

To Defend and Maintain:
A Brief History of the Family of God at Our Savior Lutheran Church
Freeport, Illinois

By Michael T. Carr

Submitted to Prof. John Brenner
Professor of Church History
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
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This paper is dedicated to the members past and present of Our Savior Lutheran for all of their support... and especially to Lois Wellman. Without her detailed scrapbook, this paper would not have possible.

Thank You!

Michael

Prologue 1964: *Breaking Away, Standing Firm*

In 1964, Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Freeport, Illinois was a church of several hundred members which had been in existence since 1877. It stood at 617 S. Chicago Avenue, just outside of downtown Freeport. In 1964, Reverend Frederick E. Bartling¹ had been pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran since 1950. He had been ordained February 7, 1937 by the Rev. E.T. Lams, president of the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He had served LCMS congregations in Chicago, Northlake, and Wood Dale prior to his arrival in Freeport.

The storm of controversy in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at this time had swept into Emmanuel Lutheran as well. After years of expressing patient and loving concern for the Missouri Synod, Pastor Bartling had come to a conclusion: the situation in Missouri was untenable. The time for action was now. In his letter of resignation to the Missouri Synod, Pastor Bartling wrote:

From this it should be abundantly clear to everyone that false teachings have been and are being tolerated within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and that Synod has not taken the necessary steps to bring about the needed correction. My concerns and efforts to maintain the pure, clear doctrine of God's Holy Word have largely been ignored. I have reached the point whence I despair of effecting any correction of the situation prevailing in Synod... Therefore, in the fear of God and in grateful love for His Word of Truth, and in obedience to the divine rule and precepts the Word of God sets forth; for example, in 1 Cor. 1:10; Matt. 7:15; Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10, do hereby declare with profound sorrow and regret that I must sever my fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and in protest of such developments as I herewith have cited terminate my membership as of August 31, 1964 in said Synod. ²

Pastor Bartling's departure from Emmanuel and the LC-MS prompted eleven other families at Emmanuel Lutheran to follow clear biblical doctrine and resign their membership.³⁴ Leaving Emmanuel was not easy. Many of these people had grown up in that church and could trace membership back to the very founding of the church. They left behind close friends, acquaintances and the beautiful old church building that had been their home for many years. But false doctrine could not be stomached. Now they found themselves floating in a vast and lonely sea, unattached and adrift from their previous religious affiliation. But they had

¹ cf. photo in Appendix C

² Bartling, Rev. F.E. *Letter of Resignation from LC-MS*. August 31, 1964. (See Appendix A for copy of original document in full).

³ cf. copy of resignation letter from the Wilbur Nicol family, August 20, 1965 in Appendix A. Though it came a year later, the content is indicative of the reasons for the original twelve families to leave Emmanuel Lutheran and the LC-MS.

⁴ cf. list of original twelve families in Appendix A.

God's Word as their lifeboat. And clinging to this lifeboat they decided to organize into a church of their own. These are the beginnings of what would become Our Savior Lutheran Church of Freeport, Illinois.

1964-1969: *New Beginnings*

On September 1, 1964, an organizational meeting was held. 33 people, representing twelve families and 41 souls met to discuss the establishment of a new conservative Lutheran church. Those attending, "expressed an enthusiastic desire to establish a new conservative congregation whose creed is to defend and maintain God's Word, in all of its truth and purity, from the attacks of 'modern day theology.'"⁵

It was decided that the first service of this new congregation would be on September 27, 1964, at 8 A.M. in the basement of the Clinton Miller home at 1636 Ridge Drive in Freeport. Congregational officers were elected. Walter Kuehl would serve as chairman, Thomas Monigold as secretary/treasurer, and Gary Carr as chairman of public relations. Pastor Bartling, who had already accepted a call to a congregation in Elizabeth, Illinois, was called to serve as a temporary part-time pastor until a permanent pastor could be called.⁶ A second organizational meeting was called for September 19, 1964 at 8 P.M at the Freeport YMCA.

A constitution was drawn up some time during this second meeting. The following are some notable excerpts from that original constitution. They show a rabid adherence to pure biblical teaching:

Art I—The name of this congregation shall be Our Savior Lutheran Church, located at Freeport, Stephenson County, Illinois.

Art. II—The Confessions

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments as the holy, inspired, inerrant, and eternal Word of God; and acknowledges and accepts all the Confessional Writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580, to be the true and genuine exposition of Christian Doctrine, drawn from, and in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures; hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation that is in any way at variance with the following symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, namely:

1. The Apostle's Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. The Athanasian Creed
4. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
5. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
6. The Smalcald Articles

⁵ Minutes of organizational meeting, September 1, 1964.

⁶ No evidence of a permanent call could be found. Pastor Bartling would serve in this "temporary" position until 1974.

7. The Small and Large Catechisms of Martin Luther of 1529

8. The Formula of Concord

And “A Brief Statement” of 1932 as a true and correct exposition of the doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures.

We set forth that according to this norm of doctrine and faith all controversies, discussions, and questions of doctrine which may arise in this congregation shall be decided.⁷

On September 27, 1964 the twelve families gathered for worship in the basement of the Miller home.⁸

The following was printed on the top of the first bulletin:

In the name of the Lord, we welcome you to the first worship service of Our Savior Lutheran Church, a truly conservative congregation.

Our creed is to defend and maintain the Holy Bible as the complete, infallible Word of God, and to teach and preach it in all of its truth and purity. (2 Tim. 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”)

We hope that you enjoy our services and we invite you to join us regularly to share the joy of the Lord’s work at His command. Should you not already be a member, we invite you to contact one of our officers, or Pastor Bartling, or fill out the section on the back of this bulletin and give it to one of the ushers.

That first bulletin also announced that the services on October 4 were to be held at the YMCA. Instead, they too were held in the basement of the Miller home on Ridge. The services from October 11, 1964—April 11, 1965 were held in the Read Park pavilion on American St. in Freeport.⁹

The first newsletter was issued on October 18, 1964. It reported the attendance for the first three Sundays as being 43, 42, and 44 respectively. The Sunday School attendance was 14, 23, and 25 respectively. The financial report showed receipts of \$1,119.72 and expenditures of \$93, leaving a balance of \$1,026.72 in the bank. It was also noted that Northwestern Publishing House of Milwaukee, Wisconsin had provided copies of the devotional book *Meditations* on a trial basis.

The first service with Holy Communion was held at the Read Park pavilion on October 25, 1964. The communion ware for this first communion service was provided on loan from Northwestern Publishing House. On December 6, 1964 Clint and Elaine Miller and their son donated permanent communion ware.

⁷ Original Constitution of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Freeport, IL. Cf. Appendix A for a copy of the complete document.

⁸ cf. photos in Appendix B

⁹ cf. photos in Appendix B

The first confirmation at Our Savior Lutheran took place on May 9, 1965 when Pastor Bartling confirmed Allene Wilma Julius—daughter of John and Katie Julius. One week later, on May 16, 1965, Wendy Jill Schult—daughter of Roger and Jan Schult—became the first baby to be baptized at Our Savior Lutheran.

The members of Our Savior Lutheran knew that worshipping at Read Park pavilion would not be a permanent situation. During the winter of 1964-1965, a search was made for a more suitable location. Two frame buildings on a 118' x 262' lot at 631 W. Cleveland St. in Freeport were purchased.¹⁰ The congregation decided to renovate the larger of the two buildings to use as a church building and rent out the smaller of the two. There was also a 20' x 24' garage that was unused by the congregation. The plan was to use the larger building for worship until a larger church could be built at that site.

On April 18, 1965, the first services were held at the Cleveland St. location. The members continued to worship there while, at the same time, renovating the building. Renovations were finally completed in August 1965. The main room on the first floor served as the sanctuary. The oak floors were stripped and refinished. St. Mary's Catholic Church of Freeport donated oak pews. The pulpit, lectern, altar, baptismal font and hymn board were handcrafted from oak by Our Savior member Walter Schult.¹¹ A reproduction of DaVinci's *Last Supper* hung in front of the altar. The walls were painted mint green. The chancel area was carpeted with antique-gold carpeting. The windows of the sanctuary were painstakingly covered with colored tissue paper to simulate stained glass. The other rooms in the home were converted into classrooms, meeting rooms and a full kitchen. The cost of remodeling was \$4,271.96.

The new church was dedicated on August 29, 1965. The guest preacher was Rev. Mark Bartling, son of Pastor F.E. Bartling. Other pastors in attendance included Harold Romoser, Carl Rusch, Reimar Frick, Paul Brugdorf and A.T. Kretzmann. The Lydia Circle¹² (Ladies Aid) provided a reception on the front lawn of the church after the service.

