

A Profile of St. John

Wood Lake, Minnesota

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## A Profile of St. John, Wood Lake, MN.

The purpose of this paper is to give an historical presentation of God's guiding hand in the congregation of St. John. This paper is not meant to detail every last thing that St. John's congregation ever did. To me that seems unnecessary as well as provides monotonous reading. What I tried to do was hit the highlights of the years. I believe I accomplished this goal because the reader will no doubt see how God's grace worked in the 111 year history of my home church. If statistics are what you are looking for, they can be found in the Synod Archives at Mequon WI.

## HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS

The ~~early~~ beginnings of St. John Evangelical Church of Wood Lake Minnesota, a member of the Wisconsin Synod, date back to 1880. It was in this year that August Schulz, his wife Henriette, sons Samuel, Martin, and Otto established a homestead in Wood Lake Township. That original farm place is about two miles north of Wood Lake on MN state highway 274, on the west side of the road. August Schulz's great grandson, Harold Schulz is presently living there. August and his family had immigrated to Minnesota from Posen, Germany. They followed the same trail that many of their friends from Germany had taken before. These early immigrants settled down in southwestern Minnesota in a place they called Posen Township. Wood Lake Township was Posen Township's neighbor to the north. This area that August Schulz and other early pioneers settled in had many advantages. The farm land was very good for growing crops such as corn and wheat. There also was a railroad which ran between the two townships which could transport their harvests to the bigger cities of New Ulm and Mankato. There was also a small village nearby which would take on the name Wood Lake in 1884. Considering that there were others from August's home land of Germany now living in the area and because of the potential for great growth, it was an obvious choice for August Schulz and others to settle in this area.

The religious background of many of the families that moved to the area around Wood Lake, as well as that of the August Schulz family, was Lutheran. The settlers to Posen Township had formed their own congregation which was called St. Luke. This congregation is now a member of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. However, this church was just a little too far away from August Schulz's farm, about six

miles to the south, and consequently he and some other Lutheran families were without a church. This condition began to change in November of 1884 with the beginnings of St. John Lutheran Church.

In the Fall of 1884 the family of Martin and Louisa Schulz was blessed by God with the birth of a new daughter. The baby's name was Ida Augusta Henriette Schulz. The parents were very concerned that their child be baptized and they sent word to the pastor of St. Luke's asking him to come and administer the sacrament. Pastor Scheitel, who himself was installed as the pastor of St. Luke's on October 12, 1884, obliged the request of the Schulzes and on November 30, 1884, Ida was baptized into God's family. But that was not the only thing that was done on that day. At this occasion of the baptism many Lutheran families had gathered. There were about eighteen souls present that were without a church and yet were very interested in establishing one [1]. These families spoke to Pastor Scheitel about their desires to form a congregation, and with a loving and caring heart he offered to serve them from time to time.

After this initial contact with Pastor Scheitel it was planned that the Lutheran families of Wood Lake would gather at August Schulz's home with Pastor Scheitel leading worship on the third Sunday in Advent of 1884. For the next two years services were held at the Schulz home every third Sunday under the pastoral care of Pastor Scheitel.

Soon after the services began to be held in the Schulz home, it was decided that the Lutheran families would pursue the organization of their own church. Already on January 13, 1885, a mere month and half after they first met for Ida Schulz's baptism, the decision was reached to begin the establishment of a new congregation. At this meeting the families chose a name for their new church. The official

name of the congregation at its founding was: The St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, Unaltered Augsburg Confession, in the town of Wood Lake, Yellow Medicine Co., Minnesota [2]. They also elected church officers from among the group to serve in the new church. The first elected officers of St. John were: Gustav Schulz, chairman and treasurer; William Frase, secretary; Gustav Schulz, William Stuebner, and Gottlieb Just, trustees; and Gustav Schulz, Samuel Just, Herman Schlenner, and Julius Liskey, as deacons.

