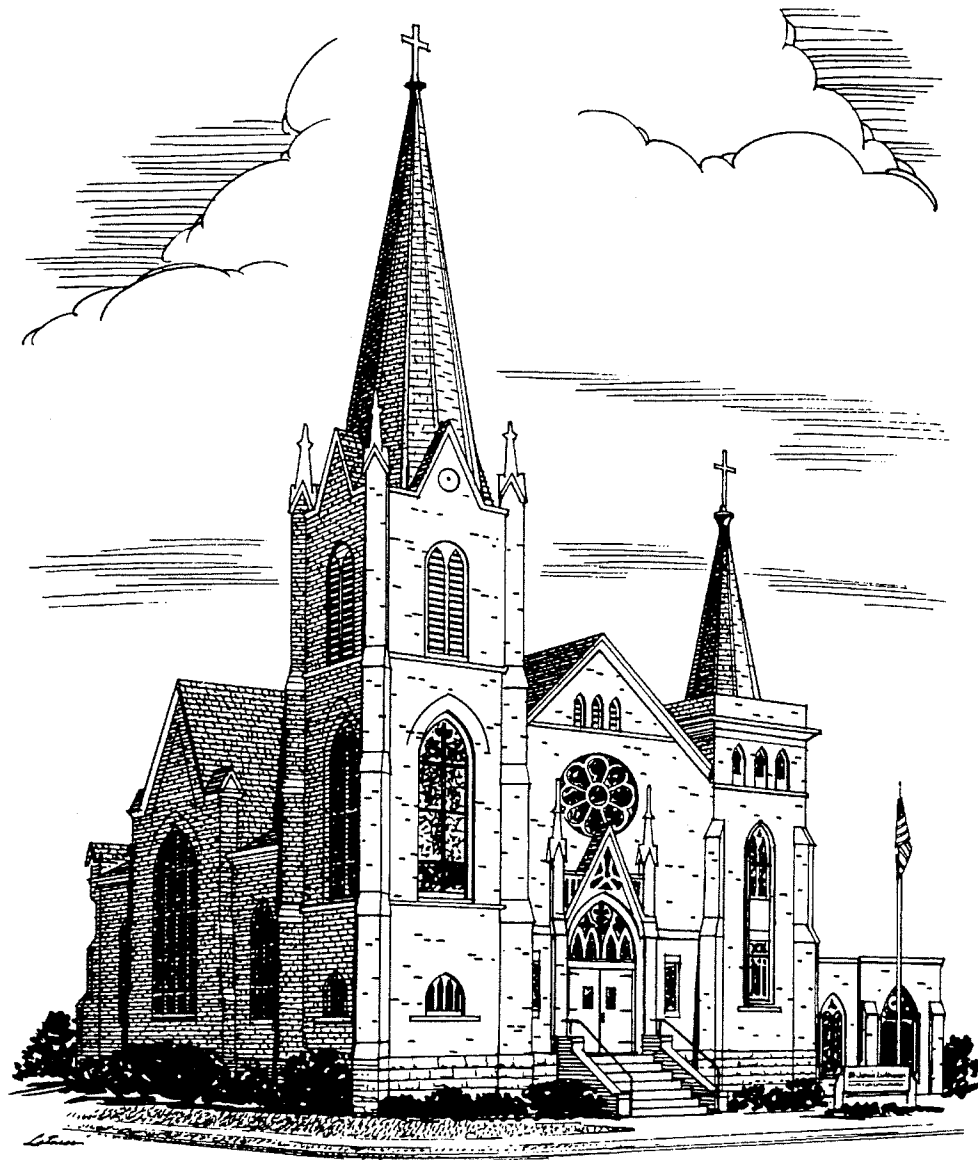


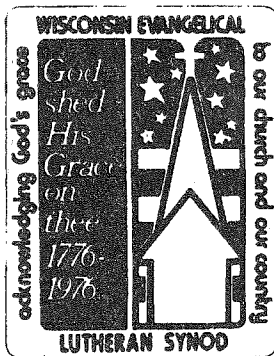
125th Anniversary History Book



*St. John's Luth. Lutheran Church
Sleepy Eye, Minnesota*

June 16-17, 2001

Featuring text from 100th Anniversary Book & Last 25 year update



History of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation

Our Roots Go Back To Germany

The Wisconsin Synod roots go back to 1837. This was when a few Christians in three German cities, Langenberg, Elberfeld, and Barmen became concerned about the spiritual welfare of their Lutheran countrymen who were migrating in large numbers to America.

Consequently, action was taken and missionaries were sent to this new land. Soon thereafter, pastors who were serving the Rochester, New York area heard that many German immigrants were settling farther west and that there was a need for Pastors in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. Lutheran Pastors who went there found this to be a promising region.

As the work of establishing Lutheran congregations flourished there, pastors from three small Lutheran congregations a few miles north of Milwaukee, namely Granville, Town Oak, and Grace, met on December 8, 1849. They decided that their area which was founding many new congregations should not permanently depend upon missionaries being sent from Germany to serve as pastors.

The result of this study was the founding of the Wisconsin Synod in 1850. The same zeal brought the missionaries to Minnesota as the German immigrants pushed farther west in search of new land to homestead.

Sioux Reservation Slows Settling Of Sleepy Eye Area

With the exception of fur traders, missionaries, and Indians, the only people in Brown County in 1855 were about thirty German colonists who came in October 1854 to establish the future New Ulm. A French-Canadian, Hyacinthe Courturier known as "French Cap" is credited with being the first white settler in 1857 in the Sleepy Eye area. He built a log cabin on the east edge of Sleepy Eye Lake near where Indian Chief Ish-tak-ha-ba (Sleepy Eyes) had made his summer camp.

Brown County was established by the

state legislature in 1855. Strangers coming in seemed to dislike living in close proximity to the Sioux Reservation.

At that time the county was then populated mostly by Indians who lived and hunted over a large area. The lower half of the Sioux Reservation by treaty covered a ten mile band south and parallel to the Minnesota River. The present site of Sleepy Eye was in this area. The government was seeking to contain upon the reservations which extended west to Lake Traverse seven to eight thousand Sioux, many of whom were newcomers to the region.

Early settlers usually chose to locate near a stream which would provide an adequate supply of wood. These were the areas where the terrible destruction of life and property usually took place during the uprising. Following the Indian Uprising in 1862, Home township, in which Sleepy Eye is located, was organized in 1866.

Missionaries Serve The Settlers

Historical accounts relate that eight different religious congregations were established in Sleepy Eye from 1868-1876.



Pastor J. J. Hunziker

Pastor Gottlieb Reim, New Ulm, and Pastor J. Hunziker, a missionary, began searching for Lutheran Immigrant families in the Sleepy Eye area in 1872. Rev. Reim was pastor of the St. Paul's Congregation, New Ulm at that time.

made a great impression on the settlers. Visitors were welcome as it was a way of getting news. What would we, you and I, as pastor or settler and family have done in those days?