¹⁰ cf. photos in Appendix B

¹¹ The baptismal font is the only piece known to be still in existence. It is in the possession of Rev. Gary F. Schult (Walter's son), who is at this time the pastor of Faith Lutheran Church (WELS) in West Newton, PA.

¹² The Lydia Circle was formed at a meeting on April 22, 1965 at the Miller home. The officers elected were as follows: President—Bette Carr, Vice-President—Laura Anselme, Secretary—Elaine Miller and Treasurer—Phyllis Monigold.

From its formation in 1964 until 1966, Our Savior Lutheran Church functioned as an independent Lutheran church. They sought out like-minded Christians who believed and taught the pure Word of God with whom they could be in fellowship. This search for like-minded Christians ^{led} to Our Savior Lutheran joining the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1966. The following news item appeared in the *Freeport Journal-Standard* on March 1, 1966:

Our Savior Lutheran Church has applied for membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and has received a letter from Rev. Carl H. Mischke, president of Western Wisconsin District of the synod, saying, “we are happy to welcome you into our fellowship.” The letter continues: “Your formal reception into membership will take place at the time of our district convention this summer. This meeting will be held at Watertown, Wis., June 13-15. We invite you to send a delegate to this meeting.”

The initial years of Our Savior Lutheran Church saw many blessings. The members of Our Savior bonded together into a very close-knit unit. There was always work to be done, and the members provided countless hours of volunteer work to see the early projects through to completion. As many early bulletins pointed out, “many hands make light work.” Their dedication to God’s Word and their dedication to each other only continued to grow during this exciting time of change.

But this first decade also placed a toll on Pastor Bartling’s health. In February 1968, he would suffer the first of many medical setbacks. The enormous responsibility of guiding two churches (Freeport and Elizabeth, IL) out of the Missouri Synod and helping these founding congregations establish themselves firmly on God’s Word resulted in his hospitalization in 1968 for bleeding ulcers. He would recover from this ailment and continue to serve at both Freeport and Elizabeth, a commute of 45 minutes each way in good weather.¹³

The 1960s would conclude with Our Savior Lutheran celebrating its fifth anniversary. Dr. Siegbert Becker, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin—himself a refugee from the doctrinal controversies in Missouri—conducted the service in September 1969. The first five years saw many changes for this tiny church in Freeport, but there were also countless blessings. A foundation of true orthodox

¹³ As a humorous side-note: In February 1968, Daniel Deutschlander (then a Seminary student, now professor at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN) experienced for himself the stress of this Sunday morning commute. Arriving just in time from Freeport for services in Elizabeth, Prof. Deutschlander strolled into the Lutheran church in Elizabeth only to find out that he was in the Missouri Synod church. He rushed, fully robed in a long black cassock down the street to the Wisconsin Synod church a bit late and a bit out of breath!

teaching had been laid. The next ten years would see more challenges and even more blessings as the congregation built on that firm foundation of God's Word.

1970-1979: Building upon the Foundation

In 1969, as a new decade loomed, the members of Our Savior Lutheran realized the need for a larger building for worship. So a planning committee was established to develop a building program. It was not going to be very feasible to construct a new building on their current Cleveland St. location. The planning committee looked at two different locations—one just to the west of Freeport and one just to the south. Both areas were projected to be booming areas for residential development.

The committee decided for the southerly location. In 1970, Our Savior Lutheran purchased a 13-acre site one mile south of Freeport on State Highway 26 on Skyline Drive. On March 13, 1971, the planning committee presented its plans for the new church building to the congregation. The design (though not on the scale) would be based upon St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Stevensville, MI. The design was approved and on April 4, 1971 (Palm Sunday), a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the new church.¹⁴

In August 1971 work on the initial plumbing was completed and the basement walls were waterproofed.¹⁵ The corner lot adjacent to the Skyline Drive property¹⁶ was also purchased at this time. By the end of September of that year, the wooden support arches had been erected. As October arrived, the carpentry and cement work began and the first exterior bricks were laid. With the basement structurally completed (though aesthetically unfinished), worship services moved from the Cleveland St. building to the basement of the new church building on December 19, 1971.¹⁷ The congregation would continue to meet there until the sanctuary was completed in 1975.

By December 1971, the chronic health problems which continued to plague Pastor Bartling led to his resignation from Faith Lutheran in Elizabeth, Illinois. However, he continued his service in Freeport until

¹⁴ cf. photo in Appendix B

¹⁵ cf. photo in Appendix B

¹⁶ The future site of the parsonage

¹⁷ cf. photos in Appendix B

November 1974. On November 3, 1974 he preached his last official sermon as pastor of Our Savior. He had wanted desperately to see the new building project through to the end, but was physically unable. An era had come to an end.

But Pastor Bartling was able to conduct the dedication service for the cornerstone of the new building on February 27, 1972. The following items were placed into the cornerstone by Pastor Bartling and members of Our Savior Lutheran:

1. A Bible—Walter Schult
2. A Hymnal—Richard Anselme
3. A Sunday School Hymnal—Walter Kuehl
4. Sunday School Material—Sandra Wellman
5. A Catechism—Pastor Bartling
6. A Baptismal Napkin—Bette Carr
7. A History of our Congregation—Gary Carr
8. The Membership List of our Congregation—Clinton Miller
9. The Constitution of Congregation—Jan Nicol
10. The Building Plans of our New Church—Wilbur Nicol
11. Copy of the Journal-Standard containing the groundbreaking and first service articles—Roy Johnson
12. Statistics and Financial Report for 1971—Roger Schult
13. Constitution of our Lydia Circle—Elaine Miller
14. Constitution of Our Savior Teens—Kirk Wellman
15. A Silver Dollar—William Strutz

In December 1972, the first baptisms in the new building were performed by Pastor Bartling.¹⁸

In early 1975, Pastor William Russow—a 1967 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary—accepted the call to serve as the second pastor of Our Savior Lutheran. He was installed in February of that year. Pastor Russow was the oldest son of a WELS pastor from Minnesota. He attended Northwestern Prep and Northwestern College. His first call was to a triple parish in the West River Country of North Dakota. Before coming to Freeport, he served St. Paul's in Valley City, North Dakota. He married his wife, Betty Lou in June 1964. By the time he moved to Freeport, they had 4 children.¹⁹

By late May 1975, the finish work had been done on the permanent sanctuary. The length of time needed to complete the project was due to the fact that the vast majority of finishing work was done by members. On June 1, 1975, a special dedication service was held for the new sanctuary. Pastor Bartling

¹⁸ Melinda Jennifer Myers—daughter of Roger and Wanda Myers, and Jennifer Leanne Carr—daughter of Gary and Bette Carr

preached in the morning service. In the afternoon, Rev. Donald Bitter²⁰ conducted the dedication service. The teen choir sang a song and Walt Kuehl performed a solo. The Lydia Circle served a luncheon after the service.

During Rev. Russow's pastorate, the Lord blessed Our Savior Lutheran with steady growth in numbers. By the time Pastor Russow accepted a call to serve another congregation in May 1979, Our Savior Lutheran had grown from twelve families and 41 souls to 51 families and 132 souls.²¹ The Rev. Kenneth Kratz, who was serving Mt. Olive Lutheran in Monroe, Wisconsin, at the time, served as vacancy pastor until a new pastor could be assigned. He wouldn't have to serve long. Pastor Steven Radunzel was assigned straight from the Seminary in 1979 to be the next pastor of Our Savior Lutheran. His would be the first pastorate during the tumultuous decade of the 1980s.

1980-1991: Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back

The first fifteen years of Our Savior Lutheran Church had been an historic time. The motto "to defend and maintain pure Scriptural doctrine" had served them well through their split with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, through a remodeling and a building project. But at the beginning of the 1980s, the church was well established in a permanent location. Now it was time to increase their efforts to reach out to the community with the gospel which they had fought so earnestly to defend. This transition would not be an easy one.

Pastor Steven Radunzel had been assigned fresh from the Seminary in 1979. He was installed on July 15, 1979. The Rev. Carl Mischke presided at the service. During the first four years of his ministry, Pastor Radunzel's faithful service and loving pastoral heart were evident to all. Having "gotten his feet wet"—so to speak—it was time to try something new, to continue expanding the church. The next logical step to take was to establish a Lutheran Elementary School at Our Savior. The initial foray toward such an end was the calling of teacher Kris Pagel in 1983 to serve as a pre-school teacher. She began her service on October 10, 1983.