One month after this meeting the church constitution, which was prepared by Pastor Scheitel, was signed by the following men who began the congregation of St. John: Gustav Schulz, Martin Schulz, Samuel Schulz, Samuel Just, Gottlieb Just, Herman Just, Gustav Just, Herman Schlenner, Carl Schlenner, Julius Liskey, William Frase, Herman Henke, Martin Kaatz, William Stuebner, Herman Giese, Fred Lange, Christopher Lange, Herman Hempel, and Gottfried Henke [3]. Soon after this initial signing, the membership began to grow steadily. It grew so big that it became obvious that the congregation would have to construct its own church building. But because the cost of building a new church was too great for new immigrants the decision was reached on October 11, 1885 to conduct the church services in the English school house of Wood Lake. Four times a year from 1886 to 1891 Pastor Scheitel conducted Communion services in this school house [4].

At a meeting on November 7, 1890, the plan was set forth to build a school house of their own. But in January of 1891 the members of St. John decided to scratch the idea of building a school house in order to build their own church. At a meeting in January<sup>7</sup> it was determined that each member would contribute to the new building fund. Each family was expected to give ten dollars for every eighty acres of land that they farmed [5]. In March of 1891 it was further decided to

construct a building that was 30' by 52'. This building would serve as both church and school. The cornerstone of the church was laid on July 12, 1891, and the church was finished and dedicated on December 6, of that same year. This church building was erected on land donated by Gottlieb Just and stood a short distance north of the present church building. From the very beginning of St. John's history God's guiding hand is clearly seen. After being in America for ten short years the Lutheran families had a new church building and a part time pastor.

A tragic event in the spring of 1892 would considerably alter the direction of St. John. From its early beginnings until 1892, St. John was affiliated with St. Luke of Posen. Pastor Scheitel, the resident pastor of St. Luke served also St. John. But on May 20, 1892 everything changed. While on his way to perform a wedding for Lenora Kirschbaum and Gustav Giese, Pastor Scheitel was drowned while trying to cross the Yellow Medicine River. At that time there were few bridges and in the spring the melting snow caused the rivers to be very high and very quick, ~~even to this day~~. With the resulting vacancy the members of St. John thought it would be prudent to call their own pastor. They separated from St. Luke and joined the Minnesota Synod who supplied the first resident pastor of St. John in the person of Pastor August Arndt.

#### St. John's Pastors

1. Pastor William Scheitel. 1885 - 1892. Served St. John while serving St. Luke of Posen Township. As mentioned above, he was very influential in starting the congregation of St. John. <sup>H<sup>e</sup></sup> Served until <sub>^</sub> his death by drowning in 1892.

2. Pastor August Arndt. 1892 - 1904. Pastor Arndt was called in

1892 to fill the vacancy left upon Pastor Scheitel's death. He was St. John's first resident pastor. It was stated that he received \$500.00 a year as salary. He also received three sacks of feed from each of the members to feed his livestock [6]. In 1892, the year he was installed, the congregation decided to build a parsonage for Pastor Arndt. In 1894 Pastor Arndt was given permission to conduct services in the nearby town of Echo. This he did every fourth Sunday. It was also during his pastorate that St. John built a new schoolhouse. This 24' by 46' one room school building was completed October 1st, 1900. Pastor Arndt served faithfully as pastor for twelve years and resigned in 1904. During his pastorate the membership grew to eighty voting members.

3. Pastor Justus Naumann. 1904 - 1913. After Pastor Arndt resigned, St. John's congregation called Pastor Justus Naumann. In 1905, under his leadership, St. John joined the synod federation called the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and other States. In 1906 he was given permission to conduct English services on an occasional basis. By 1908 St. John had one Sunday evening German and English service every month. In 1912 he was elected president of the Minnesota Synod. He served St. John only one year after his election to president before he accepted a call to a congregation near Goodhue, MN. ↗ Pastor Justus Naumann had a son, Oscar, who was to become a Wisconsin Synod President from 1953 -1979, while in Wood Lake. Also both Justus and his wife are buried in St. John's cemetery just north of Wood Lake.

