kenmare, North Dakota.

Today, Our Savior's is maintained by Our Savior's Lutheran Cemetery Association. The site has remained virtually undisturbed and reflects its original design intent, retaining almost all of its original materials. Only the shingles have been changed. It has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Although the grounds are faithfully maintained, the building receives only minor maintenance due to financial constraints.

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<sup>1</sup>Plat and Certificate of Survey, 31 October 1931, County of Ward and State of ND.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

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**Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church**  
**Ward County, ND**

**Statement of Significance**

Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C, also meeting criteria considerations A and D, as a religious property significant for its architecture and association with local immigrant history and settlement patterns. Its simplified Romanesque apse and tower form exhibits extraordinary complexity in its eight-sided steeple, with Gothic and Romanesque design elements, attached to a common vernacular building type. Grenvik family tradition attests to the prominence Our Savior's held in the religious and social lives of the local Scandinavian immigrant farmers in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The siting of the Church on an open flat plain, giving it visibility for approximately ten miles, offers a visual clue to its physical prominence. The ongoing high level of community involvement in its maintenance further supports its social significance.<sup>2</sup>

Our Savior's is a local landmark representative of a type commonly seen across the northern plains. Located on a vast, windswept prairie, on an unpaved section road, the property still evokes the isolation endemic of the agricultural communities built by Scandinavian immigrants during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its role and importance as a religious center of a Scandinavian farmland community, it is a modest church whose atypically complex steeple construction is indicative of cultural and building traditions in historic Norwegian church architecture. Similar six-sided steeples can be found on the Urnes Church (ca. 1030-1140 C.E.; Luterfjord, Sogn, Norway), and the Lowen Church (ca. 1175; Vestre Slidre, Valdres, Norway).<sup>3</sup> The six-sided, Gothic-Romanesque steeple of the Lutheran Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, may also have served as a model or inspiration, as it is known through Grenvik family lore that early trips to St. Paul and Minneapolis occurred. The absolute east-west orientation is traditional Christian symbolism which also "underscores the fact that man is bringing a unique type of building into the world – or onto its site – a symbolic structure that is imposed on, rather than inherently related to its local surroundings."<sup>4</sup> The siting of the church on an open, flat plain, the verticality of its tower, capped with the distinctive steeple, and its white paint (historically and currently), all call attention to its being wholly *upon* the land, rather than integrated with the landscape.

The site is approximately three miles from Bethlehem Lutheran Church, which was constructed a few years earlier than Our Savior's. Local tradition suggests that Bethlehem was organized by Norwegian immigrants and Our Savior's by Swedish immigrants. If true, that distinction was almost immediately dissolved, as attested to by Grenvik family oral history. It is likely that geography, not minor ethnic distinctions, dictated a family's membership. Both churches are in typical proximity to the farmsteads which they served. Harald Grenvik's father, Hans Grenvik (1851-1904) is listed as an organizing trustee of this earlier church. Bethlehem is similar in form to Our Savior's, but larger. The significant difference between the two buildings is the forms of their

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<sup>2</sup>Research to prove a criterion B connection to a significant person, Harald Grenvik or others, has not been done. Such a connection may exist.

<sup>3</sup>Holan, Norwegian Wood, 50-51.

<sup>4</sup>Clifford and Fevold, The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian Americans, 189.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

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**Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church**  
**Ward County, ND**

**Statement of Significance (continued)**

steeples. The square steeple of Bethlehem is considerably less complex in design and construction than the distinctive octagonal steeple of Our Savior's.

A Trondheim, Norway, passenger manifest identifies Hans Grenvik as "carpenter, master builder."<sup>5</sup> It can be inferred that the son learned carpentry from his father and perhaps even "helped" as a boy with the building of Bethlehem. It might also be speculated that, at the young age of twenty-four and with only the apprenticeship training with his father, Harald Grenvik sought to establish himself as a highly-accomplished craftsman through the design and execution, by himself, of this character-defining steeple at Our Savior's. Harald Grenvik built several later churches in the region, most with variations of what became known locally as the "Grenvik steeple." These include Knife River Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1925, and Lostwood Free Lutheran Church.

History

In 1869, Norwegian pioneers first crossed to the North Dakota side of the Red River of the North and began creating permanent settlements. As this flood of migration continued, Norwegians became the state's largest ethnic group and North Dakota the most Norwegian-populated prairie state. By 1900, twenty-three percent of the population was of Norwegian extraction. The trend continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Norwegian immigrants demonstrated a strong affinity for the land and farming.<sup>6</sup> They had come from a rural and crowded country that was slow to industrialize. Although only about three percent of land in Norway was suitable for farming, most of the emigrants coming to North Dakota had a farm or agricultural background. The instant status garnered by owning land, even more when it was a productive farm, was an enticement highly-publicized through letters and newspaper articles back in Norway.<sup>7</sup>

The recognizable form of the Lutheran churches, simple, white-painted wood buildings standing alone in the country landscapes and small towns, were tangible manifestations of Norwegian immigrant populations in North Dakota. About seventy-five percent of these immigrants remained Lutheran in the New World and were aggressive in keeping their faith and culture.<sup>8</sup> In early Norwegian immigrant communities, schools and churches were a priority. Lessons and services were typically conducted in Norwegian, preserving language and culture through these important community institutions.<sup>9</sup> Traditional rural values were treasured by these people who sought, early-on, to define their communities through the establishment of these institutions. Socially and geographically, early communities centered on their churches. The school, the press, and the

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<sup>5</sup>Trondheim shipping list, n.p.

