

# In the Lord's Hands

A History of  
St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
Pickwick, Minnesota  
1937-2003

Mark Gunderson  
Church History Project  
Professor Brenner  
May 14, 2003

The title for this history comes from a conversation I had with my aunt and uncle, Tom and Laurie Church. They made the point that throughout all of the tough times that St. Luke's congregation endured everything turned out for the good because it was in the Lord's hands. As I researched this history it became obvious to me and to those with whom I talked that the Lord's fingerprints were all over the history of this congregation.

St. Luke's officially became a congregation in the year 1937 but its history began several years before that. The congregation began meeting five years earlier, in the year 1932. St. Luke's congregation owes its beginning in large part to one woman, Louise Davis. She and her husband, George Davis, and family lived in Pickwick but were members at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Winona, Minnesota. There were also some other families from the Pickwick area that belonged to St. Martin's. Among these were Emil and Phylis Buege. Louise also noticed that there were some families in Pickwick that belonged to St. John's Lutheran Church in Nodine, Minnesota. Since both Winona and Nodine were of some distance away and since there was a core group of Lutheran families in Pickwick, Louise Davis asked her pastor at St. Martin's, Rev. Alfred William von Rohr Sauer, if he would be willing to travel to

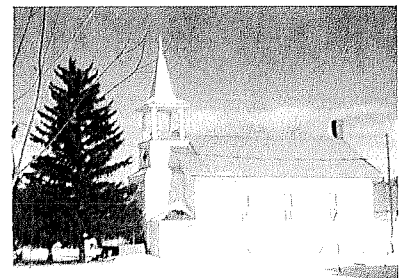


Louise Davis – vital to the start of St. Luke's Church



Rev. Alfred William von Rohr Sauer

Pickwick to conduct services. He agreed to do so. Arrangements were made to use the Baptist Church in Pickwick. This church was the first church built in Pickwick and it was originally intended to be a community church. However, the church became



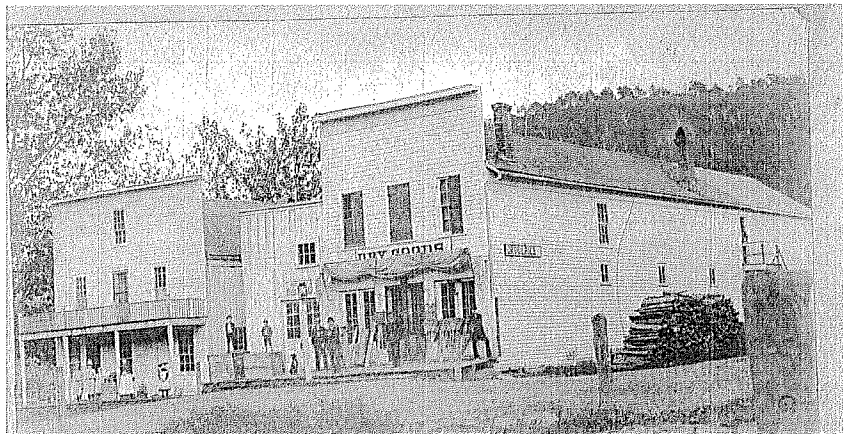
St. Luke's first met at the Baptist Church in 1932.

most widely used by the Baptists. But by the early 1930's the Baptist church was little used and there were no problems for the small group of Lutherans to meet there. The first service was set for April 14, 1932. Pastor Sauer became ill and was not able to conduct the first service. Pastor Paul Froelich took his place and conducted the first service for the Lutheran group in Pickwick. From that time on Pastor Sauer traveled every two weeks from Winona to Pickwick to conduct services for the group that Louise Davis started. They met for worship in the evenings and continued to use the Baptist Church for their services.

After less than a year, however, problems arose in the relationship between the Baptists and the Lutheran group. The problem came as a result of Pastor Sauer baptizing a Lutheran baby in the Baptist Church. Baptists do not believe in infant baptism and this action by the Lutheran pastor offended the Baptists. As a result they were no longer willing to let the Lutherans meet in their church and the Lutherans needed to find a new place to worship.

Early in 1933 the Lutherans were able to rent the downstairs in the Griffin Store (at present time this building is the "apartment building").

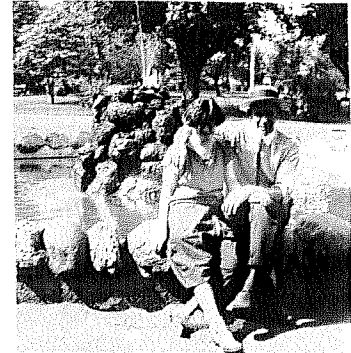
Later in October of that year, interestingly enough, the Ladies Aid was organized before the church was duly organized. On October 26, 1933, with Pastor



The Griffin Store is the building on the right. St. Luke's Church met here first in the downstairs and later moved to the hall in the upstairs. The hall was accessed by the staircase which is seen at the far right in the picture.