4. Pastor J. H. Hinck. 1914 - 1926. Pastor Hinck accepted the call to St. John after Pastor Naumann took a call to Goodhue MN. Pastor Hinck served during what can be called a transition into the modern era. In his first year as pastor, electric lights were

installed to replace the kerosene lanterns in both the church and the parsonage. In 1919 he began conducting two English services a month as more and more English was being used by the children. In 1922 a new organ was purchased for the church. And three years later in 1925 an offering envelope system was introduced for the first time. The highlight of Pastor Hinck's tenure came in his last year as pastor of St. John. In 1926 he saw the building of a new brick church. More on this church is found under the heading: The Present Day Church. In the summer of 1926, before the new church was fully erected, Pastor Hinck accepted a call to serve as pastor in Porter, Nebraska.

5. Pastor Carl G. Schmidt. 1926 - 1936. Pastor Schmidt served in the hard times of the Great Depression. These times were tough on everyone including Pastor Schmidt. When asked how St. John managed through the Depression years present members responded: Harold Schulz (great grandson of August Schulz), "As I am told they were dedicated Christians and supported it [St. John] the best they could with believing hearts and they made it." Harold Jeseritz, "I remember our parents telling of how the pastor took a cut in salary." Freddie Goltz, "Everyone's wages were small - perhaps the clergy received more gratuities in the '29 - '33 years." And Ervin Munsch, "God showed his love so we could keep it going. It was hard but we made it." [7] During Pastor Schmidt's pastorate a permanent Christian Day School was set up grades 5-8. In May of 1935 St. John celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on Pentecost Sunday. The membership continued to grow.

6. Pastor F. E. Traub. 1936 -1944. Pastor Traub, a professor at Northwestern Lutheran Academy at Mobridge S.D. was called in the fall of 1936. During Pastor Traub's pastorate several improvements were made to the church. In 1940 loudspeakers and hearing aids (same to this day) were installed for the hard of hearing. Also in 1940 the



present day outside bulletin board was set up announcing the times of service. In 1941, Pastor Traub successfully introduced "The Lutheran Hymnal" as the first English hymnal used in St. John's 56 year history. At this same time, in October, 1941, Pastor Traub made a significant effort to reduce the \$515.00 debt that remained from the building of the new church. The following words are attributed to Pastor Traub, "Thankfulness for the undeserved security and abundance of food and other material blessings ought to encourage us to help maintain an institution, the church, which alone gives us imperishable riches in times that try men's hearts." [8]. So with renewed effort the debt was erased and a permanent building fund was established so that money would be available when the need arose.

7. Pastor Gotthold F. Zimmerman. 1944 - 1948. Only a few things were done during Zimmerman's short stay. In 1945, the congregation celebrated its 60th anniversary. In honor of the occasion, a statue of Christ entitled, "The Blessing Savior" was placed on the altar through a combination of many private gifts. Also during Zimmerman's pastorate a teacherage was purchased which was just west of the church. In 1948 a new parsonage was built, the present day parsonage, with an approximate cost of \$16,000. The old parsonage was sold to Harry Timm and is still standing at the age of 104 years.

8. Pastor John W. Stehr. 1948 - 1954. Pastor Stehr was the first pastor to move into the newly completed parsonage. The most significant development for St. John during Pastor Stehr's stay was the building of the new brick school. More about this present day school is found under the title: The Christian Day School. Pastor Stehr pioneered a Vacation Bible School drive in 1950 and that institution remains to this day. In 1954, under Pastor Stehr's direction, St. John hosts the Minnesota District Pastoral Conference.

9. Pastor Lloyd Huebner. 1954 - 1958. One of the more notable pastors that have served St. John was Pastor Huebner. Though what perhaps made him most notable in the WELS is that he would serve as president of DMLC, Pastor Huebner was very popular with the congregation. Pastor Huebner recognized that there were only a few members remaining who desired the German services and in 1958 the only German services left were the early service, on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

1958-1967 ?

10. Pastor Norval W. Kock. Pastor Kock saw the congregation reach the age of seventy-five. In 1960 two Sundays were used in June to celebrate seventy-five years of God's grace. The year 1960 will also be remembered for another important event. In August of 1960 the last German service was preached by Pastor Kock. The writers of the 1985 Centennial booklet make these remarks, "There have been many changes over these many years. Changes in the church as well as changes in the world. The first and main language of our forefathers was German.