¹⁹Pastor Russow's children and ages at the time of his installation: Karra Lee (9), Craig Robert (7), Krista May (5), Erika Renae (3 months)

²⁰ At that time, 1st Vice President of the WELS

²¹ cf. Appendix D

The next step was taken the following year when the pre-school was expanded to include grades K-4. The congregation called Stacey Lehner, a 1984 graduate of Doctor Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota and native of West St. Paul, Minnesota, to serve as the LES teacher. Our Savior Lutheran Elementary School opened August 22, 1984. There were nine students enrolled that year.

From the very start, there was hesitation ^{on} of the part of the congregation to support such a school. Finances were tight and the prospect of running an elementary school in such a small church caused many to doubt the pragmatism of such an endeavor. For the first time there was real and vocal dissidence between the members of Our Savior. Those in favor cited the need for a sound education in God's Word and the opportunity for outreach in the community. Those opposed cited the financial difficulties, general lack of interest on a congregational level, lack of present facilities, inability to provide new facilities and the quality of education provided at the school.

In the midst of this ongoing struggle, Pastor Radunzel resigned as pastor of Our Savior Lutheran for personal reasons on August 25, 1985. Filling the vacancy were two local pastors—the Rev. Dale Tollefson of Mt. Olive, Monroe, Wisconsin, and Rev. Kenneth Arndt of Faith, Elizabeth, Illinois. The vacancy would last almost seven months before Rev. John C. Baumann was installed as pastor on March 23, 1986.

Pastor Baumann was a 1982 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He had been assigned from the Seminary to serve a mission congregation in Poway, CA. At the time of his arrival in Freeport, Pastor Baumann had a wife, Carolyn, and two daughters, LeAndra and Melissa. Pastor Baumann's enthusiasm was contagious. He could often be heard literally whistling while he worked in the church office or strolling through the church.

But despite a cheery disposition on the part of Pastor Baumann, Our Savior Lutheran still continued to flounder around the subject of the elementary school. The school had grown both in 1985 and 1986.²² But the numbers were still small and congregational support was seriously lacking. A downward turn in 1987 saw enrollment drop to an alltime low of seven students. It was decided not to continue the school another year. Our Savior Lutheran Elementary School shut its doors before the start of the 1988 school year.

²² Enrollment was 12 and 15 respectively those two years.

Bitter resentment and tender nerves were the scars that the school left on the members of Our Savior Lutheran. The congregation had decided to boldly take two steps forward by undertaking the elementary school project. But in the aftermath, it appeared that they had only taken two steps backward. Pastor Baumann would spend the rest of his pastorate in Freeport trying to heal the wounds and bring the congregation back into a unity that they had once enjoyed. But as in all families, deep wounds heal slowly.

The 1980s ended on a positive note at Our Savior with the initiation of a project to fit the church's 18 windows with stained glass. Corrie Art Glass of Monticello, Illinois, was commissioned to provide the church with these windows.²³ A fixed cost of \$610 per window was established. When memorial money designated for the stained glass window project became available, a new window would be commissioned, produced and installed.

All 18 windows were completed in 1996. The eight windows in the sanctuary itself depict the Lord's Supper, creation, the Flood, Judgment Day, baptism, Christ's birth, crucifixion and resurrection. The three windows in the lower foyer²⁴ were the first to be completed. They depict the Trinity. The three windows in the upper foyer were the last to be completed. They depict Law and Gospel combined with the Alpha and Omega. The two windows in the pastor's study display the Good Shepherd and the Word. The window at the bottom of the balcony steps shows Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane while the window at the top of the basement stairs shows Jesus with the little children.

1991-2001: Growth and Devastation

On June 17, 1991, Pastor Baumann left Our Savior after accepting a call to serve a congregation in Deluth, MN.²⁵ Things in the congregation had settled a bit since the closing of the school. The future looked

²³ Chris Corrie and his wife Lynn were the sole proprietors of Corrie Art Glass. Chris was a 1977 graduate of Freeport High School. Fellow 1977 graduate Kevin Carr—a former member at Our Savior—lived in Monticello at the time and connected the church with the artists.

²⁴ cf. photo in Appendix B

²⁵ Before he left, however, he made a point to stop by the home of Gary and Bette Carr to talk to their son, who was a sophomore at Freeport High School at the time. He told the young man that he had the gifts to be a pastor. He said that his pastor never told him that and that he wished that he had. He encouraged the young man to attend Northwestern Prep in Watertown, WI. And although that young man wanted nothing to do with being a pastor at the time, Pastor Baumann planted a seed in his head that would lead him to

bright. Rev. Michael Wolff, pastor at Mt. Olive, Monroe, served as vacancy pastor for one month before the Rev. Paul J. Lidtke was installed as pastor at Our Savior on July 7, 1991. Pastor Lidtke, a Michigan native, had graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1990 and served a one-year call as a tutor at his alma mater—Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, MI—before being assigned to serve Our Savior Lutheran.

From newsletters of the time, both Pastors Baumann and Lidtke noticed a “maintainance ministry” attitude prevailing in the congregation. Once again, the motto of “to defend and maintain,” which had served Our Savior so well in the early days of doctrinal strife, had limited the scope of the congregation in regards to outreach. Both men had cited Revelation 2:4 and 4:15-16 as warnings to the congregation against losing their love and becoming luke-warm.

Lidtke took an abrupt and refreshing approach to the inter-congregational problems. He confronted them head-on. When a member would take issue with his ministry, he would visit them in their homes again and again. He welcomed honest criticism from the members and defended himself when he felt it was not valid. With stubborn resolve, he began to heal rifts and close divides. Slowly but surely, Our Savior Lutheran was once again growing and taking joy in sharing the gospel with others as they enjoyed the company of each other. The pastor was learning from the congregation and the congregation from its pastor.

In July 1992, 10.2-acres of farmland, part of the original 13-acre property purchased in 1970, was sold to the Stephenson Country Fairgrounds²⁶ for use as a parking lot. 1992 was also an eventful year for Pastor Lidtke. On November 28, 1992, he married Stacey Nicol, a lifetime member of Our Savior.

Throughout its history, Our Savior Lutheran never had a parsonage. The pastors would find their own housing in and around the Freeport area. The notion of the congregation was to allow the pastor to build up his equity through home ownership. In 1994, however, it was decided to use the corner lot purchased in 1971 ⁴⁵would-be the location of a new parsonage. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on October 9, 1994 and by the summer of 1995 Pastor Lidtke and his wife took up residence in the modest ranch house. The basement would be finished off as a living area by the late 1990s.

Northwestern College in 1994 in order to begin his studies for the pastoral ministry. I am, of course, that young man and will forever be gratefully to Pastor Baumann for stopping by that night in 1991.

²⁶ The Fairgrounds property borders the property of Our Savior Lutheran.

On June 14, 1998, Pastor Lidtke left Our Savior Lutheran Church after accepting a call to serve as pastor at Lord and Savior Lutheran Church in Waunakee, WI. Rev. Kenneth Arndt once again served as vacancy pastor for almost five months until Rev. Robert P. Hankwitz was installed as the pastor at Our Savior. Pastor Hankwitz was a 1988 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He had served as a teacher at Illinois Lutheran High School in Crete, IL and as recruiter for Great Plains Lutheran High School in Watertown, SD. Pastor Hankwitz, his wife, Christina, and two daughters, Allison and Analise moved into the parsonage.

The first year or so of Pastor Hankwitz's pastorate were relatively calm. But by the year 2000 a rift was developing between many of the members and Pastor Hankwitz. Though numerous attempts were made to heal these divisions with the help of the circuit pastor, Pastor Arndt, and the district president, Pastor Prah, the situation only became worse and worse until finally action was taken at the voters' meeting on May 20, 2001.

The following is an excerpt from the minutes of that meeting:

At 11:45 a motion to adjourn was set aside to hear discussion on another motion that was made and seconded: to withdraw our call to Pastor Hankwitz. Comments were voiced concerning our authority/power for such action, whether scriptural grounds exist, and should we wait three weeks for President Prah to mediate.

A motion was approved to extend our meeting time for further discussion of this matter. Further comments centered on Pastor's shepherding and the loss of confidence expressed by several members.

The original motion (to rescind Pastor's call) was withdrawn. Pastor Hankwitz was asked to comment and he recommended we wait for Pres. Prah's visit on June 9th. A motion to table further action until June 9th was defeated.

Comments were made suggesting we may lose more members if we wait too long. A motion was made and seconded that we ask Pastor to resign. Before the motion was voted on, Pastor tendered his resignation, effective immediately (12:59 p.m.)

A motion was then made and approved to accept Pastor's resignation. Another motion was approved to continue his current salary and house (except for mileage allowance) until August 1.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

The fallout from this meeting was immediate. Several members left Our Savior in support of Pastor Hankwitz.²⁷ For those members remaining, the next year would be difficult. Finances plummeted and it was not known if the congregation would be able to continue to exist. A spirit of unity ^{prevailed} pervaded, however, since the dissenting voices had left the congregation thereby not fostering continued resentment. Pastor Luther Wendland of Hope Lutheran Church in Belvidere, IL, served as vacancy pastor during these trying months.