Pastor J. J. Hunziker

Pastor J. J. Hunziker, descriptively called a "traveling preacher" as translated from German, covered a large area in this part of Minnesota, searching for Lutheran families.

His visitations contributed to the organizing of the St. John's Evangelical Congregation in Sleepy Eye.

Trails which had been used for many years by Indians were tailor made roads for settlers and missionaries alike. First hand historical accounts from early settlers who were homesteaders, or had purchased land from the railroad, state that the settler's first aim in life was to establish a home of their own.

A dugout or a sod house was the cheapest and most practical way to establish a home on the prairie at a time when there was little money. Families settling along a stream or the shores of a lake might build a home from logs or boards obtained from trees. Some settlers earned money when the railroad was being built. Others earned some money in communities to the east where development had started earlier. Some settlers were fortunate in bringing more resources along when they came.

It is worth our while to refresh our thoughts in 1976 on the way the early settlers lived. What we call standard of living was in its simplest form. That someone from so far away should care about their spiritual welfare



Pastor Reim

Settlers began coming in 1855 to establish New Ulm, which was known as "Turner City" (gymnastic city). Churches and clergymen were discouraged from coming in. But new arrivals did come and St. Paul's was established in 1865. In its unsettling experiences the congregation removed the term "Reformed" from its name, and in June 1867 joined the conservative Minnesota Synod.

Rev. Gottlieb Reim, Pastor, Ev. Lutherische St. Paulus Gemeinde, New Ulm was the third resident pastor of that congregation. Although settling in that community had started well over a decade ahead of Sleepy Eye circuit rider Rev. Moldehnke representing the Lutheran General Council preached in 1866 in as yet an unfinished church structure. Even with a growing congregation going through unsettling experiences, Rev. Reim found time to go to distant Sleepy Eye to help sponsor a new congregation.

In 1873 the Minnesota Synod convention organizers consisting of some 30 pastors convinced after the New Ulm congregation had dropped "Reformed" from its name and that the congregation was guided by the "Unaltered Augsburg Confession," held its meeting in St. Paul's church. Interestingly, St. Paul's was to contribute greatly toward the founding of the Dr. Martin Luther College. The

Minnesota Synod was seeking a place to be established to train pastors and teachers.

In 1892 the German Ev. Lutheran Synod of Minnesota affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod and the Michigan Synod to form what is now known as the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod.

Pastor Reim came to St. Paul's from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin in 1870. Even though he was greatly occupied in serving his growing congregation in New Ulm, his missionary zeal brought him frequently to Sleepy Eye to assist in establishing a new congregation in "frontier country."

Historical records of St. Paul's tell us that later Pastor Reim fell from his carriage while on call visiting the sick. This injury caused his death.

Establishing A Home On The Prairie

Local historic accounts by settlers explain that the prairie sod was very tough and when cut into lengths like good sized brick made substantial walls. Sod was also used for the floor although the homemakers found that prairie hay was very useful as a carpet and could be easily changed when worn. Poles could be found and when covered with long grass made a serviceable roof for the sod house. Settlers who located near a woods had logs and lumber nearby from which to build a house.

Sawed lumber could usually be gotten from Leavenworth, flour and some equipment from Iberia, located on the trail south of the Cottonwood River. These were settlements before Sleepy Eye.

Coming Of The Railroad In 1872 Stimulates Development

Finding German Lutheran settlers took time, and almost four years passed before St. John's was organized. This was a pleasing goal of Pastors Reim and Hunziker. The railroad came, and the first train arrived from the east July 12, 1872. There was a big reception. Sleepy Eye was surveyed and platted that year and the first store was built. The post office was opened in 1873. These events led to the gradual demise of Iberia and Golden Gate which had become thriving little settlements.

Sleepy Eye which at one time was called Loreno, received its name from the former Indian chief Ish-tak-ha-ba and was incorporated in 1878.

So the times during St. John's origin are rich in pioneer experiences. The courageous pastors did not know when they left New Ulm what experiences were in store for them as they traveled west. They did not know where they would eat, stay over night, or keep their horses, if they had one.

What was known as Sleepy Eye Lake at first, had ceased being an Indian Reservation area as a result of the Indian Uprising. The east reservation line had been between what is now Sleepy Eye and Essig. In that terrible destruction 21 persons in one relationship lost their lives on August 18, 1862 in Milford township, which is located between Sleepy Eye and New Ulm. The lives of old and new settlers were terribly shaken for years to come.

Pioneers Confronted By New Problems

The grasshopper plague began in 1873 and lasted through 1877. Also settlers soon found that the area was subject to drouth, cyclones, and prairie fires. Flocks of blackbirds ravaged crops. The offer by the legislature to pay \$1.00 per bushel of dead hoppers and 40 cents for 100 dead blackbirds took off a bit of the sting. However, some farmers lost faith and sold out for what they could get and left.

Determination By Pastors Pays Off

Certainly it took great fortitude on the part of missionaries Hunziker and Reim to gather together a flock of worshipers during those stressing times. Their work prospered and services were held in the homes.

By early 1876 enough families had been found to hold a meeting on February 19 in the old Sleepy Eye public school for the purpose of discussing the organizing of a parish.

The discussion favored the organizing of a congregation and on March 11, 1876 the Deutsch Lutherische St. Johannis Gemeinde was organized with 20 families participating. Obviously this was going to be a German speaking congregation.

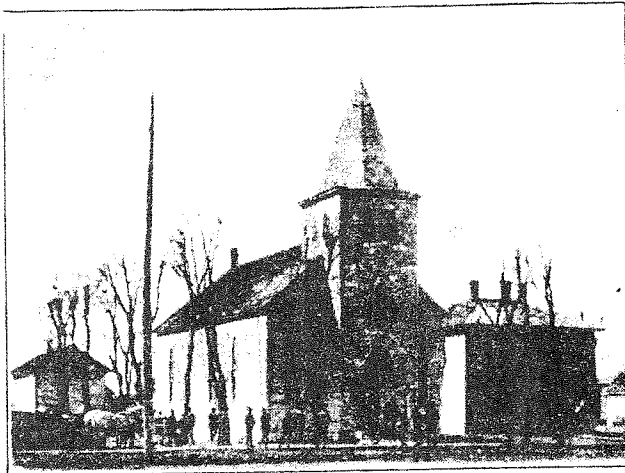
The Rev. Christian Frederick Meyer, coming here from the Pine Island parish, Goodhue County, presided at the organization meeting. He became the first resident pastor. John Remmele was named secretary at that meeting and continued until 1882.

The following trustees were elected:

Daniel Staeger, Friedrich Kissner, Friedrich Radetzke; as first elders: Peter Petereins, Christian Sommerfeld, and Heinrich Romberg. August Utecht was named treasurer.