This language was used and written until 1930. From that time on the minutes were written in English with a synopsis given in German. And so it was that gradually there were more English services than German.

Some German services were held each month at the pastor's discretion. In August, 1960, the last German service was held; this was preached by Pastor Kock." [9] In 1966 the now thirty-five year old church was in need of minor repairs. The church was rewired, new light fixtures were hung. The stained glass windows were replaced. A new organ console was purchased with an inheritance bequest from Ida Lange. And new pipe sections were installed for the organ. It was also in this year that the large windows of the classrooms were removed and replaced with small glass block squares - the kind that are very difficult to see through.

11. Pastor Norbert Gieschen. 1967- 1974. Pastor Gieschen was the pastor of St. John for the first four years of my life, though I do not remember him. In 1972, under Pastor Gieschen's guidance, a sister congregation was started in Granite Falls, Minnesota. The name of this congregation is Bethany Lutheran. In July of 1974 some discussion began concerning the construction of an addition of a covered front entrance to the church. In April of 1975 a church entrance fund was established. It would not be until 1990 that this entrance would finally become reality. While Pastor Gieschen was pastor of St. John, the communion ware was replaced and a Student Aid Committee was established in 1968. And in 1974 the church was carpeted down the center aisle, the narthex, and the chancel.

12. Pastor David Meyer. 1975 - 1985. Pastor Meyer did many things ~~to~~ to further the work of God's kingdom, but he was also the only pastor of St. John to resign for cause. Pastor Meyer was very interested in Christian education and demonstrated this by sending his own son, Mark, to MLPS in 1984. While Pastor Meyer served, many Day School graduates went on to MLA, MLPS, and DMLC. ( I went to NWC after Pastor Meyer left). During his pastorate the outside brick work was cleaned, and regouted, the roof was reshingled, and the church received a general facelift after 59 years of use. In 1983 angels that guarded the chancel arch were repainted in Milford Paxton's design. In 1976 the ground breaking for Bethany Chapel in Granite Falls took place. And in that same year individual cup communion ware was donated to the church. In 1977 the roof of the school building was replaced. In 1978 a Communion rail was installed on the chancel steps to assist communicants in attending the Lord's Supper. In 1984 the church pews were padded. And in 1985 St. John celebrated its 100th anniversary.

13. Pastor Chester Zuleger. 1985 - present. Pastor Zuleger came to

St. John from Lake City, MN. He was called after David Meyer resigned his call. Immediately after he came to St. John he had to prepare for the Centennial celebrations. Pastor Zuleger was installed on June 16, 1985, and the Centennial services began the following Saturday, June 22 and continued into Sunday June 23. During Pastor Zuleger's continuing pastorate the only major change to the church building, a new entry, took place. The majority of the money for this project came from the estate of Henry and Gladys Just. At the same time an elevator was installed to aid those in wheel chairs. All this was done in 1990. In 1995 Pastor Zuleger with the capable help of the Elders began an intense undertaking to clear the membership rolls. After making it clear that the church offered them nothing, 35 members were dropped from membership. Pastor Zuleger is the pastor I remember most and his gifts are centered upon preaching perhaps more than anything. Pastor Zuleger will be remembered as a wonderful preacher of God's Word.

#### The Present Day Church Building

In the years preceding 1926, St. John experienced a steady and gradual growth. By that time the original church building which was constructed in 1891 was becoming too small as well as too unsafe. So it was that in the spring of 1926 the members decided to erect a new edifice. The following men were elected to serve on the church building committee: Emil Stibb, Lawrence Schrupp, G.E. Warnke, John Nelson, and Pastor J. H. Hinck. This new building would be built just south of the old church and can<sup>15</sup> be located on the west side of N. 3rd street, in Wood Lake. In order to accommodate the perceived growth it was decided to build a church that was 40' by 98'. It would have a seating capacity of 400 people. It was also decided to go with a flat

