

The Cemetery View

Vermont Lutheran Church Cemetery Association

Welcome

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Welcome to the first issue of *The Cemetery View*. Perhaps you're wondering why you're receiving this newsletter and maybe even why we're publishing it. First of all, you've been identified as someone who is a member of Vermont Lutheran Church or simply has ties to Vermont and may have an interest in the current goings on at the cemetery and more importantly, what the vision of the Cemetery Committee is for the future. Naturally our foremost responsibility is the current upkeep and improvement of the cemetery (see *Mapping the Cemetery*). And, with a look to the not too distant future, space needs will become critical before we know it. (see -*A look to the Future...Will there be cemetery space?*)

We hope you enjoy this little newsletter and we welcome your comments and input. Please consider our goal of future cemetery expansion and to preserve the beauty and sanctity of Vermont Lutheran Cemetery for fu-

ture generations. You may contact us individually or by e-mail at jurness@vitaplus.com. Or, Jon Urness (608) 767-2471; David Haugen (608) 767-3313; Calvin Tollefson (608) 767-3373; Gary Olsen (608) 767-3988 or Greg Herrling (608) 798-2268.

Vermont Lutheran Cemetery Association

Inside this Issue

Page 2
A Look to the Future-Space?
Page 3
Mapping the Cemetery



View of Vermont Lutheran Cemetery from the north

A look to the future....

Will there be cemetery space?

Recently the Vermont Cemetery Association and a committee of interested church members took a hard look at future space needs of our beautiful cemetery. Part of that discussion centered on the number of visitors our cemetery receives on a day-to-day basis and it became clear that a lot of people, even beyond our membership, hold the cemetery near and dear. One of the questions became—how do we sustain this important asset and keep it a special place for generations to come?

Picture in your mind the cemetery as it is today, the resting place of the first four or five generations of Vermonters and their families. Now try to imagine providing space for the next four to five generations and beyond. Clearly, the current cemetery is not large enough to provide space that far into the future. Based on our estimates, there's room for us and probably for most of our children but perhaps not for our grandchildren and beyond.

For those of you analytical types, there are approximately 1170 burial sites in the "modern" part of the cemetery roughly defined as the northern most half of the current cemetery. Two-thirds of those are occupied or spoken for. During the congregational annual meeting in January, 2011, we estimated about 416 sites available and not all those are suitable or desirable as grave sites. During a subsequent mapping of the cemetery (see related story) it became clear that number is much less, probably closer to 300. On the average there are 6-7 burials per year at Vermont. This would imply that we have about 40-45 more years of burial space available.

However, as our membership ages and grows, we believe we could be full by the year 2050. Burials have taken place at Vermont since the mid-1870's or approximately 140 years so according to this estimation the useful life of our current cemetery is approximately 80% spent.

Based on conversations with our neighbors we believe that sometime in the next 10-15 years additional land to the north and possibly to the east of us will become available. Certainly the primary goal is to add cemetery space especially to the north, but secondarily, it would be desirable to provide a buffer space around the church property to preserve our attractive setting and views. It's an ambitious plan and even in today's real estate market would be expensive. Our committees have no intention of launching fund raisers and pledge drives. And we certainly don't want to compete or interfere with the funding of current and future church programs. Instead, we hope that because so many members and non-members alike hold the Vermont Lutheran Cemetery so dear, they'll consider naming the Cemetery Association in their wills and other instruments of testamentary giving. If you, your spouse, or anyone you know, are inclined to make a bequest or an immediate gift for this effort, please consider filling out the two enclosed documents. The first, a **Notification of Estate Gift** form, simply outlines your intended gift and should be kept in your records as well as a copy sent to the Cemetery Association for our records. The second form, **Amendment to Last Will and Testament**, should be filled out, witnessed and attached to your original Last Will and Testament. In the event you do not have a will, Bill Meddings has been offering workshops for making out new wills or updating existing wills. There's no charge for Bill's services. (continued on page 3)

A look to the future....Will there be cemetery space?

(continued from page 2)

In any case, if you have any questions or comments regarding this effort please contact one of the listed Vermont Cemetery Board Members listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Thank you for your consideration!

Mapping the Cemetery

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to easily access a map of the Vermont Lutheran Cemetery to locate the gravesite of an ancestor or loved one. Or, to see where available sites for future needs exist. That's the goal of a worthwhile Cemetery project that has been ongoing for more than a year.

Late last year (2010), Terry DeWitt, Dave Haugen and Jon Urness began piecing together cemetery records, old cemetery maps, some newer cemetery maps and current burial records with the goal in mind to once and for all have a useable and accurate map of the cemetery. Terry's vision of a map and burial directory kiosk placed near the entrance to the cemetery was the impetus for the project. In addition, it is hoped that there will be a map available as an on-line resource, perhaps on the church website.

Heading into winter 2011-12, a grave by grave field check has pretty well been completed. Terry is working on a final design for the kiosk that will include an alphabetical listing with corresponding map grids, the map itself and an area for recognizing contributors to the Cemetery Preservation Fund.



Avery & Terry DeWitt printing out a preliminary version of the proposed cemetery map.

Previous efforts to map the cemetery have proven to be helpful but incomplete. Because of the somewhat haphazard choice in placing burial sites in the early years of the cemetery, one of the biggest challenges has been to display an accurate map in grid form. For example, in the earliest sections closest to the church where burials began in about 1874, there are sometimes six and sometimes seven rows of graves. This rather informal placement of graves does not lend itself well to today's system of columns and rows on a spreadsheet. As a result, when the map is finished there will be some areas that had to be "fudged" a little. In any case, visitors will be able to find names on an alphabetical list that will correspond to a row and column on the map and easily find the gravesite location from this reference.

This project is just another example of the pride and vision shown by members of Vermont Lutheran Church. It is remarkable how many visitors from near and far seek information regarding an ancestor or loved one buried in the cemetery. It's a reminder of how many dozens and even hundreds of people still look to Vermont to discover their roots.

**Vermont Lutheran
Church Cemetery**

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