Our congregation from the beginning was a member of the old Minnesota Synod. In the quarterly meeting of the congregation on April 7, 1880, the matter of a proposed union of the Minnesota Synod and the Wisconsin Synod was discussed. A resolution was passed favoring such a union.

First Church Is Built



First Church and Parsonage

The first church was built by this small congregation the same year it was organized. The house of worship, a frame building 50' x 28', cost 1,766.99. On October 22, 1872 the completed church was dedicated. The pastor's family living quarters were several rooms in the rear of the church.

Compared to present values the cost was small, but this venture called for severe sacrifices on the part of the little flock made up of pioneers whose means were very limited, in many cases even bordering on actual poverty. Crop failures due to severe grasshopper devastations added to their plight. But they were doing the Lord's work, and He granted them grace and strength; also gradually supplying the means which enabled them to overcome many obstacles. They were given a concrete demonstration of the Scriptural truth: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Ps. 127:1.

The pioneers had trust in the Lord that productive years would be coming. The small congregation was strengthened and reinforced by the arrival of new immigrants. By

mid-1881 the congregation had increased to 40 families.

First Parsonage Is Built

Crops became more productive. The congregation was able to purchase pews for the church in 1881 and also built a barn, since a clergyman without a horse buggy was not very mobile. Four years later, in 1885 the congregation built the first parsonage, a large square frame house, pictured with the first church above. Until then you will recall the pastor and his family had been living in several rooms in the rear of the church. It might be added here that a summer kitchen was built on in 1897, and in 1898 a front porch and a privy.

However, the little congregation was not long to enjoy the services of its first pastor, Rev. F. C. Meyer. On August 19, 1877 his successor Rev. C. Oerding took over the pastorate.

Pastor Oerding drew up the first "Gemeind Ordnung" (Congregation Regulations) which he wrote in German script, recorded in the first book with statistical records. These rules affiliated St. John's with the Minnesota Synod and were adopted by the membership on March 12, 1879. They are now known as the Constitution and By-Laws. Pastor Oerding was succeeded by Rev. Simeon Deuber in 1880.



Pastor Deuber



Pastor Oerding

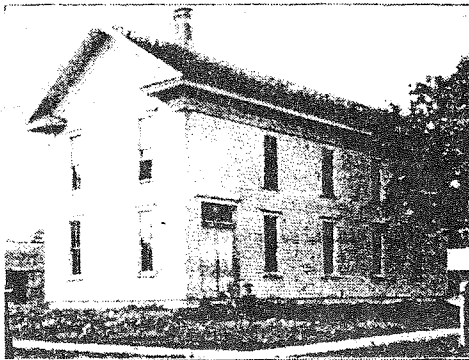


Pastor Meyer

First School And Choir Became Realities

In 1885 after the pastor and his family had moved from their living quarters in the rear of the church, the rooms became available for school purposes.

In 1891 the congregation purchased the school building from the Sleepy Eye School District. It was placed on the church lots adjoining those occupied by the church and parsonage.



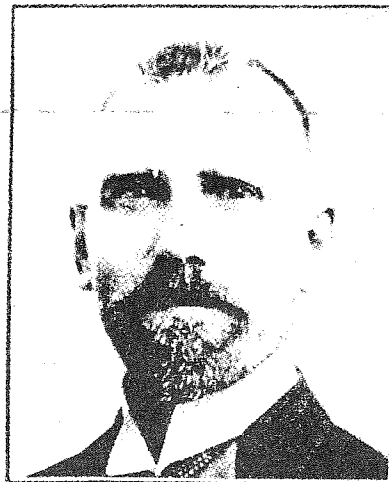
The first school.

On January 7, 1891 the congregation incorporated itself under State Law and adopted its first Constitution.

Earliest mention of a choir in our church is made in the minutes of April 3, 1892. If not before then, at least since that time some sort of choir has existed in our midst.

In the year 1896 Pastor Deuber retired from the ministry after having served St.-John's for 17 years. Loss of hearing had become a problem. With his family he moved to Mankato where he passed away on April 14, 1912, at the age of 77 years.

The fourth pastor to serve our congregation was the Rev. August F. Zich, coming here from Dexter, Mower County in 1896. He found much work as did his predecessors serving a steadily growing congregation. With great skill he also served the school children until 1898 when the congregation called the first school master J. W. Jaeger. He devoted all his time and strength to his calling.



Pastor Zich

Review Of Voter Meeting Action

As agreed upon, the organization of the congregation took place on March 11, 1876 under the name Deutsche Ev. Lutherische St. Johnis Gemeinde (German Ev. Lutheran St. John's Congregation). The following were elected as first trustees: Daniel Staege, Friedrich Kissner, Friedrich Radetzke; as first elders: Peter Petereins, Christian Sommerfeld, and Heinrich Romberg. August Utecht was named treasurer.

Officers elected at the 1895 voters meeting were: as trustees, H. H. Meyer who was replaced by Wm. Guse, elected for three years; John Remmele elected for three years;

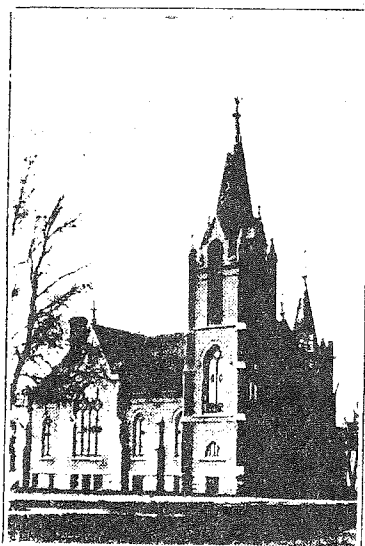
Henry Offermann, President and Franz Bulow, one each year, and Franz Gottsche elected secretary. Freulein Lena Deuber was paid \$25.00 per year serving as organist.

Auditors Fred Harmening, Wm. Guse and Carl Remmele reported collections of \$976.49, and expenses of \$950.00 for the year. The pastor was paid \$9.00 for six lamps. The amount of fire insurance premium is not stated.

In 1896 the minutes report there was a debt to the synod of \$300.00. The pastor was called upon to contact members to resolve the debt. In an item of business, members having horse barns on church property were told to keep the doors locked.

A well was dug in 1897. Increase in church attendance required the building of a balcony in the church. A baptismal font was also purchased.

For about the first twenty years the pastor was in charge of the school. When John Jaeger, the first teacher was called in January 1898, the minutes state "each child would be charged fifty cents per month."



New church, 1902.

Membership Growth Requires Construction Of New Church, The Present Edifice

In 1901 the congregation resolved to build a new church. The first church, which had served the congregation up to now, no longer provided enough room even though a balcony had been built in 1897 to take care of the overflow attendance.

Appointed to the building committee were the following: Fred Horman, Ferdinand Krenz, Fred Harmening, Frank Romberg, Frank Buehlow, J. F. Kelm, Fred Mielke, and William Guse.