roofed bell tower, rather than the pointed bell tower of the old church. The contract to build the new church was granted to Bertelson Construction of Forest City, Iowa. The bid price for the structure was \$28,663.00. The architect of the church was also from Forest City by the name of Thorwald Thorson. Bertelson Construction tore down the old church and used some the wood to build a tool shed, office and scaffolding. During the erection of the new church, services were held in the public school gymnasium which was across the street. All the materials for the church; the brick, sand, cement, tile, etc. were shipped by rail and then hauled to the site by Martin and Fred Ahrend. The lumber that was used was purchased locally from S. H. Bowman Lumber Co. of Wood Lake. The bell from the old church was saved and installed in the brick bell tower. The janitor would ring this bell on Saturday evenings as a reminder that the next day was the Lord's day. This custom of ringing the bell on Saturday has since disappeared as it was apparently too much of a hassle for the janitor to do.[10]. The interior of the church was furnished mostly through the donations of members. The cornerstone of the church was laid on July 11, 1926 with the contents of the old cornerstone once again entombed in the new cornerstone. Items included: coins, newspapers, a list of members, the constitution, and the church by-laws. Work was completed on the church and dedicated on February 27, 1927.

The church is not unlike many other Neo-Gothic style churches. It has a single bell tower with louvres on all four sides. Access to the bell tower can be gained off the balcony. The narthex is very small and gets crowded very easily. To the left of the narthex, facing the altar, is a crying room. Inside the nave, to the right, is the stairs which wind up to the balcony. The balcony itself can accommodate about 100 people. The nave of the church is narrow but long with two

sides of pews which can seat another 300. <sup>There</sup> ~~There~~ are stained glass windows on either wall, and on both the front and the back of the church. Facing the chancel, the wood lectern is on the left and the pulpit on the right. Before the early '70's there was a large clock to the right of the pulpit. It's been said that the pastor could reach out with his left hand and touch it. By about 1973 it was removed and a new clock was placed on the balcony facing the pastor. No longer could the members time the pastor's sermons so easily. [11]. The altar is made of wood and is adorned with the statue of Christ which was given as a gift to celebrate the 60th anniversary in 1945. The organ is placed on the left front of the nave and the pipes are hidden just off the chancel on the left side. There is a pastor's office off the back right side of the chancel which contains a desk and other office equipment. Ceiling fans were placed in the church during a redecorating project in 1980.

### The Christian Day School

The history of the Christian Day School dates all the way back <sup>to</sup> the very beginning of St. John. As early as 1889, St. John's members had the desire to grant a Christian education to their children. The first schooling was actually done in the home of Adolph Ziebarth. In 1891 the congregation set forth to build a school but it was later decided to build a church instead. In this first church the pastors taught school part time. In 1900 the first school house was built. It was a one room school which served until 1953 when the new school was built. In this first school only grades 5-8 met. The students were taught Bible History, and Hymnology together, while the 5th and 6th graders were taught other subjects apart from the 7th and 8th graders.

All of the instruction before 1927 was done primarily by the pastor alone. Sometimes part time female teachers would assist, but no permanent teacher was called. In 1927 the decision was finally reached to call a full time teacher. The classes became too large and the pastor's work load too heavy for the pastor to continue teaching. The first call for a teacher was extended to George Kiecker who accepted and was installed on the first Sunday in September, 1927. Mr. Kiecker served only two years and a second call was extended to Miss Alma Sievert. Miss Sievert served as teacher for the next seven years.

By the early 1950's it became obvious that the old one room school house was not big enough for all the students. It was therefore decided to build a new school building which could accommodate eight classes. The first plans were to build in 1952, but the bids for construction were turned down because they were too expensive. Another call for bids was issued in 1953 and these were accepted. The new building was 58 feet long and 47 feet wide. It built up against the church giving it the appearance of one continuous building. The school contains two classrooms upstairs with a seating capacity of 40 per room. The basement contains boys and girls bathrooms, hooks to hang coats, and a small open gym. Recently a kindergarden room was built into one corner of the gym giving them some privacy. In the upstairs there is also an office which can be used for office use and serves as the principal's office. The grounds around the school are furnished today with a basketball court and playground equipment.

After the new two room school was built in 1954, the school enrollment included 1st through 8th grade. From that time a second teacher was called to teach the lower grades while the principal taught the upper grades. This <sup>arrangement</sup> method continues today.

