

Lutheran Community Church celebrates 130th anniversary

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OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

✓ The Lutheran Community Church will celebrate 130 years in the Pajaro Valley with a two-day celebration today and Sunday.

Today's festivities will include music, food, a parking lot sale, activities for kids and a jump house from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the church, located at 95 Alta Vista Ave. in Watsonville. A pet blessing will take place at 1 p.m. A worship service will take place Sunday at 2 p.m., with music by Mariachis Sonora and harpist William Faulkner.

"It's kind of fascinating to look back over 130 years and see the ups and downs," Pastor Susan Birkelo said.

Lutheran Community Church was founded in 1880 by Danish immigrants and was the first Lutheran church in Watsonville.

"They started out conducting the services in Danish," Birkelo said. "Pretty soon they ended up adding English services to what they offered. Now, in these times, we're speaking English and Spanish. We've continued to be an immigrant church."

Throughout the history of the Lutheran community, the

church has served the Pajaro Valley through its education programs, homeless ministry, Migrant Assistance program and by making the church facility available to community groups.

"The primary focus of Lutheran Community Church is to become a bilingual, anti-racist, multicultural congregation that is healing, reconciling and a unifying presence in this diverse community," Birkelo said.

Education is an important focus of the church, she said, with the most recent ministry effort being the Community Information Center for Migrant Assistance.

"We try to offer free, good, reliable advice to people who come in with questions about status or options," Birkelo said.

During the week, the church also hosts meetings for Alcoholics Anonymous, Neurotics Anonymous, Janus, domestic violence support, salsa classes and WeightWatchers.

Lutheran Community Church has a few longtime members and a total of 140 members in its congregation.

"We're not 130 every year, so it's noteworthy," Birkelo said.

For information, contact 724-3460 or visit www.lccwatsonville.org.