Sauer and his wife present, the Ladies Aid elected Phylis Buege as president, Elsie Greenwood as vice-president, Louise Davis as secretary, and Ella Braatz as treasurer. Other original

members of the Ladies Aid were Mrs. Charles Goetz, Mrs. Omer Harem, Mrs. William Husman, Mrs. Reinhold Parpart, Miss Cleora Parpart, Mrs. Ernest Steinfeldt, Miss Florence Steinfeldt, and Mrs. Benjamin Tarras. The Ladies Aid worked very hard to support the young church and helped significantly in the building of the first church building. Of the original members of the Ladies Aid, Mrs.



Emil and Phylis Buege

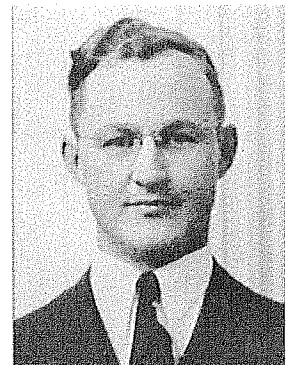
Dorothy Harem and Mrs. Florence Bublitz are still active in St. Luke's congregation.

After a year and a half of worshipping in the downstairs of Griffin Store the space no longer worked for the growing group and they made arrangements to rent the upstairs hall. In October of 1934 the Lutheran group converted the upstairs hall into a place of worship. The men made benches from second-hand lumber and the group bought a stove and an organ. The Ladies Aid also equipped the kitchen with everything that was needed.

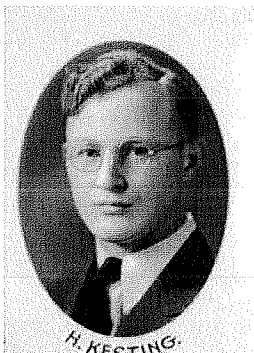
Early in the history of St. Luke's congregation the members expressed their concern for the spiritual upbringing of their children. Pastor Sauer provided catechism instruction and there were children's Christmas programs from 1933 on. In 1935 a Sunday School was organized to provide spiritual care for the youth of the congregation on Sundays. Miss Winnifred Greenwood served as the first Sunday School superintendent (she also served as organist). Louise Davis also helped organize the Sunday School and assisted Miss Greenwood.

In February 1936 Pastor Sauer's son, Rev. Alfred von Rohr Sauer, Jr., began to help his father in the spiritual care of the congregation in Pickwick. He conducted Sunday services and adult and youth catechism instruction. He served from February to September when his father once again continued his work for the congregation. Pastor Sauer, Sr. served the congregation for ten more months until July of 1937 when the congregation's first pastor arrived.

On July 11, 1937 Rev. Herbert H. Kesting was installed to serve both the Lutheran congregation in Pickwick and the Lutheran congregation in Minnesota City. Pastor Kesting was installed in the Pickwick congregation in a special afternoon service in the upstairs of the Griffin Hall. Pastor Sauer, Sr. preached the sermon and conducted the installation. Pastor Kesting was installed the following Sunday in the Minnesota City congregation. Pastor Kesting's home was in Hadar, Nebraska.<sup>1</sup> He was a 1936 graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. After graduating Pastor Kesting served



Reverend Kesting



1936 graduation photo.

for one year as an assistant pastor of First Lutheran Church of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, before coming to serve the Pickwick and Minnesota City congregations. With his arrival the congregation in Pickwick became a joint parish with the congregation in Minnesota City and was officially a mission congregation of the Wisconsin Synod. The congregation in Pickwick was now able to have services every Sunday instead of just every two weeks. At first Pastor Kesting took up residence in Pickwick but later moved to just outside of Winona to better serve both congregations.

In August of 1937, just one month after Pastor Kesting arrived, a very important event occurred for the Pickwick congregation. A constitution was drawn up and on August 8, 1937, the constitution was adopted by the congregation and was officially organized as "The St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pickwick, Minnesota." Richard Buege was elected as the first president, George Davis (Louise's husband) was elected vice-president, and John Larson was

<sup>1</sup> Pastor Kesting's installation was covered by the Winona Republican-Herald, Saturday Evening, July 10, 1937.

elected secretary/treasurer. Nineteen men were the first signers of the constitution. They were Roy Greenwood, William Selke, John Larson, Richard Buege, George Davis, Wilfred Davis, Ralph Buege, William Koeller, William Husman, Edward Steinfeldt, Reinhold Parpart, Theodore Braatz, Ben Tarras, Elmer Bernadot, E. J. Buege, Alfred Nissalke, Ernest Steinfeldt, Richard Steinfeldt, and Paul Steinfeldt.



Elsa and Richard Beuge

Also in 1937 pews were purchased from the Siloh congregation to replace the wooden benches in the upstairs of Griffin Hall. The Ladies Aid donated the money to buy these pews.

In the following year the first choir was formed by Pastor Kesting with some of the young people of the congregation. Pastor's wife, Alice, was the director. The Sunday School, which had stopped functioning for some time, was restarted with Winnifred Greenwood serving as superintendent, Irene Davis and Ruth Greenwood serving as teachers. Pastor Kesting started to have regular Sunday School teacher's meetings every other Friday evening to better the Sunday School program. In the fall of 1938 the first Mission Festival was held. In the spring of 1939 an altar was built and other improvements were made to the upstairs hall.