The cornerstone of the new church was laid on July 20, 1902. The new church was built on the same site as the structure built in 1876. On December 14, 1902, the congregation celebrated the dedication of the new edifice. It was estimated that the building would cost \$10,000, but the actual cost was double the estimate and the congregation had to go into debt \$6,000.00.

Guest speakers for the dedication were Prof. John Schaller, New Ulm, who later became director of our Seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and Rev. W. Schulze, pastor of Zion, Sanborn, which had organized six years before Sleepy Eye. The first church building was sold and later was destroyed by fire.

"How amiable are Thy Tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." We could well apply these words of Psalm 84 to the church building which our forefathers erected for us in 1902. Even now, after almost 74 years of use, we still have every reason to be proud.

First mention of a Ladies Aid is made in the voters minutes of April 1, 1906. At various times in the minutes a vote of thanks was recorded for appreciation to the ladies of the congregation for work done or paid for by them in improving church property and for missions and charitable purposes.

Rev. Zich, pastor at that time, possessed an art of assembling information on church history. While serving St. John's he was moved in 1909 with the assistance of other pastors to write the preface, if not the whole book, the "GESCHICHTE der MINNESOTA SYNODE Und Ihrer Einzelnen Gemeinden," (Story of Minnesota Synod and Other States, 302 pages). The publication covered the history of the old Minnesota Synod from 1860-1910.

The Synod had a rather strong following and initiated the building of the "Old Main", the start of Dr. Martin Luther College, to train pastors and teachers. The undertaking became too difficult. In 1892 the Synod joined the Wisconsin Synod and the Michigan Synod to form a church body which today is known as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

On January 11, 1911, after 15 years of

faithful service, Pastor Zich was granted a release so he could accept a call to St. Paul's Church at Green Bay, Wisconsin. He later became professor at our Seminary at Thiensville, Wisconsin. He died there on June 24, 1939.



Pastor Albrecht

The congregation then called Pastor William C. Albrecht, White, South Dakota, and on April 11, 1911, he was installed by Prof. A. Ackermann, Courtland. For Pastor Albrecht it was the beginning of over 35 years of fruitful service with St. John's.

The pastor's salary was \$800.00 a year, and in 1913 it was raised to \$1,000.00 a year. The council decided to permit the ladies to fix the basement in 1914, and one year later to put heat in the basement.

Newcomers who could neither speak nor understand German were not able to take part in the voters meeting, and that created a problem. In 1916 a decision was reached that the meetings would be held in English.

Also, in 1916 the parsonage and church were connected with the Municipal Heating System, and in 1917 connection was made with the city water and sewer system. The voters decided that the horse barns would have to be removed from the school lots. Proceeds from a picnic provided funds for the installation of hitching posts for horses.

A decision was reached in 1921 to have ushers for the church services, and O. A. Prescott, Percy Scobie, and F. W. Stolley were appointed.

In 1923 the voters decided at a quarterly meeting to read the names of all the members who had paid their church dues and the names

of those who had not. In the minutes are listed 201 names with amount of their subscriptions. The receipts for the year were \$5,089.30 while the amount paid out was \$4,735.24.

School Well Established

Mr Jaeger served as parochial grade school teacher until 1906 when he was followed by student S. Duin who served only one year. Wm. Hellermann then served from 1907 to 1909 and was followed by J. W. Pelzl who served from 1909 to 1918. This is a good place to mention that the young people put electric lights into the school in 1916.

Paul Hippauf came in 1918 and by the fall of 1919 the increased enrollment in the school made it necessary to employ a second teacher. At that time Emma Offerman, a high school graduate of our congregation was prevailed upon to teach for one year.

Since 1920 the congregation has been able to secure lady graduates from our teacher schools as instructors for the lower grades in our school.

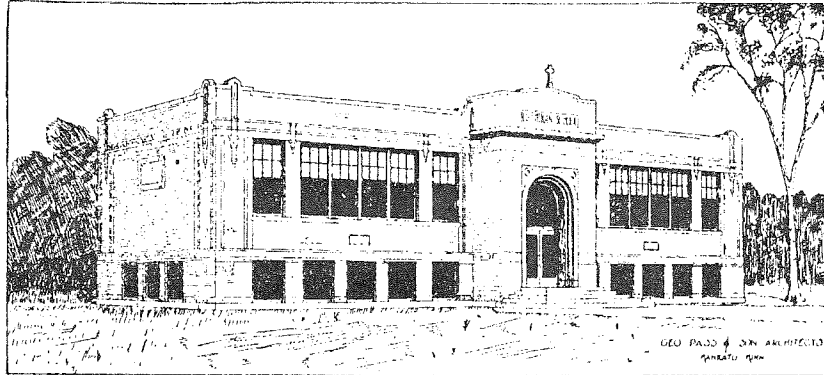
Through work by Pastor Albrecht, the teachers, and the congregation, the school enrollment outgrew the accommodations of the old school building. The question arose as to whether the old school building should be improved and modernized or a new school erected.

New School Built To Accommodate Increasing Enrollment

The matter was finally settled at a meeting of the voters on June 21, 1925. With a large majority in balloting it was resolved to build a new school on the same site as where the old one stood. The old school building was torn down and the salvage was used in the new building.

The following members were elected to serve on the school building committee: A. R. Kelm, Charles Buagatz, Charles Remmele, John Trebesch, C. A. Remmele, Carl Petermann, Fred Grundmeyer, Herman Krueger, William Schmidt, R. Mielke, Hy. Linnemeyer, Gustav Messerschmidt, Henry C. Romberg, and Teacher Alfred Geoglein.

The cornerstone of the new school was laid at a special service on Sunday, September 13, 1925. Rev. J. R. Baumann, Red Wing, and



New School

Prof. Schweppe, New Ulm, delivered sermons on this memorable day. The dedication of this fine new school building, still outstanding today, was held on January 10, 1926. Rev. J. Plocher, St. Paul, and Rev. Wm. F. Sauer, Watertown, South Dakota were the speakers.

In speaking of the completion of the new brick structure, Rev. Albrecht remarked, "It is a building outstanding amongst our parochial institutions and one on which we can pride ourselves." Cash and signed subscriptions secured to an even \$20,000.00 for the building.

At the 50th anniversary the congregation numbered about 750 souls, 550 communicants, and 138 voting members. Eighty eight children were attending school.

During Pastor Albrecht's years of service (1911-1946) a change in the method of gathering funds for the Lord's work was initiated when in the year 1923 envelopes were introduced for Synodical collections. The congregation adopted the envelope system the following year for general use.

Transition To English Services Was Gradual

Mention had been made earlier at voter's meetings of some interest in holding evening English services, but apparently there was not strong enough support for holding regular English services until Pastor Albrecht came. It became an item of business frequently discussed at congregation meetings.