<sup>6</sup>Lovoll, The Promise of America, 123-125.

<sup>7</sup>Berg, Ethnic Heritage in North Dakota, 94-95.

<sup>8</sup>Sherman, ed., et al, Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History, 190.

<sup>9</sup>Berg, 95.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

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**Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church**  
**Ward County, ND**

**Statement of Significance (continued)**

church became the most visible institutions established and supported by Norwegian immigrants as community vehicles of culture.<sup>10</sup>

A number of Scandinavian, both Swedish and Norwegian, pioneer families of the Kenaston, North Dakota area recognized the need for a local church. They began laying plans in 1902. In 1904, they met in the home of Joseph Hope to organize and adopt a constitution for the congregation they named Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church. Its associated Ladies' Aid Society was organized in 1903, also in the Hope home. This supports the assertion that Norwegian-American Lutheran church-women in North Dakota often organized before the men were able to fully organize the congregation.<sup>11</sup> However, no known formal minutes of the Ladies' Aid Society associated with Our Savior's exist to provide a tangible record.

In 1906, land was purchased from Nels Christianson for the church and cemetery site. The congregation met in private homes until the building was complete in 1907. The church had no kitchen facilities and was therefore used exclusively for religious services. It remained a significant religious center of the surrounding community until its closing service on 7 October 1962.<sup>12</sup>

In 1907, a farm was located on almost every 160 acres, or quarter section of land. By 1962, few of these smaller farms remained. Most of the original homesteaders had died, moved to town, or been succeeded by generations forced to amass additional acreage in order to make farming a financially viable lifestyle.<sup>13</sup> Our Savior's Lutheran Cemetery Association was formed March 26, 1971 and consists of approximately fifteen members.<sup>14</sup> The motivation to maintain the church on its original site was its preservation as a memorial to the pioneer families who established it. The small white, steepled churches so characteristic of the North Dakota prairie have become synonymous with the Scandinavian immigrant communities. They are vanishing almost as quickly as the communities they served. Only those with caretakers dedicated to the preservation of this physical remnant of culture, such as Our Savior's, are managing to remain as significant reminders of our past.

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<sup>10</sup>Lovell, 58.

<sup>11</sup>Williamson, "Norwegian-American Lutheran Churchwomen in North Dakota," 77.

<sup>12</sup>Church records, "History of Our Savior's Lutheran Church," n.d., n.p.

<sup>13</sup>Modine, interview.

<sup>14</sup>Church records.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 6

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**Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church**  
**Ward County, ND**

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Clifford, Nelson E., and Eugene L. Fevold. The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian Americans. Vol. 1. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960.

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Holan, Jerri. Norwegian Wood: A Tradition of Building. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1990.

Lovoll, Odd S. A History of the Norwegian-American People revised edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Modine, Vivian. Interview by author, 16 September 2001. Kenmare, North Dakota. Tape recording in possession of author.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church records. Our Savior's Cemetery Association, Kenmare, North Dakota.

Recorded Survey. 31 October 1931. Ward County, North Dakota, Book 2 of Plats, 145.

Sherman, William C. An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota. Fargo: North Dakota Institute of Regional Studies, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Playford V. Thorson, et al, eds. Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History. Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 1988.

Trondheim shipping list. Cunard liner, name not given. 5 July 1899. Photocopy in possession of author.

Williamson, Erik Luther. "Norwegian-American Lutheran Churchwomen in North Dakota: The Ladies' Aid Societies." Master's Thesis, Grand Forks: University of North Dakota, 1987.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 7

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**Our Savior's Scandinavian Lutheran Church  
Ward County, ND**

**Verbal boundary description**

In Spencer Township, beginning at the NW corner of the NW 1/4, NE 1/4, of Section 35, Township 159N, Range 89W, thence East along the North line of said section 35 a distance of 396 feet to a point; thence South 240 feet, thence west 396 feet, thence North 240 feet to the place of beginning; tract contains 2.18 acres more or less.

**Verbal boundary justification**

The result of Certificate of Survey by Chas. A. Truax, recorded by the State of North Dakota, County of Ward, dated September 1931. Nominated property includes entire parcel historically associated with the church excepting donated land across the section line road where a stable once stood.