Epilogue 2001-2003: *A New Beginning*

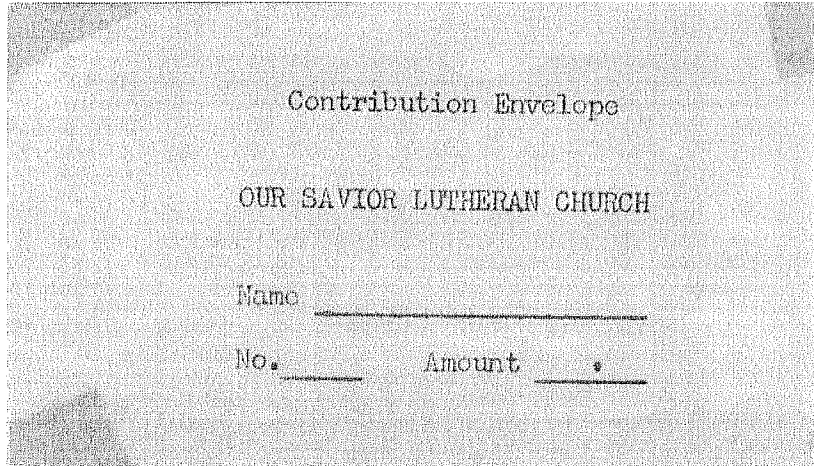
In May of 2002, Pastor Paul J. Learman, a 2000 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, was assigned by the Seminary to serve the members of Our Savior. He had served as assistant to the district president of Michigan for two years. After waiting patiently for a year, the members of Our Savior were overjoyed to once again have a pastor. They were eager to leave the past behind and move ahead in the work of God's Kingdom.

Pastor Learman brought a mission mindset to the congregation—fostered over his tenure in Midland, MI. His enthusiasm and youth have served him well to this point. The congregation is once again growing, and outreach efforts have once again begun in earnest. The congregation has realized that they must reach out with God's Word or wither away and die. The love of Pastor Learman for the congregation is obvious and vice-versa.

It is a new era, a new beginning for our Savior Lutheran. After almost 40 years, Our Savior Lutheran Church of Freeport still defends and maintains God's Word in all of its truth and purity. Though many of the original members have joined the church triumphant in heaven, the original beliefs of this church remain. This is a true blessing of our gracious God. And with their trust and confidence in God alone, and listening to the voice of their Savior in his Word, they look into the future with fresh confidence. May God continue to bless this congregation as it carries out his work.

²⁷ cf. Appedix D, 2001, under item "released"

Appendix A: Source Documents



Original 1964 Offering Envelope

The Original Twelve Families

Rev. F.E. and Vera Bartling
Richard and Laura Anselme
Gary and Bette Carr
Roy and Marie Johnson
John and Katie Julius
Clint and Elaine Miller
Tom and Phyllis Monigold
Martin and Mary Siedschlag
Roger and Jan Schult
Walter and Inez Schult
Olga Schulz
Stanley and Lois Wellman

F. E. BARTLING, PASTOR
617 SOUTH CHICAGO AVENUE
FREEPORT, ILLINOIS
PHONE: AD 2-9824



SUNDAY SERVICES
WORSHIP SERVICE AT 10:15 A. M.
SUNDAY SCHOOL AND
BIBLE CLASSES 9:15 A. M.

IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

MISSOURI SYNOD

SOUTH CHICAGO AVENUE AND EAST PLEASANT STREET

"We Preach Christ Crucified" 1 Cor. 1:23

In the latter part of August, 1925 in the study of my pastor, the Rev. Henry Roehrs, I decided to enter Concordia Seminary at Springfield and prepare for the office of the Holy Ministry. From a human standpoint if at that time I had been told that this day with its tremendous and far-reaching decision, and also with its regrets and sorrows, would occur, I might have told pastor Roehrs; I will have no part of it. However, God led me to accept the advise of my pastor, and the encouragements of my sainted grandmother to prepare for the office of the Holy Ministry. Since then I have prayed for and labored in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, in which I was born, reared and educated, and in which I have many friends, above all, in which I have learned to know, to love, and to believe in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During the years of my ministry in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod the good Lord has granted me grace to know His Word in its full purity, to love and cherish it, to staunchly proclaim it, to defend it, and apply it without fear or favor of men. At the time of my 25th anniversary of service in the church, a high official in the Synod wrote: "You have made an important contribution to the life and work of the Church, for which the Lord has given you the necessary gifts, grace and vision." This came from a man with whom I did not agree in doctrinal matters. A friend pleaded: "Make every year count in your service as a pastor loyal to the Word and upholding the truth." One of my professors at Springfield wrote: "May the Lord grant you another 25 years of courageous testimony for the faith of the fathers, in which we, too, would like to remain steadfast unto the end."

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has for more than 100 years held that all the Books of the Bible are the inerrant and infallible Word of God in all their parts and words. Article II of Synod's Constitution reads:

- "Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation:
1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
 2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God....."

While it is, therefore, true that Synod still professes and adheres to the Confessions upon which it was founded in 1847, it is also true that Synod has tolerated false teachings within its midst during the last 20 years, and has not taken the necessary steps to bring about a correction. I call to your attention the following:

1. The Chicago Statement Issue in 1945 of the 44th was never properly settled;
2. In the years 1947 - 1962 the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod did not, within the organization of Synod or in convention assembled, take definite positions and actions on major doctrinal issues and their application as requested in many memorials;
3. In 1962 Synod did not give a clear and simple answer to 15 manifest errors that have been publicly taught within Synod as requested by more than 250 pastors and members of congregations belonging to Synod;
4. In 1962 a memorial requesting that Synod direct the officials to discuss the doctrinal issues ~~involved~~ involved with the Executive Staff of the Confessional Lutheran Publicity Bureau was not properly presented to the delegates of the convention;
5. At the 1964 convention of the Northern Illinois District a motion duly made and seconded, to request the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to include in its report that it is definitely false doctrine to teach that Moses is not the author of the first five books of the Bible and that Isaiah is not the author of the entire book that bears his name, was indefinitely tabled;
6. At the same convention a request to investigate the teachings of evolution at Valparaiso was denied;
7. At the same convention a request that a committee be appointed to review past and future issues of "Lutheran News" and "The Confessional Lutheran" and instruct this committee to bring to the attention of the pastors and congregations of the Northern Illinois District any error, misstatement or false teaching which it finds was denied;
8. Last year the Board of Elders of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Freeport informed our officials of Synod and District of some of the false teachings going on in Synod;
9. In 1958 a poll of students at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis showed that of 148 students 33 declared false the statement that "the immortality of the soul" is a sound Biblical doctrine, and 5 had no conviction in the matter;
10. The Texas District Board of Appeals reported: "We believe there is a situation in Synod similar to that which prevailed to and even during the Reformation period, when the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated men such as Luther for being too catholic, while it retained in its fellowship the skeptics and scoffers, since they did not attack nor defy authority."

From this it should be abundantly clear to everyone that false teachings have been and are being tolerated within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and that Synod has not taken the necessary steps to bring about the needed correction. My concerns and efforts to maintain the pure, clear doctrine

of God's Holy Word have largely been ignored. I have reached the point where I despair of effecting any correction of the situation prevailing in Synod. The Preface to the Christian Book of Concord states: "We will also take pains, if either controversies already composed should be renewed, or new controversies concerning religion should arise, to remove and settle them betimes, for the purpose of avoiding offenses, without long and dangerous digressions."

Therefore, in the fear of God and in grateful love for His Word of Truth, and in obedience to the divine rule and precepts the Word of God sets forth; for example, in I Cor. 1:10; Matt. 7:15; Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10, do hereby declare with profound sorrow and regret that I must sever my fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and in protest of such developements as I herewith have cited terminate my membership as of August 31, 1964 in said Synod.

"It is a grave matter that one should separate one's self from so many lands and peoples and profess a separate doctrine; but here stands God's command that everyone should beware and not agree with those who maintain false doctrine, or who think of supporting it by means of cruelty."

It is my sincere hope and prayer that the members of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and its officials in Synod and its Districts, will heed in this action of mine a clear call to repentance and return to the sound doctrinal and Scriptural position upon which the Synod was founded and under which it grew great and strong. I will continue to recognize and practice fellowship with such congregations, pastors, teachers, and other individuals as are in a truly protesting state, as well as with sister-synods heretofore in fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod which have declared their objection to and rejection of the errors now existing in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and with pastors and congregations who have left the Synod for similar reasons.