## The Future

The future of St. John's Lutheran Church and School is a bit cloudy. Dropping attendance and decreased offerings are signs that the church may have to join with other small churches to make operating feasible. The drop in offerings has also caused concern about the grade school. <sup>Beginning with</sup> ~~Starting~~ in the 1993 school year St. John's school has started charging tuition. More and more of support for the school will have to come from the parents. A sad case indeed.

Alas, there is reason to have a hopeful outlook. In the preceding pages of history, God's guiding hand is clearly seen <sup>f</sup> ~~From~~ St. John's early beginnings to the modern day. When asked how God's hand has been visible in the congregation member Ervin Munsch responded, "We've always had devoted pastors in our church." [12]. Harold Jeseritz responded, "By being able to support a Day School. By most of the time having had dedicated, hard working pastors and teachers." [12]. Clearly one of the great resources St. John has had is good shepherds. They have kept the flock of souls together for 111 years and continue to do so into the future. Surely God has blessed St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Surely God will continue to do so in the future.



#### End Notes.

1. The number 18 is taken from "Golden Anniversary Homecoming", a publication issued in 1935. p.11
2. This name of the church appears this way only once in "Golden Anniversary Homecoming", p.11. In subsequent histories the reference to the Augsburg Confession is dropped.
3. For one reason or another, August Schulz is not a an officer in the church nor is he a signer of the constitution.
4. The location and history of this school is not known.
5. This \$10 per 80 acres is spoken of in "Centennial Anniversary" p.4.
6. Pastor Arndt's payment is referred to in "Centennial Anniversary" p.5.
7. These are responses to question number 21. All other responses are in Addendum A.
8. These words of Traub are found in "Centennial Anniversary" p.7.
9. This information regarding the last German servive are written in "Centennial Anniversary" p.9.
10. This conclusion was based on information supplied in the responses to question number 2 of the questionnaire.
11. This reflects the thoughts of Freddie Goltz in his response to question number 15 of the questionnaire.
12. Both are responses to question number 23 of questionnaire.

## Bibliography

"Centennial Anniversary of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church"  
1885 - 1985 This booklet was printed for the centennial celebration of  
St. John. 1985. Available in the WI Synod Archives, Mequon, WI.

"Diamond Jubilee" 1885 - 1960. This booklet was printed for the  
75th anniversary of St. John. 1960. Synod Archives, Mequon, WI.

"Golden Anniversary Homecoming" A history of St. John's Ev. Luth.  
Church. June 9th, 1935. Printed by Northwestern Publishing House,  
Milwaukee, WI. Available in the Synod Archives, Mequon, WI.

Questionnaire sent by Paul Gunderson.

Responses of the following are included in addendum A.

1. Goltz, Freddie. Rt. 1 Wood Lake, MN. 56297.
2. Jeseritz, Harold. Rt. 1 Box 104, Wood Lake, MN 56297.
3. Munsch, Ervin. Wood Lake, MN 56297.
4. Rhode, Dale. Box 116, Wood Lake, MN 56297.
5. Rigge, Orvin. Rt. 1 Box 152, Echo, MN 56237.
6. Schulz, Harold. Rt. 1 Box 32, Wood Lake, MN 56297.

Addendum A

Responses to a Questionnaire sent by Paul Gunderson

# Response of Harold Schultz

March 31, 1996

Please respond to my address at the seminary before April 30.

I am in the midst of writing a Church History paper for one of my classes. The topic of my paper is the history of St. John's Lutheran of Wood Lake. To help me in my research I have included many questions that would help me in completing an accurate history of our beloved church. If you could please take a few minutes to answer as many questions as best you are able, it would be most appreciated. Remember you don't have to answer any question you do not know. On the backsides of the sheets, please feel free to write down any memories that you would like to share about St. John's.

1. In 1884 the first service was held in the home of August Schulz. Services were conducted in his home for two years. Where were the services held after 1886, before the church was built in 1891?

as I understand our congregation was affiliated with St. Lukes of Eisen and four times a year pastor Scheitel came to conduct a communion service in the English school house.

