

FIRST FINNISH FELLOWSHIP

Memorial Marker Fundraiser

Much was lost in the Fire of 1918. Yet nearly 100 years later, a piece of what once was lost is being rediscovered and recovered!

Salem First Finnish Methodist Episcopal Church, located six and a half miles west of Moose Lake on Highway 27 in what was then Split Rock township, was founded in 1891 by immigrants from Finland. The “first” in the long name hints at recently discovered distinction: it is the very first Finnish Methodist congregation in the United States. The congregation was started by local legend John Michaelson. It continued until the deadly fire of 1918 destroyed their modest, Finnish-style log building. John died in 1906 and his wife Anna and two of their grandchildren died on Dead Man’s Curve during the fire. Their son John owned a store in Kettle River and served as postmaster and land agent for surplus railroad land. The beleaguered congregation was unable to rebuild, and surviving members transferred to other churches. The story of the little congregation was lost. . . .

. . . Until now! A group interested in recovering, sharing and preserving this amazing history has come together, calling ourselves the First Finnish Fellowship. There is wide interest and involvement, from locals of the area, to United Methodists around the state, to FinnFest USA. Our first priority is to place a memorial at the site. We proposes to move three local granite boulders to create a “family” marking the site. One would have a brief inscription as well as a sketch of the original building. Landscaping will require removing a partially burned building and planting birch trees around the memorial.

We plan to dedicate the memorial *July 6, 2014*, to connect with the FinnFestUSA celebrations.

We estimate the cost of the project at \$14,000. Moose Lake United Methodist Church has agreed to administer donations and expenditures for this project.

Please donate towards this exciting project. Together we can recover an exceptional piece of what was lost and preserve it for generations to come. Any gift makes a difference. Consider making a tax deductible donation in an amount that would in some way honor the church’s heritage:

The year it was founded:	\$18.91, \$189.10, \$1,891.
Each year of the congregation’s life:	\$26.00, \$260.00, \$2,600.
The year it was lost:	\$19.18, \$191.80, \$1,918.
Each year since the congregation was lost:	\$96.00, \$960.00, \$9,600.

Make your contribution payable to “Moose Lake United Methodist Church,” designated “Finnish Marker,” and send them to: Steve Olson, Moose Lake UMC, PO Box 467, Moose Lake, MN 55767. Thank you.

As the boulders are pulled out of the ground, so can we, by working together, pull out of this charred, stained soil the story of a forgotten history. As the stones stand to pay tribute to those who have gone before, may we stand together and never let this story be lost again!

Rev. David Werner,
Commission on Archives and History, Chair

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Fellowship Partners

- Moose Lake United Methodist Church
- Dan Reed, Finnish Historian, Kettle River
- Moose Lake Area Historical Society
- Moose Lake Star Gazette
- FinnFestUSA
- Commission on Archives and History, MN Conference of the United Methodist Church
- United Methodist Historical Society of MN
- General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church

Anyone can join the Fellowship! Call us or send us an email!