Truly and Sincerely
In our Savior and His divine truth,

(Rev.) F. E. Bartling

The Wilbur Nicol Family

Shannon, Illinois

August 20, 1965

Dear Friends:

Regretfully we herewith announce that we are withdrawing our membership from Immanuel congregation. We feel conscience bound to this decision because of the doctrinal liberalism in high places in the Missouri Synod and the attitude of the current leadership of Immanuel to those false teachings and practices. Having been an active member of the congregation for eight years as elder, as secretary, and as a Sunday School teacher, I feel that it is fitting and proper to make this first hand report of our action to all concerned.

Our decision to leave Immanuel has been neither lightly considered nor hastily made but rather in full appreciation of the implications involved. The consequences of this move in the social field alone are heartbreaking, particularly where it concerns our children who have recently attended Immanuel's schools. Also it is very distressing to forfeit the use of Immanuel's obvious potential for work in the Lord's kingdom -- her school, her church, her congregation. Most distressing of all, however, is leaving so many dear friends and children I have taught to the leadership of those who, far from warning and protesting against the false teachers in their midst as is their God given duty, are actually harassing and persecuting those who do.

Our leaving Immanuel should not be construed as a judgement against any individual for we are sure that there are in Immanuel many, many sound Lutheran Christians. On the other hand it is obvious that there are a few influential people in the congregation who are wittingly and deliberately steering Immanuel toward the toleration of doctrinal positions which they themselves would have considered false a few years ago and which are today just as surely "contrary to the doctrine which we have learned." There are a few others in Immanuel, blind leaders of the blind, who, lacking either the ability or the inclination to study the issues, lend their talents to the leftward drift of the congregation.

The greatest tragedy however lies in the sad fact that the great majority of the members of Immanuel, and of Synod for that matter, couldn't care less about matters of doctrine. These path-of-least-resistance Christians are the natural prey of those who would lead the church from the sound Biblical positions established and cherished by our fathers. In their apathy they ignore the clear warnings and directions of God's Word as found in Matt. 7:15; Acts 17:11; Rom. 16:17,18; 1 John 4:1; Gal. 5:9; Gal. 6:7; etc. Down through the pages of history the Lord has withdrawn his blessings from those who despised His word. Be not deceived; God is not mocked.

It is probably inevitable that some will misunderstand or be offended by our action. Let's be reminded that the Christian thing to do in such an event is to reason together. If anyone can show us from God's Word that our conclusions or actions are wrong, you owe us the favor of so doing. Our decision has been carefully, prayerfully made. We do what we must do as God has given us the light to see our duty.

Sincerely yours,

Wilbur C. Nicol

Seminary Male Chorus

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

MEQUON, WISCONSIN

Spring 1980

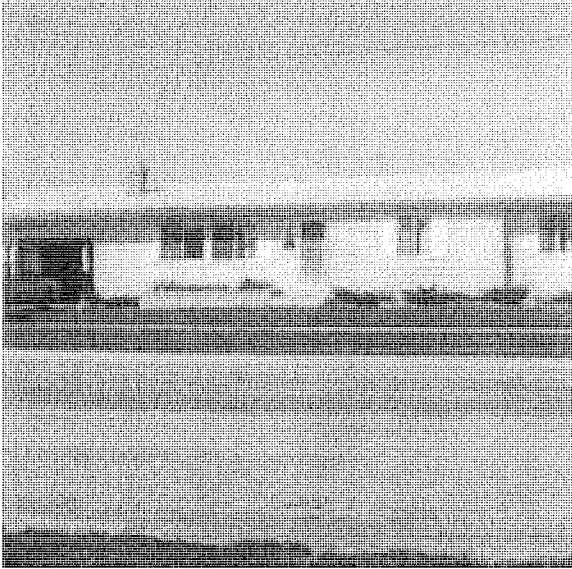


The male choir of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary appearing in your area is composed of men who are to enter the ministry, some in a few weeks, others within the next few years. We ask you to check the time and the place of our nearest appearance; we hope that you will find it possible to worship with us in our sacred song service.

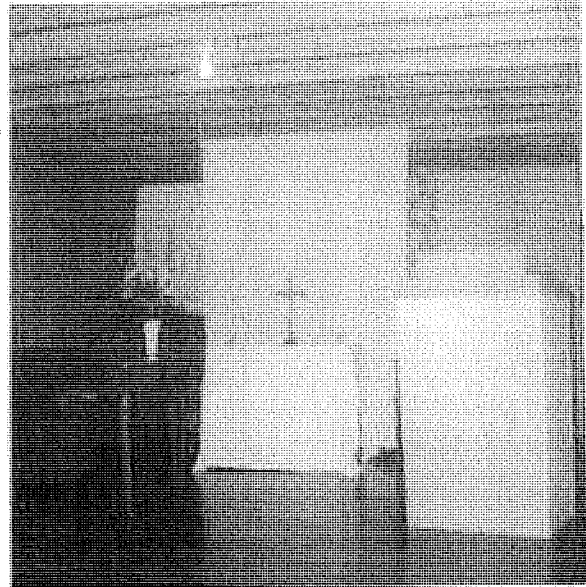
April 2	Wednesday	7:30 p.m.	Our Savior	Freeport, IL
April 3	Thursday	7:30 p.m.	Gethsemane	Omaha, NE
April 4	Friday	*7:30 p.m. MST	Christ Our Redeemer	Denver, CO
April 5	Saturday	10:00 a.m. MST	Christ Our Redeemer	Denver, CO
April 5	Saturday	8:00 p.m. CST	St. Paul	North Platte, NE
April 6	Sunday	Sunrise Service	St. Paul	North Platte, NE
April 6	Sunday	2:00 p.m.	Zion	Valentine, NE
April 6	Sunday	7:30 p.m.	Trinity	Winner, SD
April 7	Monday	7:30 p.m. MST	St. Paul	Rapid City, SD
April 8	Tuesday	7:30 p.m. MST	Peace	Isabell, SD
April 9	Wednesday	7:30 p.m. CST	Trinity	Aberdeen, SD
April 10	Thursday	7:30 p.m.	Our Savior	Brookings, SD
April 11	Friday	7:30 p.m.	Christ	Marshall, MN
April 12	Saturday	7:30 p.m.	St. Paul	New Ulm, MN
April 13	Sunday	*10:30 a.m.	Trinity	Belle Plaine, MN
April 13	Sunday	3:00 p.m.	Bloomington Luth.	Bloomington, MN
April 13	Sunday	7:30 p.m.	St. Paul	Prescott, WI
April 14	Monday	8:00 p.m.	St. John, Ridgeville	Tomah, WI
April 26	Saturday	7:00 p.m.	St. John	Two Rivers, WI
April 27	Sunday	2:30 p.m.	St. Peter	Sturgeon Bay, WI
April 27	Sunday	7:30 p.m.	Immanuel	Kewaunee, WI

*Indicates participation in the service

Appendix B: Church Photos



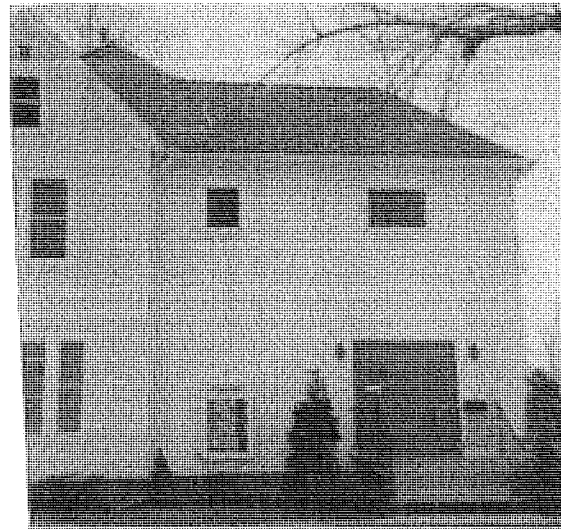
*Clinton Miller home at 1636 Ridge Drive
Worship site for first two Sundays of OSLC*