While the congregation made improvements to their worship space their hearts were set on having a place to worship the Lord that they could call their own. An important event happened in the fall of 1938. Plans were made to buy the Husman store and convert it into a chapel and parsonage. This plan fell through but a building fund was started from contributions and other special offerings.

Few in the congregation knew if it were possible to have their own worship place but they were confident. This confidence, however, was not in themselves, their confidence was in their Almighty Father. Louise Davis writes in her early history of the church:

The question often arose, 'How shall we obtain funds to build a church we can call our own, and how shall we get the money needed for the upkeep of the church and the necessary repairs to God's House?' Yet, the answer was given long ago and is recorded for us in many places in the Bible. Free-will offerings made possible, not only the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but also the building of the stately and very costly Temple in Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 24,5.<sup>2</sup>

God would provide also for St. Luke's congregation and the project would certainly be in his hands.

From 1939 into 1940 numerous attempts were made to find a suitable site to build a church. Nothing was fully realized until a member, William Selke and his wife, Olive, donated a lot behind the Griffin Store. Louise Davis in her history called the lot "a wilderness"<sup>3</sup> since it was full of trees and needed to be cleared of brush before any building could take place. A committee was assigned to finalize the deal. This committee did some of the preliminary work but there was some delay in obtaining the deed for the land and a second committee was formed. On December 16, 1941, the lot was officially deeded over to the congregation and it was time to go to work.



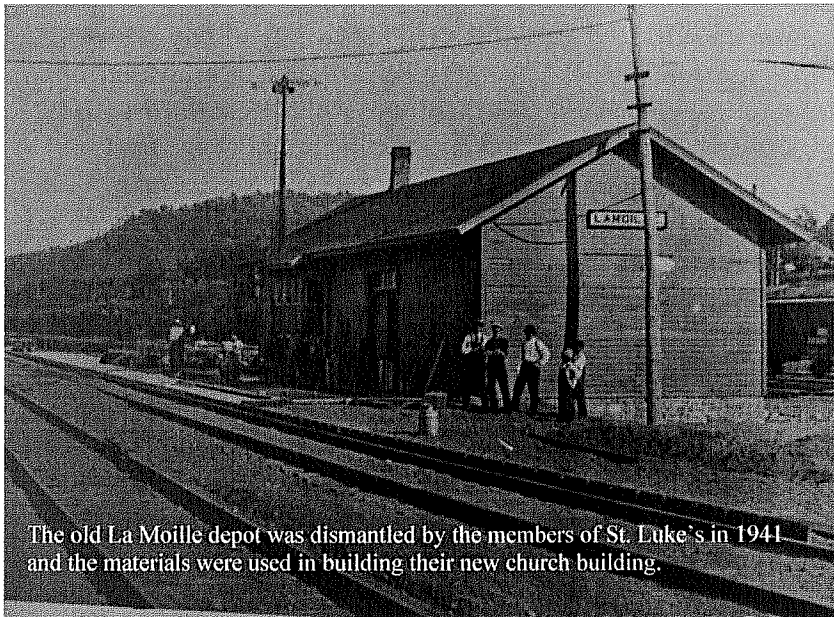
William and Olive Selke

Since the plans for the lot were being finalized another opportunity came up for the church that they could not pass up. In October of 1941, two months before the deed for the lot was official, some of the members heard that the La Moille depot was going to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. In an urgent special meeting the trustees of the church and the committee working on the lot met at the home of the church's president, Richard Buege. The group assembled decided to bid on the building in order to use the materials for the building of their first church. A bid of \$161 was offered. This offer was too low and a second bid of \$170 was offered. On November 13, 1941 the congregation learned that its second bid was accepted. The

---

<sup>2</sup> Louise Davis compiled a history of the young church which can be found in the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



money to pay for the building came out of the building fund that was started three years earlier. About a week after hearing of its accepted bid members of the church carefully dismantled the old depot and stored the materials in Pickwick. It was

noted in the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary history<sup>4</sup> that even the shingles were saved.

Things were starting to move forward for the small church. In the annual meeting on January 4, 1942, the congregation elected a building committee to oversee the plans for the new church building. Theodore Albrecht, Roy Greenwood, and Pastor Kesting were elected to this committee. Also in the annual meeting it was decided that the church would be twenty-four by fifty feet in size.

But it takes more than enthusiasm and joy to build a church. It also takes money and St. Luke's did not have very much of that. The building fund was depleted by the purchase of the depot. There was some wishful thinking among the members that the entire building project would not cost more than \$1,200. The reality was that in the end the building would cost more than twice that amount. How would the members be able to afford to build their first church building? This, too, would be in the Lord's hands. A fund-raising drive went into full swing in the months of February and March of 1942. At the first quarterly meeting in 1942 there was

---

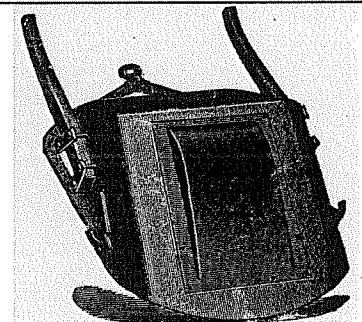
<sup>4</sup> Pastor Elwin Klumb also compiled a history of the church for the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Luke's congregation in 1972.