2. In 1928 the janitor was instructed to ring bell at 6 o'clock on Saturday evenings because of an old tradition. What was the tradition and why was it stopped?

It was a reminder that the following day Sunday was church & people were to come. as I understand it was stopped as the Janitors stopped on their own.

3. In 1949 the men and women attended communion together? What was the practice before 1949?

as far as I know and from members older than me they always attended together.

4. At one time the men and women sat on different sides of the church.

About when did they start sitting together? From what I hear they were sitting together since the early 1900's.

5. How many rooms were in the old school?

one room with grades 5 to 8

6. Which classes were held together?

religion. some secular subjects with grades 5 & 6 and grades 7 & 8

7. In 1971 it was determined to have only one service each Sunday.

Was there always two services each Sunday before that? yes. The first service was in German

8. How often were Mission Festivals held?

Twice a year after 1961  
once a year before that

9. Where were they held?

before 1927 they were held outside in Otto Schütz  
or Gottlieb Just Grove.

10. When did St. John's stop having special mission festival services  
outside?

1927

11. When I was in grade school I went on several class trips. When  
you were in school did you also go on class trips? If so, where? *yes.*

*Mostly to the cities to places of interest.*

12. Did St. John's begin using the 1941 The Lutheran Hymnal right  
away?

*This was before my time as I was born in 1943*

13. Do you recall much controversy over its use?

*I was too young to recall*

14. St. John's was started by Lutheran families who had moved to Wood  
Lake. Do you know anything of where they came from and how they  
became Lutheran?

*The families that started our church  
brought this with them from Germany.*

15. When was the clock in the church moved from near the pulpit to the  
balcony?

*about 1980*

16. Do you recall what happened to the old clock?

*NO I don't*

17. Do you recall any struggle or opposition to the dropping of German  
in the services until it was finally eliminated?

*as the people interested  
in German passed on there was not enough people  
attending this service to make it feasible. I don't  
recall any opposition.*

18. In your lifetime, what are the biggest changes that you recall that happened to St. John's?

going From German to English services. building of the present School. New Entry Way built.

19. What are the saddest changes you have seen?

as our farmers and small towns disappear our congregation gets smaller.

20. If you could restore some old traditions, which ones would you bring back?

I think the times we have now are good to live in.

21. Do you recall how the church survived the Great Depression years?

As I am told they were dedicated Christians and supported it the best they could with believing hearts and they made it.

22. When you were in Grade school, what was your average day like? Please include any stories you remember about being in school.

I was in the upper grades room after the new school was built. We were taught about the same classes as they have now except for computer classes. We did not have sports as we have today.

23. In the years that you have been a member of St. John's, how have you seen God's love for mankind shown to our church?

It has been good for the people with believing hearts. We have a few people who fell by the wayside but all churches do.

24. What do you think the future will bring for St. John's.

As we get smaller we could be sharing a pastor with another WELS congregation. Our school might be forced to close.

Orrin Rigge

March 31, 1996

Please respond to my address at the seminary before April 20.

I am in the midst of writing a Church History paper for one of my classes. The topic of my paper is the history of St. John's Lutheran of Wood Lake. To help me in my research I have included many questions that would help me in completing an accurate history of our beloved church. If you could please take a few minutes to answer as many questions as best you are able, it would be most appreciated. Remember you don't have to answer any question you do not know. One the backsides of the sheets, please feel free to write down any memories that you would like to share about St. John's.

*Sorry this is late - we left 2 days after we received this and a week trip out east. I've been writing this on the bus.*

1. In 1884 the first service was held in the home of August Schulz. Services were conducted in his home for two years. Where were the services held after 1886, before the church was built in 1891?

*please excuse the writing -*

2. In 1928 the janitor was instructed to ring bell at 6 o'clock on Saturday evenings because of an old tradition. What was the tradition and why was it stopped?

*Orrin Rigge*

*to remind people to go to church the next morning!*

3. In 1949 the men and women attended communion together? What was the practice before 1949?

*went separately, men first!*

4. At one time the men and women sat on different sides of the church. About when did they start sitting together?

*Maybe when the new church was built.*

5. How many rooms were in the old school?

*One large room and a cloakroom.*

6. Which classes were held together?

*hymnology - Bible History*

7. In 1971 it was determined to have only one service each Sunday. Was there always two services each Sunday before that?