Many of you readers in the 100th Anniversary year, 1976, do not understand why the holding of English services should have posed such a big issue. All the founders of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church were German speaking folks. After fifty years had passed, many members were still accustomed to

speaking German. Worship in English was "superficial", had to be German, in order to be genuine "echt" (unadulterated). Some members declared "they felt they had not been to church when the service was in English."

So voters resolved and rescinded, after trying services in English. Almost as trying for some was the change from the custom of the men occupying the east pews and the women the west.

Minutes of the congregation meetings indicate that in July 1919 it was decided to hold English services once a month, and commencing with the fall of 1927, English services were conducted alternately on Sunday mornings and evenings. Eventually, an English service was held every Sunday morning following the German service.

In 1940 a decision was made to hold Lenten services only in the English language. Starting in 1943, German services were held twice each month. This practice continued until 1946, at which time it was decided to discontinue regular German services and have only four German communion services each year.

In 1946 school board members were added to the church council. A kindergarten teacher was employed in 1947 the last six weeks in the school year.

Pastor Albrecht Leaves:

Pastor Hoenecke Installed

Ill health compelled Rev. Albrecht, in October 1946, after a faithful and sometimes trying ministry of 35 years to tender his resignation. He conducted his farewell service on December 8. Called as his successor was Rev. Gerald Hoenecke of Cudahy, Wisconsin. He was installed as St. John's sixth pastor by Professor Carl Schweppe, New Ulm, on



Pastor Hoenecke

Sunday, December 15.

On October 2, 1947, a revised Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. This period (1946-1952) saw the acquisition and installation of the Wickes pipe organ at a cost of approximately \$9,000.00.

Congregation Anniversaries Observed

Noting anniversary observances is interesting. However, the minutes do not show whether the congregation observed its 25th Anniversary in any special way.

The Golden Jubilee was duly celebrated on June 13, 1926. This also was the year of the building of the school. The festival speakers for the day were: Rev. August Zich, Green Bay Wisconsin, Rev. Immanuel Albrecht, Fairfax, Minnesota, then president of our Minnesota District, and Rev. Henry Boettcher, Gibbon, Minnesota, then vice-president of the District. An Anniversary booklet was printed in both German and English for the occasion.

The congregation likewise observed its 60th Anniversary in 1936 in conjunction with the 10th Anniversary of the school dedication. At this occasion Professor Carl Schweppe, New Ulm, and Rev. R. Schierenbeck, Sanborn, were the guest speakers.

The congregation minutes of October 17, 1937, state that the congregation resolved to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the dedication of the church building.

An unusual anniversary was observed by

the congregation on February 22, 1948 when it honored Frank Romberg, who had served the congregation 50 years as secretary.

The founding of St. John's Congregation reached its 75th year in 1951. This milestone was celebrated with great jubilation on June 3rd with services in the morning and evening, and a parsonage dedication service in the afternoon. For the occasion 300 booklets were printed.

Sons from the congregation preached during the morning Jubilee services. Rev. Rubeen Marti, Burlington, Wisconsin, preached during the 9:00 a.m. service, and Rev. Edward Krueger, Green Bay, Wisconsin, served likewise at the 10:30 a.m. service.



Marti



Krueger

During the 2:30 p.m. parsonage dedication service Prof. Carl Schweppe, President of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, at that time, was the speaker. Guest organist was Theodore Pelzl, St. Paul's Lutheran School. With the building of the new and present parsonage, the old parsonage was moved about a block west to a new location and became a teacherage for the school principal Harold Klatt. In April, 1965, the house was sold for \$5,750.00, as a home west of the school had been provided for the principal.

The 80th Anniversary of the congregation was celebrated on October 14, 1956. Home made booklets were prepared for that occasion.

Improvements

It should not be necessary to state that the colored glass windows in our house of worship are beautiful. They require attention, and we note that on April 16, 1939, the repair cost was \$2,252.00. Eleven years later storm glass was installed on all stained glass windows

In 1941, 400 copies of the new Lutheran

hymnal were ordered. In September the church was redecorated. The following year the minutes state that a new picture was painted in place of the old one which was removed when the church was painted; later the motion was recinded and the old picture was cleaned and retouched. In 1944 the school and parsonage were painted, and the latter insulated.

Improvements were also made in communicating with shutins and others when in July, 1949, St. John's congregation joined other Wisconsin Synod churches in this area in sponsoring religious programs on Sundays over KNUJ Radio, New Ulm.

Seventh Pastor Called

On May 5, 1952, Rev. Gerald Hoenecke was granted his release to accept a call to the faculty at Thiensville, Wisconsin, where he is residing at this writing.

The congregation called their seventh pastor, Rev. Paul Nolting, (1952-1959).

This period reflected both joy and sadness. During that interval the congregation adopted such policies as: (1) members of the confirmation class were to attend instructions five days a week for two years, (2) two Sunday worship services were established, (3) discontinuance of the contributors list, (4)



Pastor Nolting

establishment of Baccalaureate services for high school seniors, and (5) organization of a spiritual growth committee. Because of the lack of seating capacity, the congregation approved in 1953 the holding of two children's programs on Christmas Eve.

The major material expenditures during

this period of time was the tuck pointing of the church brick in 1956 at the cost of \$7,990.00, and the painting of the trim on the outside of the church.

During this period there was sentiment favoring expansion of the church and school, and perhaps providing a local home for the elderly. Inside the church the pulpit and top of the altar were lowered, although the latter was partly restored a few years later. The beautiful chandelier in the center of the church was not greatly disturbed.

In 1959 purchase was made of the vacant lot contiguous to the school. As previously mentioned, the Sommerfeld house, which now serves as the teacherage for the principal was later purchased at cost of \$15,000.00.

The internal strife and misunderstandings of several months came to a climax on November 24, 1959. The foundations of St. John's congregation were shaken when it was decided by a membership vote of 102 to 44 to remain with the Wisconsin Synod and Synodical Conference. About one-third of the membership withdrew from our congregation.

St. John's Well Founded

Professor Martin Albrecht of Dr. Martin Luther College, served as Interim Pastor during these unsettling times, until a permanent pastor was called.



Pastor Hoyer

The eighth pastor, Rev. Waldemar Hoyer, Sault S. Marie, Michigan, (1960-1964) came to the grief stricken congregation. He assured the membership that, "through the Blessed Means of Grace and if they were uncompromising with God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions based on God's Word, peace and joy would abound."

On April 12, 1961, Article III of the Con-

stitution was changed to read, "The President elect of the Congregation shall be Chairman of the Church Council."

During Pastor Hoyer's pastorate at St. John's the property directly west of the parsonage was purchased in 1962 from the Cutting Estate at a cost of \$9,000.00. The acquisition of this property provided more playground area and room for expansion as the old Cutting house was later removed. We should also mention that the 60th Anniversary of our church building was celebrated on December 9th.