\$367 in the building fund and another \$200 was pledged for the project. This did not include \$300 that the Ladies Aid had raised for the building project. The Ladies Aid had been working hard to raise money for the new church building. They made and sold quilts, had strawberry-ice cream socials, and prepared chicken dinners and oyster suppers. The Ladies Aid did all that they could to raise money and they were very vital in the building of their church. Their role was so important and recognized by the members that it was said, “the women built that church.”<sup>5</sup>

Excavation began on March 31, 1942. Horse-drawn scrapers were used to scoop out the dirt for the basement and the foundation. Three teams of horses were put to work on this part of the building project. Edward Steinfeldt owned one of the teams, Victor Gunderson another, and there was a third team also at work. The congregation planned to begin building that spring but a number of factors prevented them. First, the government ordered a stop to all non-

A scraper similar to this would have been used to scoop out for the foundation of the church.



essential building due to the war. This was later modified to allow churches to build up to an amount of \$5,000. Secondly, there was a large labor shortage that was also due to the war. It was difficult to find the people and the time to help out with the building. Louise Davis in her history mentioned that it was “practically impossible to get a carpenter to supervise the work.”<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, there was poor weather that spring. The wet weather prevented any consistent work from being done. Due to these factors the work progressed very slowly. Things were not looking good for St. Luke’s building project.

But once again this was in the Lord’s hands. Little work was done that spring but that summer an agreement was made with the Dakota Lumber Company to furnish whatever other

---

<sup>5</sup> This was according to the recollection of Dorothy Harem who was part of that Ladies Aid.

<sup>6</sup> Louise Davis, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin

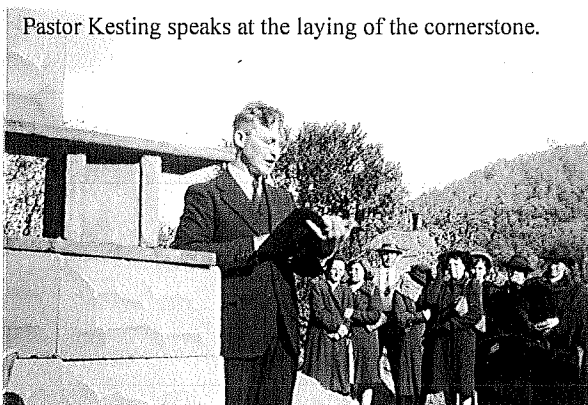
materials were needed. This was especially important because the Dakota Lumber Company was able to supply the church with nails, which were hard to come by. God also provided someone to supervise the building project. Wilfred Davis, son of George and Louise Davis, was a carpenter by trade. He was willing to supervise the project and was even willing to work for only forty cents an hour since it was for the building of the church. He began work in late August of 1942 and according to the Winona Republican-Herald they started the foundation work on August 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>7</sup> Worked progressed so that the bottom portion of the foundation was poured on September 12<sup>th</sup>. One week later the congregation was able to get a used pipe-less furnace from La Crosse at the cost of \$60.



Wilfred Davis with child on the blocks of the foundation.

About one month after the foundation work was begun an important milestone was

reached. It was time to lay the cornerstone.



Pastor Kesting speaks at the laying of the cornerstone.

The cornerstone was laid in a special afternoon ceremony following the annual Mission Festival service on September 27, 1942. This important event in the history of St. Luke's congregation was covered by the Winona Republican-Herald.

In the article Pastor Kesting is quoted as saying: "The congregation appreciates the fact that it found places to meet for worship in the last ten years of its existence, but it eagerly looks forward to the time when its own place will be ready for use."<sup>8</sup> The cornerstone was donated by Fred C. Dalleska who also supplied the cement blocks. According to Louise Davis' history, a number of items were placed into the cornerstone:

<sup>7</sup> Winona Republican-Herald, Friday Evening, August 21, 1942

<sup>8</sup> Winona Republican-Herald, Saturday Evening, September 26, 1942.

The following was placed into the tin box deposited in the cornerstone: a history of the congregation, a Catechism, the names of the church officers, the pastor, the Sunday school teachers, the building committee, the builder, the names of the voting members and lady members, and the names of the men of the congregation serving in the Armed Forces of our country; also a copy of our Church paper, The Northwestern Lutheran; furthermore, the names of the Governor of our State, and the President of the United States, and a copy of the Winona Republican-Herald of September 26<sup>th</sup>, which contained the account of the cornerstone laying.<sup>9</sup>

The foundation was now in place and the members of St. Luke's were beginning to see that their new church building would soon be a reality.

Soon after this joyful occasion the congregation received some bad news. The building supervisor, Wilfred Davis, received his notice to report for military duty. How would the church building continue without the service of a trained carpenter? Who would then take over the supervising responsibilities? He would be very hard to replace. The congregation brought this matter before the government appeal agent and Wilfred Davis was granted a sixty day stay. Work would continue under his direction for at least two more months. Even with their carpenter still on duty work progressed slowly. The poor weather continued to make the building a difficult task. Add to that the fact that there was always a shortage of help. The two most responsible for supplying the extra help were Wilfred Davis' father, George, and Roy Greenwood, a member of the building committee. Another member, Theodore Braatz, was responsible for building the chimney.