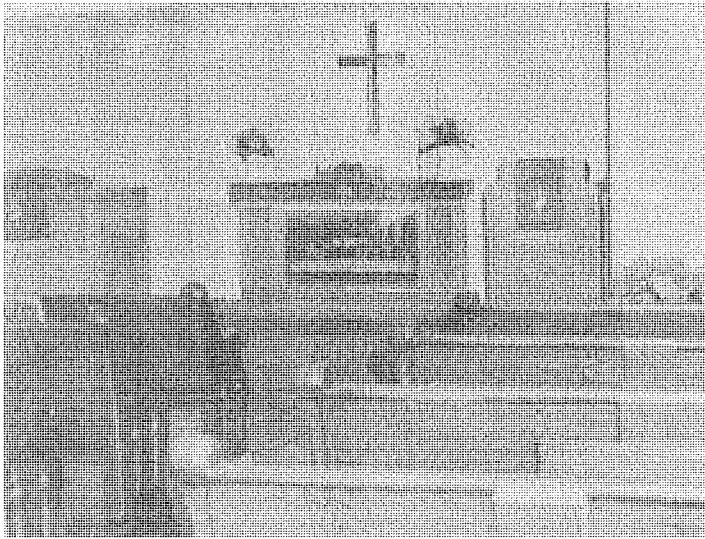
*Chancel in basement of Miller home
September 27, 1964*



*Read Park Pavilion
Worship site from 10/11/64—4/11/65*



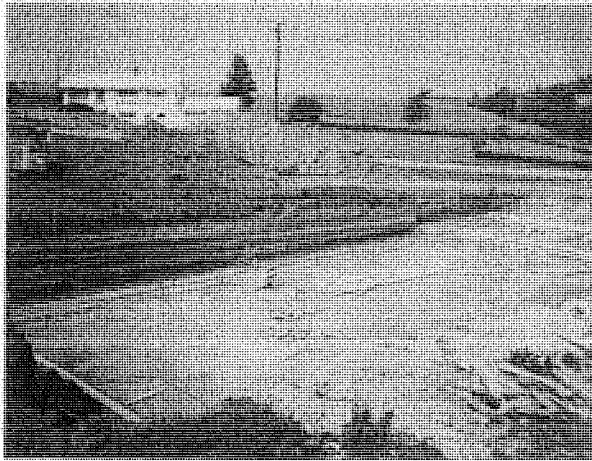
*Building at 631 W. Cleveland, Freeport
Worship site from 4/18/65—12/19/71*



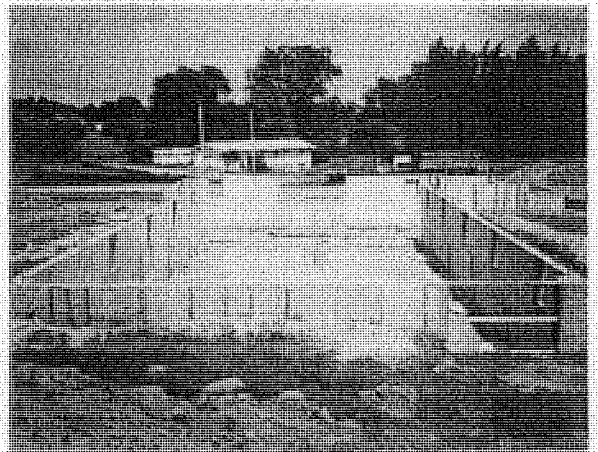
Cleveland Street Sanctuary



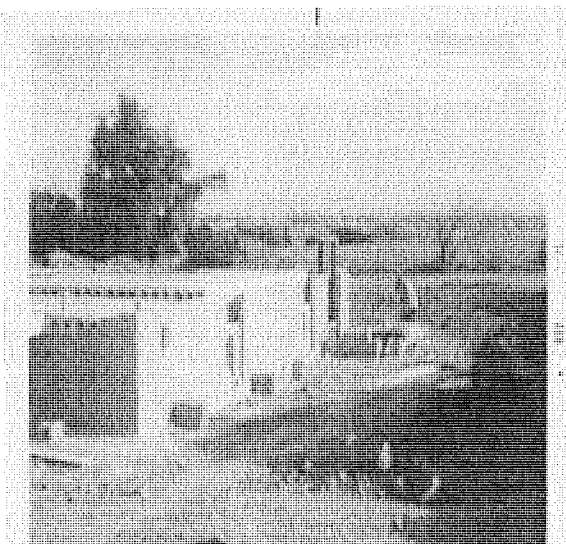
*Groundbreaking ceremony on Palm Sunday—April 4, 1971
Pastor Bartling on left, Walter Schult (chairman) on right*



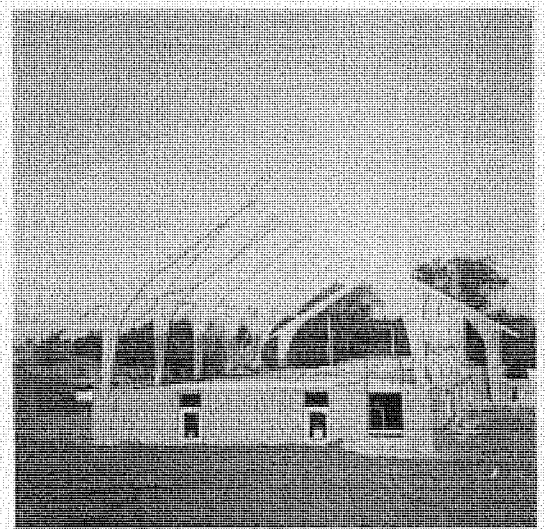
Digging out the foundation at 991 Skyline Drive, Freeport



The foundation is laid



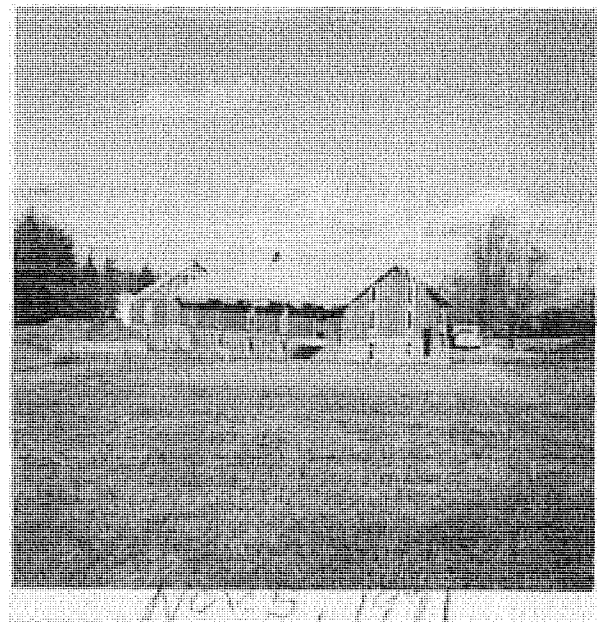
Laying the Sanctuary floor



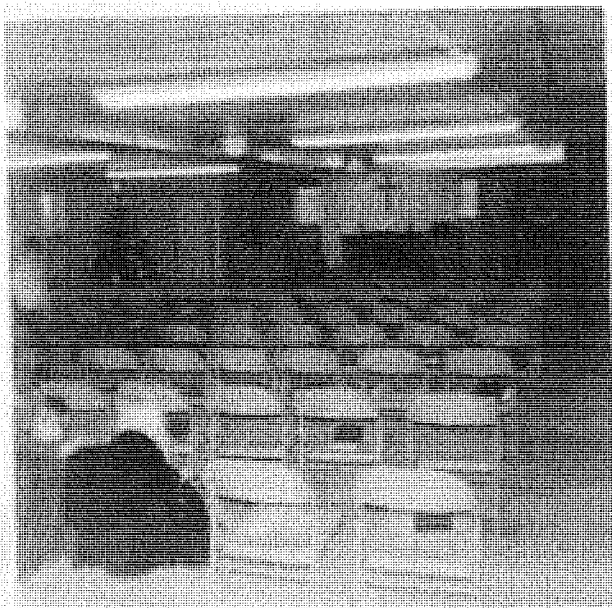
Putting up the sanctuary support beams



Adding the walls



Roof almost completed

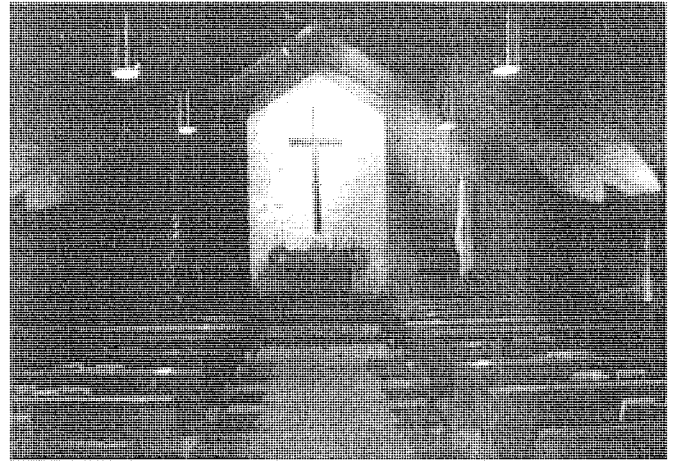


*First worship service at 991 Skyline Drive
Held in basement on December 19, 1971*