Pastor Hoyer was given a leave of absence December 11, 1962, to visit our Synod's Missions in Northern Rhodesia, Africa. He was given a peaceful release from St. John's in 1964, to accept a pastorate call to Grace Lutheran Congregation, Sioux City, Iowa. Subsequently, he accepted a call to Rochester, Minnesota and served on temporary call as civilian Chaplin in Vietnam. He is the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod Chaplin at Rochester at this writing.

Pastor Reede Our Ninth Servant

Rev. Roy Reede, Wausau, Wisconsin, (1965-1970) became the ninth Pastor to serve our Congregation. During his pastorate at St. John's the Parent Teacher Organization was founded. In April, 1966, the congregation voted to accept a \$12,825.00 goal for Misseo Dei, the Wisconsin Synod campaign for funds for new buildings.



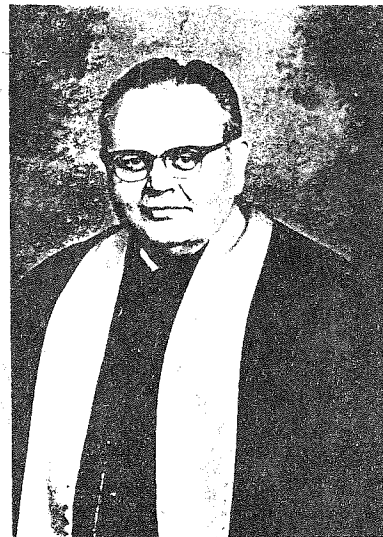
Pastor Reede

Material projects completed during this period include: paneling of the church basement; closing of the impractical north basement entry, and cutting a doorway from the east into the basement and church alike. Installation of the communion rail, re-arrangement of the floor near the altar, and enclosure of the back entry to the church were achieved. The applying of tarvia in the alley and school playground area was completed in 1968.

Pastor Reede was granted his peaceful release to accept the call as WELS Chaplin, Madison, Wisconsin hospitals where he is located at this writing.

Pastor Howard Russow Accepts Call To St. John's

During the six months vacancy period St. John's was served by Pastor Frederick Nitz as vacancy pastor, and by professors from Dr. Martin Luther College, and nearby pastors for which the members were grateful.



H. E. RUSSOW

On June 1, 1971, Rev. Howard Russow, Hadar, Nebraska, answered the divine call to become the tenth pastor to serve St. John's Congregation, and is still serving in that capacity.

Installation was conducted by Pastor Frederick Nitz, New Ulm, on Sunday August 1, 1971. The text chosen was II Timothy Chapter 4, verses 1-5, with the sermon theme being the Gospel Ministry and God's Institution.

In 1973 it should be noted that a large class of 17 was prepared for confirmation. In April a goal of \$6,000.00 was accepted by the voters for the "Grace 125" of our Synod, a thank offering for 125 years of our Synod's existence. School enrollment reached 74. The Pastor reported that 80 percent of the children are enrolled in St. John's school. At a voter's meeting, members became eligible to vote at age 18.

Material accomplishments include aluminum windows installed on the parsonage, and construction of new garages at the parsonage and teacherage. This project was first suggested, as set out in the secretary's minutes, on January 12, 1954. New lights and fixtures were installed in 1972 in the school classrooms, and kitchen improvements were made. In July 1974 a new projector and duplicating machine were purchased for the school.

The church was redecorated in 1975 in preparation for the Centennial Anniversary in 1976. The decorating cost was \$9,250.00.

In The Service Of Our Country

St. John's Congregation had many young men serving in all branches of the armed forces of our country. There will be no special mention made of these who did serve during the four wars (World War I, World War II, Korean, and Viet Nam) which covers the span of over half a century. There are some who have given their life, and some who are still serving actively, at the present time, in some branch, of the military service. To be able to serve both God and country in a land of freedom of religion is a privilege St. John's of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, has had for a hundred years.

Centennial Observance Plans Made

On January 28, 1975, the congregation at their voter's meeting approved the 1976 Centennial Anniversary Committee which the church council nominated. The committee

consisted of: Paul Kunkel, General Chairman, Mrs. Warren Marti, Secretary, Mrs. Elmer Lehnert, Gilbert Maas, Waldemar Harmening, and James Meinert. This committee reported to the voters on April 15 that the Centennial observance was being planned to be held the week of June 6-13, 1976.

The ringing of St. John's church bell with 100 strikes at 8:00 p.m. March 11, 1976, reminded the members of the congregation and the hearers that St. John's Congregation had achieved 100 years of existence.

Three days later, on March 14, at the morning services, Pastor Russow preached a sermon both in English and in German. This was done in commemoration of our founding forefathers.

During the 100 years of St. John's existence our pastors have performed the following ministrations:

Baptisms	2,397
Confirmations	1,853
Communion Guests	104,795
Marriages	611
Burials	808

"Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. 10, 25)

The Following 25 Years

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH - - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sleepy Eye was founded by German settlers in 1876. The founders were mainly farmers who had come to the area in search of prime farm land. The Indians had been removed from the area and homesteading was being done.

14 pastors have served St. John's in its 125 year history. The average length of service has been 8.9 years. The longest pastorate was that of Pastor Albrecht, who served for 35 years. The shortest was that of the founding minister, Pastor Meyer, who served for 1 year. Pastor Grams has served at St. John's since November of 1998.

The first church and parsonage were constructed in 1882. As a result of rapid growth, a new church was built in 1902. The members of St. John's continue to worship in this facility. A Christian Day School was begun in 1885. The first full time Day School teacher was called in 1898; previous to that all classes were taught by the pastor. The present Day School was constructed in 1925. Extensive remodeling was done in 1982 at a cost of \$26,000. The present teacherage was purchased in 1959 for a price of \$15,000. The teacherage was extensively remodeled in the summer of 1983 at a cost of \$12,000. The present parsonage was constructed in 1951. The lot west of the church was purchased in 1962 at a cost of \$9,000.

A major event in the life of St. John's revolved around the CLC controversy within the Wisconsin Synod during the late 1950's. Although the pastor serving at that time declared his intention to leave the WELS for the CLC, on November 24, 1959, the voting assembly of St. John's chose to continue in the WELS by a margin of 102 to 44 votes. As

a result, approximately 300 members left St. John's to form a new congregation.

The first 100 years of St. John's recorded the following statistics: 2397 baptisms, 1853 confirmations, 611 marriages, 808 funerals. St. John's was at its statistical peak in the years just prior to the split of 1959, with up to 160 students enrolled in the Day School. In 1958 average Sunday attendance was 521 — still only about 45% of the total membership which at that time numbered 1118 souls. 1960 saw the following statistics: 85 enrolled in Day School, 403 average Sunday attendance, 768 total membership.