Despite the slow progress, by early December the congregation was again rejuvenated by some good news. Things were beginning to look up. Wilfred Davis had reported for duty after his sixty day stay was up but received notice that he had failed his health exam due to heart troubles. Because of this he was rejected for military service and continued to work on building the church. Also in early December the church held its first worship service in their new building. The building was far from complete but the congregation gathered in the basement to

---

<sup>9</sup> Louise Davis, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin

worship their Lord. This first service was held on December 6, 1942. Later that month the first services on the main floor of the church were held for the children's Christmas Eve service and the Christmas day service. The building still needed a lot of work as Louise Davis noted in her history, "At this time the walls were just plastered, there were no castings on the windows, and only the sub-floor was laid."<sup>10</sup>

The day finally came for the building to be finished. On a joyous day in March the church was dedicated to the glory and praise of God. The special day was March 14, 1943. Pastor William Nommenson, President of the Western Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Synod was the guest speaker for this special service. At the time of dedication there were 130 members and eighty-four communicants. About eleven years after the group began to meet and about six years after officially becoming a congregation the members of St. Luke's congregation were able to have a church building of their own to worship in.

The members were able to furnish their new church by generous gifts from surrounding congregations. They received a used altar from the Buffalo City congregation, used brown altar and pulpit hangings from the Wilson congregation, two brass candlesticks from the St. Charles congregation, a used bell from the Stoddard congregation, and from St. Martin's in Winona they received a used baptismal font and benches for the basement. The members themselves also donated a number of items to furnish the church. Louise Davis and her daughter, Irene, donated carpeting, Esther Braatz donated a used organ for Sunday school, Mrs. Jerrold Harvey donated a picture for the altar, and Wayne Albrecht donated materials for green altar and pulpit hangings. God provided everything that was needed for this young congregation and its brand new church building.

---

<sup>10</sup> Louise Davis, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin

Following the dedication the members were busy putting the final touches on their new building. Screens were bought for the windows, a second coat of paint was applied, the ceiling was completed in the basement, the chimney was finished, and partitions were made for the furnace and kitchen. In the following year a bell-cote was built to house the bell and it was dedicated on August 28, 1944. Also in that year the Ladies Aid bought eave<sup>s</sup> troughs and downspouts, the furnace was converted to a forced air system, and the street in front of the church was widened. In the spring of 1945 the landing and steps were built. The total cost of the church then came to \$2,700.

In 1946 Pastor Kesting received a call to serve the congregation in Vesta, Minnesota, and he accepted. He preached his last sermon on November 24, 1946. The congregation was without a pastor for a few months and Pastor A. L. Mennicke of Winona served the vacancy. At this time also the pastor of Wilson and Ridgeway, Pastor H. Bentrup, took a call. With this opportunity the Mission Board of the Western Wisconsin District proposed a plan that was agreed to by all. The congregation at Wilson called its own pastor.

The congregation at Norton agreed to let its pastor also serve the congregation at Minnesota City and the dual parish of St. Luke's and Minnesota City was dissolved. Instead, St. Luke's joined with Grace of Ridgeway to form a new parish and called the Rev. Walter Koepsell to be its pastor. Pastor Koepsell accepted the call and was installed on February 9, 1947. A new parsonage was built for him in



Reverend Koepsell

Ridgeway and he became St. Luke's second full-time pastor. With this new arrangement St. Luke's was no longer a mission congregation but became a self-supporting congregation.

Pastor Koepsell was a 1937 graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. Before coming to St. Luke's he served congregations in Crandon, Wisconsin; Powers, Michigan; and Goodrich, Wisconsin. Pastor Elwin Klumb in his history of the congregation offers this summary of Pastor Koepsell's ministry:

By God's grace we were blessed with a Pastor who knows, believes, and confesses God's Word while all around our country congregation after congregation has been led down the high road of the Social Gospel and the New Theology with its New Morality. By God's grace we have been allowed to grow and prosper in our faith while all around us thousands are forsaking their faith. During those years we along with all our sister congregations of the Wisconsin Synod were engaged in a very difficult fight to see if a truly confessional Lutheran Church could endure in this land. By God's grace the victory is ours but the fight is not over... We ought to be especially thankful for the spiritual guidance he provided us during these troublesome times in the Lutheran Church.<sup>11</sup>

The troublesome times that Pastor Klumb refers to is the break in fellowship between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. This was a difficult time in the Lutheran church and Pastor Koepsell provided strong leadership for St. Luke's congregation.

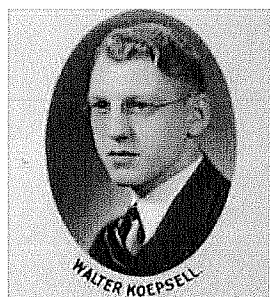
After the huge push for the new church building things began to quiet down. Pastor Koepsell writes, "The ensuing years [after building the church] have perhaps not been as spectacular as those which marked the beginning of St. Luke's. Nevertheless, the still, small voice which characterizes the Gospel continued to speak to us, admonishing, instructing, enlightening, fortifying, encouraging, and comforting us. Nor have the fruits of the Spirit been lacking."<sup>12</sup> The Word of God continued to be proclaimed in Sunday worship, Sunday school, and catechism class.