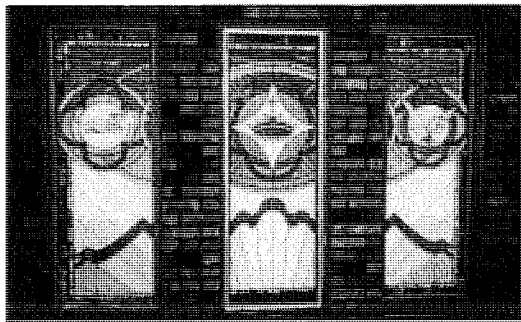




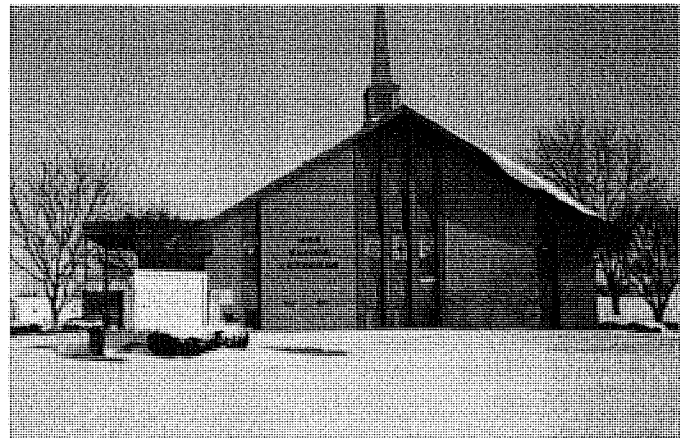
Steeple installed by OSLC members in summer 1973



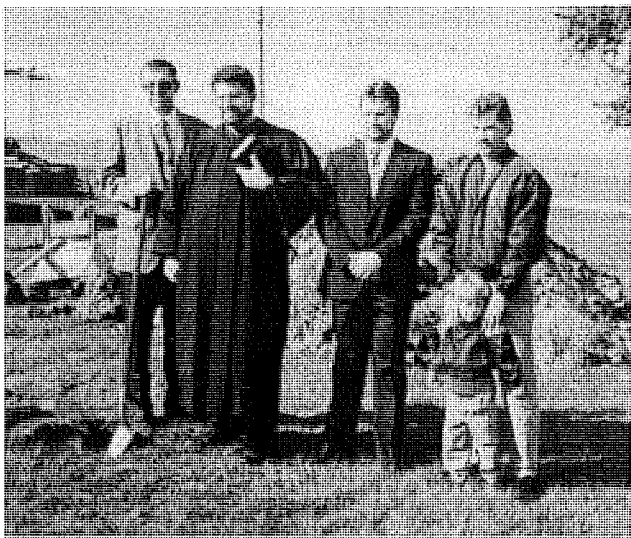
The finished sanctuary



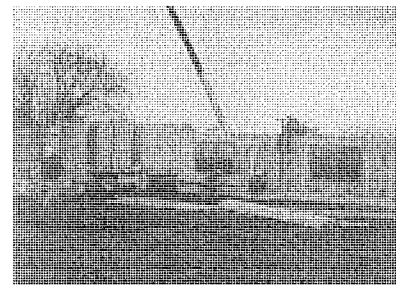
First stained glass installed (1989)



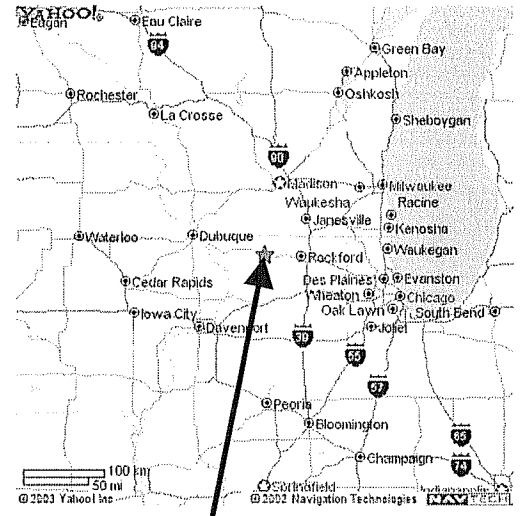
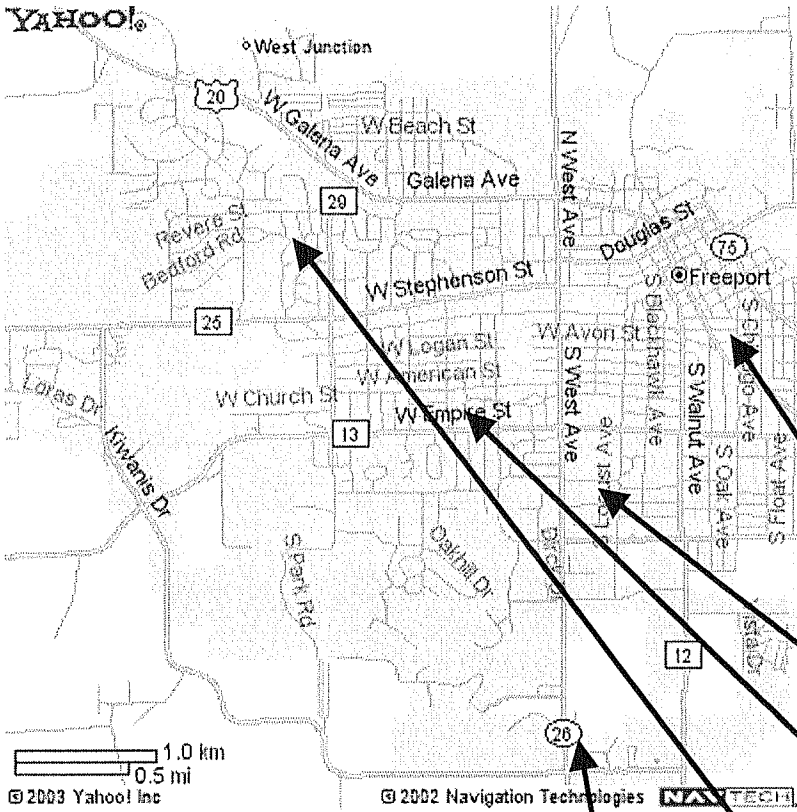
The finished church on Skyline Drive as it is today



*Groundbreaking for the parsonage (October 9, 1994)
From left to right: Jan Nicol, Pastor Lidtke, Dave Monigold, Dean Ertmer and son*



Parsonage under construction



Freeport, Illinois

*Immanuel Lutheran Church (LC-MS)
617 S. Chicago Ave.*

631 W. Cleveland St.

Read Park Pavilion, American St.