The statistical update for the ensuing twenty-five year period, as reported in the annual church reports for this period of time, indicates the following:

Baptisms = 231 Confirmations = 260
Marriages = 70 Funerals = 173
Baptized membership - (12-31-00) = 479
(High during period came in 1976 with 631 members)

St. John's School enrollment -
(12-31-00) = 66
(High during period came in 1992 with 82)

Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School
enrollment - (12-31-00) = 25
(High during period recorded on
12-31-99 with 29)

Teachers who served St. John's School during the period 1976 to 1986 were:

Terrance Vasold, Susan Brummond,
Rae Ann Goltz, Steven Woldner,
Mrs. Dale Mack, J. Gary Cox,
Mrs. James Engel, Mrs. James Bethke,
Cynthia Schultz, Stuart Steffen,

Jon Ziesemer and Kay Borchert.

Some highlights during the period 1976 - 1986 are:

In 1977 a sum of \$21,218 was expended for school tuck pointing, church shingling, insulation, etc.

In 1982 two of our members were moved to enter the preaching and teaching ministry.

Norman Burger, was in his vicar year, and Beth Marti, her initial year as a student at DMLC.

1983 saw the introduction of computers into St. John's school.

In 1985 St. John's School celebrated its one hundred year's of existence throughout the school term. This year saw the beginning of the association with Treasure Haus retail outlet in New Ulm in co-operation with other members of the Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School Association.

1986 saw three major events take place... 1) The proposed multi-purpose building was not able to be built because of insufficient funds on hand for a down payment. The congregation was able to raise approximately \$75,000 cash of a \$125,000 goal. 2) The Day School centennial was celebrated throughout the school year with the celebration being brought to a close at the Orchid Inn on the first Sunday in June. 3) Mr. Jon Ziesemer, St. John's School principal for the past four years, received and accepted a call to teach at Bloomington Lutheran School. Mr. Tom Plath and wife Lisa were welcomed into our midst.

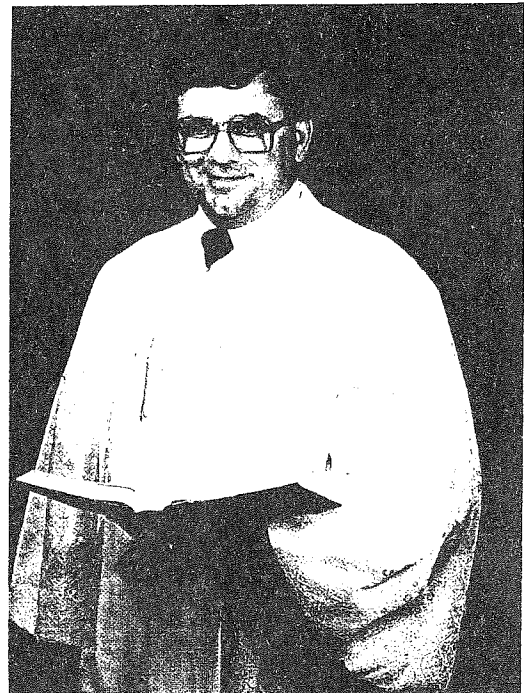
1987 saw three events take place... 1) The church basement was renovated. 2) The church window renewal project was completely financed. 3) The VFW erected a flag pole on church property.

1988 saw Mrs. Laurie Halvorson bid us farewell as a teacher in our Day School; Miss Laurie Forbeck was welcomed into our midst.

1989 saw a number of changes. The parsonage kitchen was remodeled. Mrs. Engel retired from teaching at our

school. Mr. Tom Plath resigned from being a principal and teacher to attend Vanderbilt University. Professor Engel made a transition from being a member of the church militant to being a member of the church triumphant in heaven. The school building came in to compliance with government regulations. The exterior of the church building was repainted. The annual church picnic included an outdoor service for the first time with the plan of making the outdoor service an annual event. We welcomed into our midst two new teachers, Mr. Ron Ohm and Miss Marianne Petermann.

1990 was a year of building. A new fence was erected on the south playground. The office building was completed. Enrollment at the Day School and students attending MVL from St. John's both increased. The faith of many was built up as evidenced by increased church, communion and giving statistics. The self-study of the congregation reached its completion at the Long



Pastor Liggett

Range Planning Retreat.

1991 was a year of plans fulfilled and many others made. The new office building was put into use. A fourth teacher was approved, called and is now serving St. John's in the person of Mrs. Laurie Halvorson. The fourth school room was completely renovated. The pastor's office was moved out of the parsonage and into the new office addition. The Leona Wischstadt Estate gave to Synod, MVL and St. John's over \$250,000 of which St. John's received about 25%. This enabled a complete renovation of the school bathrooms and remodeling of the lower classroom. The concept of Strategic planning was introduced.

1992 was another year of change. We bid farewell to Pastor Liggett and welcomed Pastor Leyrer. The pastor's and secretary's offices were enhanced with new Macintosh computers and printers. A Risograph was added to the office machinery to improve the quality of church publications. St. John's was the recipient of the Raymond Schmidt Estate which designated funds to cover maintenance expenses. An Endowment for Worker's Retirement was begun to help church workers save for their future retirement. The school bathrooms were renovated in time for the opening of school. A new tile floor was put in the parsonage basement.

1993 saw another staff change. We bid farewell to Miss Laurie Forbeck and welcomed Mr. Jeff Powers, who came to us through the DMLC assignment committee as our fourth teacher.

A major undertaking was the liquidation of accumulated mission offerings of approximately \$30,000 we had pledged to Synod over the last few years but had not been remitted. Through a program of contributions and internal loans we were able to meet these past obligations in their entirety. The new WELS hymnals were also ordered and paid for through memorials and dedicated funds from our various organiza-

tions.

Building and property repairs completed in 1993 included new steam pipes for the church, the addition of a storage shed to the teacherage garage, re-siding and shingling of the teacherage and par-



Pastor Leyrer

sonage garages. In addition, preliminary planning began on making our church handicap accessible. A renovation committee was formed to address this issue.

1994 was a year of more staff changes in our school. Miss Marianne Petermann became Mrs. Amos Vogel in December of 1993 and resigned her call at the end of the school year. A call was extended to and accepted by Mrs. Carrie Pfeifer of New Ulm to serve St. John's as a teacher and head organist. In August of 1994 Mr. Jeff Powers resigned his call for personal reasons. The Church Council sought the District President's help in seeking a capable one year emergency teacher to fill the classroom. We are grateful to have received the services of Mrs. Lorna Kapanke for the 94/95 school year. Mrs. Kapanke was also asked and agreed to continue through the 95/96 school year.

After much input from inside and outside the congregation, the Renova-

tion Committee suggested a plan to the Church Council which was recommended to and approved by the Voters to put an addition on the northwest side of church. This would provide a ground level entrance, a three stop elevator, a second flight of steps to the basement and narthex, an expanded narthex and new handicap accessible restrooms. The plan also called for a complete renovation of the interior of our church and putting it on an independent heating system. Estimated costs for this project was quoted at approximately \$225,000.