In 1952 the congregation replaced the old furnace because it had become a fire hazard. They installed a new oil-burning furnace in its place. They also made changes to the interior of the church. A professional decorator was hired to help in this task. The next thing to get

---

<sup>11</sup> Elwin Klumb, 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary letter.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Koepsell, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin

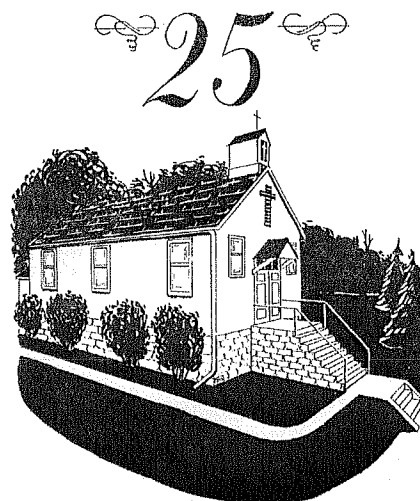


1937 graduation photo.

attention was the old reed organ. A special organ fund was set up and through offerings enough money was set aside to purchase a new electric organ. The Ladies Aid once again was very instrumental in being able to buy this new organ. The church dedicated the new organ in a special service on November 25, 1956. Pastor John Lau of Onalaska, Wisconsin, was the guest speaker.

During this time the congregation continued to grow. The members recognized that they needed to expand their worship space. A long-range plan was developed in which the church would be lengthened and a sacristy would be added off to the side of the chancel area. In order to accomplish this new expansion an Improvement Fund was started in the year 1959. The members were enthusiastic about this plan and enough money was given already in 1959 to fund a new well and a submersible pump.

In 1962 St. Luke's reached another milestone – they celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Pastor Kesting was invited back to be the guest speaker for the special service that was celebrated on August 5, 1962. A special bulletin was put together for this occasion which contained a history of the congregation that was compiled from Louise Davis' own account with a conclusion by Pastor Koepsell. The Davis family was responsible for this special bulletin. Also new pews



The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin cover.

were bought and assembled in preparation for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary service. Pastor Koepsell noted the new pews “give [the Lord’s house] a truly worshipful atmosphere.”<sup>13</sup> At the time of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary the congregation numbered 212 souls with 136 communicant members.

In 1971 the first phase of the expansion plan was completed. The church added on a new sacristy that had its own door to the outside. The congregation in this year also added parking spaces for the church by purchasing the land on the north side of the church building.

Early in 1972 Pastor Koepsell received a call from the congregation in Marshfield,



Reverend Klumb

Wisconsin. He accepted this call and finished his ministry at St. Luke’s in February of 1972. He served the congregation faithfully for twenty-five years. From February through June of that year Pastor Melvin Smith of La Cresent served as the vacancy pastor until the new pastor arrived. That new pastor was the Reverend Elwin Klumb. He was assigned to the call after graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in May of 1972. He

was ordained and installed in a special service on June 18, 1972.

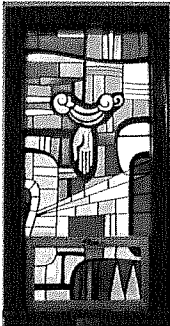
In 1972 St. Luke’s would celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To prepare for this service the members of the congregation once again went to work. Since the congregation now had a new sacristy the old sacristy was no longer needed and was torn out. In the chancel area a rectangular column was built to balance off the chimney. Also concealed closets were built flanking the altar to provide extra storage room. Then the whole chancel area was paneled. This work was done by Wilfred Davis. Wilfred Davis also installed an organ screen between the lectern and the wall. Russell Bublitz and Milton Ebert, who did much of the work on the new sacristy, built and installed an altar railing between the pulpit and the lectern. The pulpit, altar, lectern, and altar rail were also painted with an antique finish. Kneeling pads were also made to go along with the

---

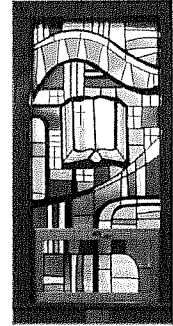
<sup>13</sup> Walter Koepsell, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bulletin



new altar rail. The members also installed new carpeting, tiled the basement ceiling, and painted the church inside and out. This was a huge amount of work and many members helped out with their time and talents. While many hands were at work Pastor Klumb rightly noted in his 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary letter that, “The highest thanks and praise, however, as always must go to the Lord. He it is that prospered the works of our hands. He it is that provided us with the money and talents to do all these things. He it is that gave us this opportunity for glorifying Him through working in His house.”<sup>14</sup> All of these improvements were showcased in the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service which was held on November 5, 1972.



The next celebration happened in the next year. Stain glass windows were purchased to replace the old church windows. These windows were created by the Conway studios of Winona and the glass for the windows came from Europe. In a special afternoon service on July 29, 1973, Pastor Cleone H.