1636 Ridge Dr.

991 Skyline Dr.

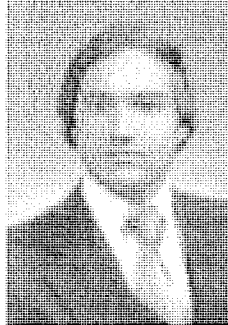
Appendix B.1

Maps of Church Locations

Appendix C: *Photos of Our Savior Lutheran's Pastors and Teacher*



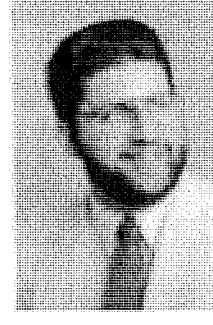
*Rev. William H. Russow
1974-1979*



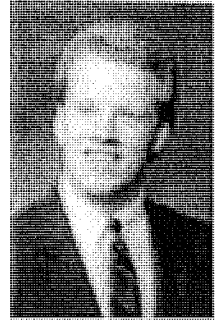
*Rev. Steven J. Radunzel
1979-1985*



*Rev. John C. Baumann
1986-1991*



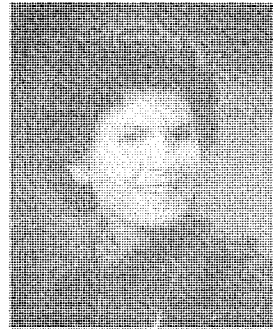
*Rev. Paul J. Lidtke
1991-1998*



*Rev. Robert P. Hankwitz
1998-2001*



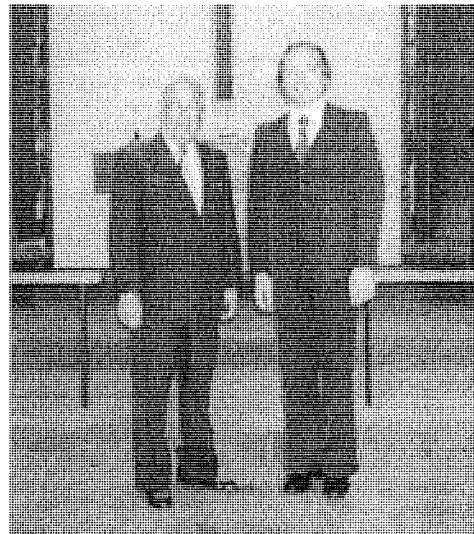
*Rev. Paul J. Learman
20002-present*



*Miss Stacey Lehner
1984-1988*



*Rev. F.E. Bartling (with wife Vera)
1964-1974*



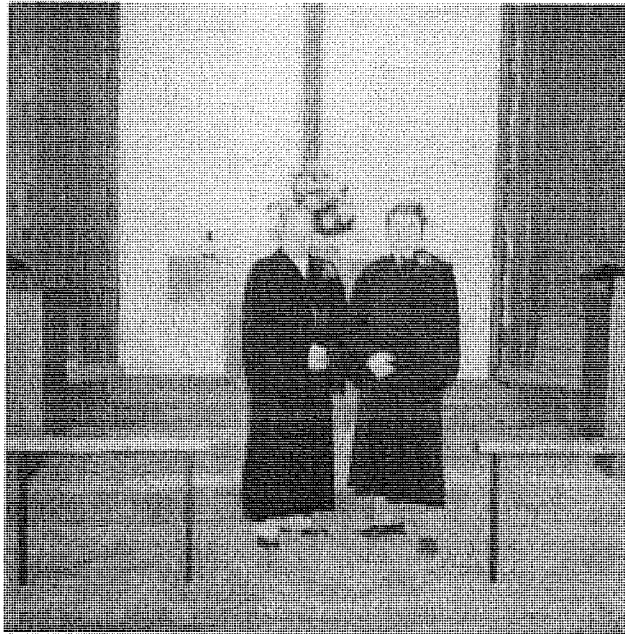
*Pastor Bartling and Pastor Radunzel
at 15th Anniversary Service*



*Pastor and Mrs. Baumann with daughters
Melissa (left) and LeAndra (right)*



*Pastor and Mrs. Russow speak with
Pastor Baumann at congregation's
25th Anniversary*



*Pastor Bartling and Pastor Russow
At Pastor Russow's installation in 1974*

Appendix D: Church statistics 1968-2003

1960s

<p>1968</p> <p>Communicants: 59 Souls: 85 Families: 27 Received into membership: 6 Released: 5 Baptisms: 2 Confirmations: 2 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 1</p>	<p>1969</p> <p>Communicants: 65 Souls: 92 Families: 29 Received into membership: 9 Released: 3 Baptisms: 5 Confirmations: 3 Marriages: 1 Funerals: 0</p>
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1970s

<p>1970</p> <p>Comm: 65 Souls: 103 Families: 32 Received: 4 Released: 4 Baptisms: 3 Confirmations: 2 Marriages: 2 Funerals: 0</p>	<p>1971</p> <p>Comm: 69 Souls: 107 Families: 33 Received: 7 Released: 3 Baptisms: 4 Confirmations: 5 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 1</p>	<p>1972</p> <p>Comm: 75 Souls: 117 Families: 30 Received: 12 Released: 6 Baptisms: 2 Confirmed: 3 Marriages: 2 Funerals: 0</p>	<p>1973</p> <p>Comm: 88 Souls: 127 Families: 41 Received: 18 Released: 5 Baptisms: 2 Confirmed: 5 Marriages: 3 Funerals: 0</p>	<p>1974</p> <p>Comm: 86 Souls: 129 Families: 41 Received: 6 Released: 5 Baptism: 5 Confirmed: 2 Marriages: 2 Funerals: 1</p>
<p>1975</p> <p><i>Information unavailable</i></p>	<p>1976</p> <p>Comm: 91 Souls: 128 Families: 43 Received: 10 Released: 8 Baptisms: 5 Confirmed: 2 Marriages: 1 Funerals: 0</p>	<p>1977</p> <p>Comm: 99 Souls: 131 Families: 50 Received: 15 Released: 6 Baptisms: 2 Confirmed: 7 (4 adults) Marriages: 2 Funerals: 2</p>	<p>1978</p> <p>Comm: 100 Souls: 139 Families: 49 Received: 9 Released: 6 Baptisms: 10 (adult 1) Confirmed: 1 Marriages: 2 Funerals: 1</p>	<p>1979</p> <p>Comm: 102 Souls: 132 Families: 51 Received: 10 Released: 6 Baptisms: 3 (a:1) Confirmed: 4 (a:2) Marriages: 2 Funerals: 2</p>

1980s

<p>1980</p> <p>Comm: 110 Souls: 140 Received: 11 Released: 0 Baptisms: 9 Confirmed: 4 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 1</p>	<p>1981</p> <p>Comm: 123 Souls: 164 Received: 20 Released: 0 Baptisms: 8 (1) Confirmed: 2 adults Marriages: 1 Funerals: 1</p>	<p>1982</p> <p>Comm: 119 Souls: 165 Received: 4 Released: 0 Baptisms: 5 Confirmed: 1 adult Marriages: 0 Funerals: 2</p>	<p>1983</p> <p>Comm: 122 Souls: 170 Received: 3 Released: 0 Baptisms: 7 (1) Confirmed: 5 (2) Marriages: 2 Funerals: 1</p>	<p>1984</p> <p>Comm: 128 Souls: 180 Received: 7 Released: 0 Baptisms: 5 Confirmed: 9 (5) Marriages: 1 Funerals: 1</p>
<p>1985</p> <p>Comm: 110 Souls: 149 Received: 0 Released: 0 Baptisms: 1 Confirmed: 0 Marriages: 0 Burials: 0</p>	<p>1986</p> <p>Comm: 118 Souls: 159 Received: 13 Released: 4 Baptisms: 1 Confirmed: 2 Marriages: 2 Burials: 2</p>	<p>1987</p> <p>Comm: 106 Souls: 136 Received: 1 Released: 13 Baptisms: 4 Confirmed: 1 adult Marriages: 3 Burials: 0</p>	<p>1988</p> <p>Comm: 98 Souls: 127 Received: 0 Released: 8 Baptisms: 3 Confirmed: 0 Marriages: 1 Burials: 2</p>	<p>1989</p> <p>Comm: 93 Souls: 122 Received: 2 Released: 7 Baptisms: 3 Confirmed: 2 (1) Marriages: 1 Burials: 1</p>

1990s

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Comm: 93 Souls: 124 Received: 3 Released: 2 Baptisms: 7 Confirmed: 1 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 2	Comm: 90 Souls: 124 Received: 3 Released: 4 Baptisms: 3 Confirmed: 0 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 0	Comm: 91 Souls: 125 Received: 5 Released: 5 Baptisms: 10 Confirmed: 2 (1) Marriages: 3 Funerals: 2	Comm: 98 Souls: 132 Received: 9 Released: 4 Baptisms: 0 Confirmed: 6 (4) Marriages: 1 Funerals: 0	Comm: 97 Souls: 131 Received: 4 Released: 5 Baptisms: 2 Confirmed: 3 (2) Marriages: 2 Funerals: 1
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Comm: 95 Souls: 132 Received: 5 Released: 6 Baptisms: 4 Confirmed: 3 (1) Marriages: 0 Funerals: 3	Comm: 99 Souls: 135 Received: 7 Released: 3 Baptisms: 1 Confirmed: 4 (2) Marriages: 4 Funerals: 1	Comm: 106 Souls: 146 Received: 8 Released: 0 Baptisms: 5 (1) Confirmed: 4 (3) Marriages: 2 Funerals: 3	Comm: 105 Souls: 148 Received: 3 Released: 4 Baptisms: 1 Confirmed: 0 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 0	Comm: 113 Souls: 160 Received: 6 Released: 0 Baptisms: 3 Confirmed: 8 (6) Marriages: 0 Funerals: 0

2000s

2000	2001	2002	2003 (YTD)
Comm: 109 Souls: 148 Received: 3 Released: 3 Baptisms: 2 (1) Confirmed: 2 Marriages: 1 Funerals: 6	Comm: 87 Souls: 110 Received: 0 Released: 22 Baptisms: 0 Confirmed: 0 Marriages: 1 Funerals: 0	Comm: 74 Souls: 94 Received: 2 Released: NA Baptisms: 2 (1) Confirmed: 3 (2) Marriages: 2 Funerals: 0	Comm: 76 Souls: 96 Received: 0 Released: NA Baptisms: 0 Confirmed: 0 Marriages: 0 Funerals: 1