Donations and commitments began to be gathered from our people in September. By Thanksgiving 1994 the Lord moved the hearts of His people to commit over \$150,000 to see this project through. Encouraged by this response, on December 4 the voters' assembly approved to begin the addition phase of the project (approximately \$175,000) in the spring of 1995 and to continue gathering support with the prayer of also being able to do the renovation phase (approximately \$50,000) after the addition is completed.

In October of 1995 the interior renovation of our church began. Worship during this time was held in the church basement. During the week of Reformation the amount of gifts and commitments needed to fully pay for the entire addition and renovation project was met and exceeded. To God alone the glory! Worship in the newly renovated church began on the third Sunday in December. A special service of Thanksgiving and Dedication was held on January 14, 1996. Minnesota District First Vice President Ronald Uhlhorn was the guest preacher.

The voters decided to finish the project by renovating the church basement as well. Work began in the summer of 1996 and was completed in time for the school year to begin. Improvement included leveling the floor and installing new linoleum flooring, glass blocking and outside windows and sheetrocking the

east wall to bring it into conformity with the new west wall. In addition, central air conditioning was installed with funds designated by the 1995 Hog Roast. In the fall of 1996 the Church Council asked the Evening Circle of the Ladies Aid to assess and furnish the new basement and narthex with funds designated for that purpose.

1996 also saw a St. John's School staff change. In the spring we said farewell to Mrs. Lorna Kapanke, who had served as our middle grade teacher. She and her husband, Jason, moved to Omaha, Nebraska, where Jason was assigned on MLC Call Day. A call was extended and accepted by Mr. Paul Marquardt of Caledonia, WI. The Marquardt family (wife Karen and three children) arrived in mid-summer.

1997 saw more staff changes. In the spring Mr. Marquardt was extended and accepted a call to serve at Calvary Lutheran Academy in South Milwaukee, WI. Shortly thereafter Principal Ronald Ohm was also extended and accepted a call to serve as Vice Principal of MVL. Mr. Ohm had served St. John's for 8 years. We bid farewell to the Marquardts and Ohms in the summer.

The decision was made to approach MLC for a middle grade teacher and call from the field for a principal. The Lord answered both prayers with the assignment of Miss Heather Boese and the acceptance of the principalship by Mr. Kurk Kramer of Fox Lake, WI. Both Miss Boese and the Kramer family (wife Janet and three children) arrived in mid summer. In addition, through an arrangement made with MLC, in August, St. John's member, Dan Hanke, began to serve the church as a Staff Ministry intern.

Other events in 1997 came about as a result of the previous year's Long Range Planning meeting. On the basis of the need identified for Hispanic outreach in our area, Pastor Leyrer spent a month of language and culture study in Mexico

through a grant from Kingdom Workers. In the fall of 1997 St. John's also resumed a Sunday morning Sunday School and Adult Bible Class program.

In 1998 we bid farewell to Pastor Leyrer and welcomed Pastor Grams, who was installed November 15th. The parsonage upstairs bathroom was reno-



Pastor Grams

vated. The church and school installed new computers which are IBM compatible. An electronic piano was purchased this year due to successful fundraising through the PTO. Due to a generous memorial of \$10,000 for Arthur and Evelyn Dumke, we were able to completely pay off the LACE loan (leftover from our office addition).

In 1999 a \$50,000 gift came from the Hoppe memorial and we were able to pay off our operating debt, give to Synod and MVL's fund drives, and begin a fund to tuckpoint the church and complete some other exterior maintenance of the church (as we looked forward to celebrating our 125th anniversary in 2001). We

also began work on a restructuring project for our church council to facilitate better organization for ministry and widen congregational participation. Mrs. Carrie Pfeifer accepted a call to MVL and the voters called Mrs. Brenda Grams as Pre-Kindergarten teacher and full-time Kindergarten aid (an equivalent of a half-time position).

By the year 2000 our church was successfully tuckpointed by Krause Construction of Stoddard, Wisconsin. Soon after the new year began and everyone realized the Lord was going to allow the earth to continue by his grace, our teacher Heather Boese received a call to teach in New Berlin, Wisconsin. It was with great sadness that we had to honor her choice to leave us. Subsequently, the Lord led us to call Mrs. Melinda Scharlemann to be our middle grade teacher and she graciously accepted. A partial settlement from the Gertrude Berndt estate was received in spring. The estate blessed our school and building maintenance causes. We also decided in spring to hire Decker Stained Glass Studios of Winona to take on a refurbishing project of our stained glass windows which included: replacing rotten wood, repainting the frames, fixing some minor repairs on the stained glass, and installing a new storm window system. Once the work got started we realized that they were not doing quality work and ended up hiring Church Art Glass of Clinton, Kentucky instead. This company of craftsman did the job right for us and they got the job done by Thanksgiving. Our fundraising efforts also were blessed by God. The Ladies Aid rummage sale went well. In addition to all this the kitchen in the church basement was remodeled by a grant from the Carol Reiner estate. New wall board was installed, the floor was leveled and received a new linoleum surface. New strips were added to the countertop replacing the old, chipped ones. God blessed us greatly in 2000. The work on

the new by-laws was completed and was presented each Sunday in the first semester of our Adult Bible Class. The voters also approved a fiscal year change in April that will begin in July of 2001, meaning that our financial (business) year will run from July—June from thereon in. Indeed the Lord has been with us and allowed much to be accomplished through the preaching of the Word and reception of the sacrament. Tim Schultz served our congregation as a Staff Ministry Intern from January to May. Finally, the PTO began a project to renovate our existing school playground and it is almost done as of this printing.

Early in 2001 the Lord blessed Nathan and Melinda Scharlemann with a baby in the womb. This resulted in Mindy's resignation as our middle grade teacher. After two unsuccessful attempts to call a teacher from the field, St. John's was blessed with a teacher candidate assigned from MLC. Her name is Amber Scharrer and she will begin her work preparing for the 2001-2002 school year soon. In January Leann Gullickson began serving our congregation as a Staff Ministry Intern. She was with us until the middle of May. Beginning in March, Pastor Grams gave a series of weekly children's sermons ex-

plaining the symbols contained in our stained glass windows. This work has culminated here at our 125th anniversary celebration and has resulted in a "commemorative coloring book" that will be given away free of charge. Our anniversary committee has worked hard to prepare two wonderful worship services, a history book, souvenir ribbons, and a stained-glass suncatcher. The Evening Circle of the Ladies Aid also prepared a revised and updated cookbook. The Church Council has a special request that gifts for St. John's Anniversary would be sent to our Wisconsin Synod's "Forward In Christ" thank offering which is currently in progress. For no matter how often the Lord sends us new called workers, now matter how much money is spent on remodeling, no matter how many changes take place down through the years - one thing still remains the same. "God's Word is our great Heritage!" May we pass it on to succeeding generations.

Once again, we stand in thankfulness to God for His amazing grace which He has richly showered upon St. John's Lutheran from its beginning to the present.