Weigand preached a sermon entitled “We the Windows and Christ the Light.” The six windows that were dedicated in this service remind us of:

The Father from whose hand we all come; the Son, Jesus the Christ (Chi-rho) our great Prophet, Priest and King; the Holy Spirit, who descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and enters our hearts through His inspired Word; the Gospel, the “good news” of the Bible; Holy Baptism, through which we are grafted into the family of God by water and the Word; and the Lord’s Supper, through which our faith is strengthened as we partake of Christ’s very body and blood and hear the words “given for you” and “shed for you.”<sup>15</sup>

The stain glass windows were given as gifts by various members of the church.

In 1975 the second phase of the expansion plan was completed. The church was lengthened by a new front addition to the building. With this addition came also the indoor

<sup>14</sup> Elwin Klumb, 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary letter

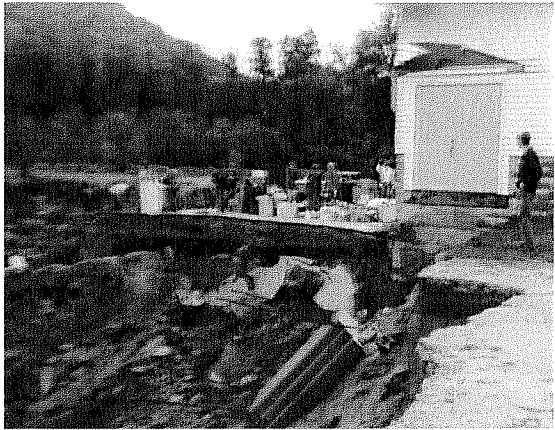
<sup>15</sup> July 1973 newsletter

restrooms. Pastor Kesting was invited back to be the guest speaker and the addition was dedicated to the Lord on June 22, 1975.

In 1979 the old oil furnace was removed and new electric heat was installed. At this time the kitchen was also completely rebuilt.

In 1980 the church faced another daunting challenge. This time the challenge came in the form of a flood that devastated Pickwick valley. The flood hit on September 20, 1980. The flood washed away the parking lot, the sewer system, and even removed the entrance steps. The flood came

Flood damage of 1980.



dangerously close to washing away the new addition. By God's grace the church itself was spared from harm. Fill was brought in to restore the parking lot and new steps were poured for the entrance to the church. Services were held in the old Pickwick schoolhouse until everything could be restored.

In 1982 the congregation experienced a big shock. Their pastor, Elwin Klumb, died from a heart attack on August 29<sup>th</sup>. He and his family had just recently returned from vacation. The

1972 graduation photo.



ELWIN KLUMB

funeral service was held at Grace, Ridgeway, and nine different pastors from the area participated in the service. Council members from St. Luke's and Grace served as pallbearers. Pastor Klumb served St. Luke's congregation for ten years. Under his shepherding care the congregation made a conscious effort to reach out with the gospel to bring more people to Christ. Three new positions were created on the Church board to accomplish this mission. These were

the minister of Education, minister of Stewardship and Information, and the minister of Evangelism. In addition to this more Bible study opportunities became available and the summer Vacation Bible School program was started. Pastor Klumb was loved by his members and the congregation was deeply saddened by the loss of its pastor. Pastor James Renz served as the vacancy pastor.

The Rev. Alvin Werre accepted the call to serve St. Luke's and was installed on January 2, 1983. Pastor Werre had previously been serving two congregations in Cataract, Wisconsin. He was a 1958 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. After graduating from the seminary he volunteered for service in Nigeria, Africa. He served there for two years but had to return to the United States because of poor



Reverend Werre

health. He taught for a year at Immanuel Lutheran Seminary in Greensboro, NC, served a dual parish in South Dakota, went back to Africa (again he was forced to return due to illness), and then served congregations in Nebraska. While he was in Nebraska he served as first vice president of the Nebraska District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The year that he was installed Pastor Werre celebrated twenty-five years in the ministry.

God continued to bless St. Luke's congregation under the leadership of Pastor Werre. In 1987 the congregation celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on August 9, 1987. Pastor Kesting returned again to preach in the morning service and Pastor Koepsell returned to preach in the afternoon service. At the time of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary there were 241 members and 187 communicant members. By God's grace the congregation continued to grow.

In 1992 the Pickwick congregation faced one of the toughest challenges in its history. Relations between Pastor Werre and St. Luke's' sister congregation, Grace Lutheran Church of

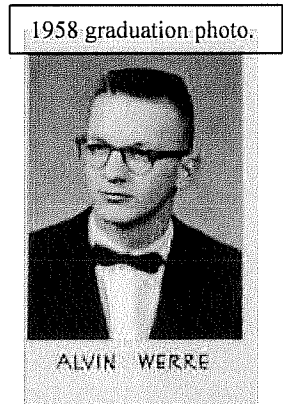
Ridgeway, had grown sour. Since many of the members of Grace openly opposed him, Pastor Werre decided that he no longer could serve as their pastor. He resigned from his call to Grace Lutheran Church. But this made the situation very complicated. St. Luke's and Grace <sup>Werre</sup> was a dual parish. Each congregation provided half the support for the pastor that they shared. Would Pastor Werre also have to resign from his call to St. Luke's? Would St. Luke's pick up the other half of the support and continue to have Pastor Werre as their pastor? Would they be able to afford to fully support a pastor by themselves? The members of St. Luke's congregation had many questions. But God had all the answers. In a special voters meeting the congregation almost unanimously decided to keep Pastor Werre as their pastor and that they would find some way to fully support him on their own. St. Luke's congregation was now venturing into something that they had never experienced before. They had their own pastor all to themselves. Pastor Werre moved out of the parsonage at Grace and moved into the village of Pickwick. God blessed the church's decision and St. Luke's was able to support their pastor on their own.

During the decade of the nineties Pastor Werre's health began to get worse. It was hard for him to get around and fulfill all of his pastoral duties. Pastor Werre heard news of a retired pastor in Wilson named Wilbur Beckendorf and asked him if would be willing to serve as an



1955 graduation photo.

assistant pastor in a retirement call. He consented to do so. In the July 1997 semi-annual meeting it was proposed that Pastor Werre would retire from the full-time ministry and that both Pastor Werre and Pastor Beckendorf would receive retirement calls. This proposal was passed by the voters. Pastor Werre retired from the full-time ministry on October 31, 1997, having served for thirty-nine



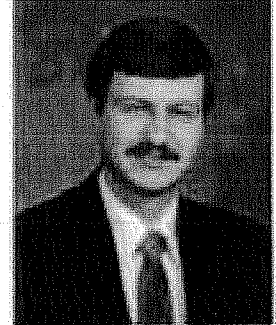
1958 graduation photo.

years in the public ministry. He and Pastor Beckendorf then received retirement calls and the pastoral duties were divided between the two of them. In this way all of the pastoral duties would be taken care of.

This arrangement lasted for more than a year but it became apparent that Pastor Werre would not be able to continue. In January of 1999 plans were made to call a young pastor at which time both pastors would fully retire. On April 25<sup>th</sup> Pastor Werre retire<sup>d</sup> for good from the ministry. He served his Lord for 41 years. At this time the congregation called the Rev. Galen Riediger who was serving Bethany Lutheran Church in Gibsonia, Pennsylvania. (Gibsonia is a northern suburb of Pittsburgh.) Pastor Riediger accepted the call and was installed on July 18, 1999. From April to July Pastor Beckendorf continued to serve the congregation. He was a blessing from God at just the right time.

Pastor Riediger was a 1994 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. His first call was to Gibsonia, Pennsylvania, and he served there for five years. Pastor Riediger lived temporarily in Ridgeway until the matter of a parsonage could be resolved. This was another challenge for the members of St. Luke's. They looked for housing

1994 graduation photo.



Galen J. Riediger



St. Luke's new parsonage.

possibilities in the area but nothing proved satisfactory. They wanted to have their pastor near to the church. The congregation decided to purchase a pre-fabricated house and place it on the lot next to the

church. At the same time the congregation decided to expand the church building by adding an office off of the back. Both the parsonage and the office were completed at the same time at a price of \$130,966. The congregation received \$79,782 in donations and borrowed \$50,000 to pay for the joint project. This project, too, was in the Lord's hands. God has blessed the ministry of Pastor Riediger and the congregation had 234 members and 192 communicant members in 2002.

The members of St. Luke's congregation have faced many challenges throughout their history. It was God, however, that brought them through every one. St. Luke's was always in his hands. There was never a time when the members of St. Luke's had to face a challenge on their own. They always had their God to direct them and to make everything turn out for their good. Many things have changed for the church in their history. They went from worshipping in a Baptist Church to a store to their own church building. They expanded their church building several times and were constantly making improvements to their worship space. They have had five different pastors to shepherd them. They went from a dual parish with Minnesota City to a dual parish with Ridgeway to a congregation on their own. While these things may have changed one thing has not changed – the pure Word of God continues to be preached in the pulpit and taught to the youth. The members have been continually fed by the Holy Spirit. Every Sunday they have heard of their need for a Savior and that Jesus supplies that need. He has taken away all sin and has given eternal life to those who belong to Him. This is the message that has stayed the same from the first meetings in 1932 to the latest meetings in 2003. May this be the one thing that always stays the same for St. Luke's congregation of Pickwick, Minnesota.

**Grateful acknowledgements:** I would like to thank the following for helping me with this project: the Lord for his guidance to me and for giving my family a place to grow spiritually; my aunt and uncle, Jan and Arv Fabian for getting me started; my uncle, Gene Gunderson, for his thoughts and the picture of the La Moille depot; my aunt and uncle, Laurie and Tom Church, for their thoughts and insights; Russell and Florence Bublitz, for spending some time with me to talk about the church; Dorothy Harem, for her valuable insights and additions to the history of her mother, Louise Davis; Rick Betzinger, for the annual meeting reports; Pastor Riediger, for helping me find some valuable research materials and answering my questions; the Winona Public Library; the Winona County Historical Society Archives; the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Archives; and lastly to my father, Donald Gunderson, who is really the reason why I started this project in the first place.

Mark Gunderson, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, class of 2003.

I have included some pictures that were not able to make it into the manuscript in **Appendix A.**

Appendix A



Confirmation class of 1952



Confirmation class of 1954



Confirmation class of 1956



Confirmation class of 1961