*One German & One English.*

1426

8. How often were Mission Festivals held?

*once a year - in June.*



9. Where were they held?

Gottlieb Just for many years. Then Otto Schulas  
right south of Woodlake

10. When did St. John's stop having special mission festival services outside?

Early 30s

11. When I was in grade school I went on several class trips. When you were in school did you also go on class trips? If so, where?

No.

12. Did St. John's begin using the 1941 The Lutheran Hymnal right away?

~~I don't remember hearing of any problems.~~  
I don't remember.

13. Do you recall much controversy over its use?

I don't remember hearing <sup>of</sup> any problems.

14. St. John's was started by Lutheran families who had moved to Wood Lake. Do you know anything of where they came from and how they became Lutheran?

Some came from Poland.  
They came from Europe as Lutherans.

15. When was the clock in the church moved from near the pulpit to the balcony?

2.

16. Do you recall what happened to the old clock?

moved it to back of church

17. Do you recall any struggle or opposition to the dropping of German in the services until it was finally eliminated?

a few of the real Germans miss it.

18. In your lifetime, what are the biggest changes that you recall that happened to St. John's?

*Common Cup to individual cup.*

19. What are the saddest changes you have seen?

*We miss our former members who are now in Heaven, looking forward to reuniting with them.*

20. If you could restore some old traditions, which ones would you bring back?

*Outdoor mission services.*

21. Do you recall how the church survived the Great Depression years?

*It was before our time.*

22. When you were in Grade school, what was your average day like? Please include any stories you remember about being in school.

*It was like a happy family with our Heavenly Father as its' head.*

23. In the years that you have been a member of St. John's, how have you seen God's love for mankind shown to our church?

*God has Blessed its' progress.*

24. What do you think the future will bring for St. John's.

*It is in God's hands  
We must all pray.*

I hope it helped you Paul — Freddie Holtz

March 31, 1998

using the enclosed envelope

Please respond to my address at the seminary before April 20.

I am in the middle of writing a Church History paper for one of my classes. The topic of my paper is the history of St. John's Lutheran of Wood Lake. To help me in my research I have included many questions that would help me in completing an accurate history of our beloved church. If you could please take a few minutes to answer as many questions as best you are able, it would be most appreciated. Remember you don't have to answer any question you do not know. On the backsides of the sheets, please feel free to write down any memories that you would like to share about St. John's.

68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73

1. In 1884 the first service was held in the home of August Schulz. Services were conducted in his home for two years. Where were the services held after 1886, before the church was built in 1891?

Dont know — 1885 church organized — Centennial 1985  
I dont have access to the old minutes — very likely in German  
I have the Centennial booklet & the 75 yr booklet 1885-1960 — I'd be glad to share

2. In 1928 the janitor was instructed to ring bell at 6 o'clock on Saturday evenings because of an old tradition. What was the tradition and why was it stopped?

Perhaps you have both

I was told that it was to remind people that there would be church tomorrow — Perhaps was stopped because it was an inconvenience for the Janitor I recall it in the 60s & 70s — Perhaps beginning of Sabbath

3. In 1949 the men and women attended communion together? What was the practice before 1949?

Paul, I was born in 38 & raised in St. Johns for my lifetime — I don't remember men & women communing separately  
I talked to K. Ellingson and our best guess on the change of men & women together was perhaps the late '20s — Communion also about the same time.  
4. At one time the men and women sat on different sides of the church. K. Ellingson  
About when did they start sitting together?

I conferred with Kenneth Ellingson last Fri while it was snowing he is 85 yrs old & good memory

5. How many rooms were in the old school?

One room, 5th — 8th grades  
I went to the old wooden school  
948-52 Confirmed in 52 — New building start use in spring of 54

6. Which classes were held together?

5th thru 8th grade

7. In 1971 it was determined to have only one service each Sunday. Perhaps 8:30 & 10:30  
Was there always two services each Sunday before that? Yes — early & late

Dont know when the 2 services started or stopped — The membership was increasing from late 40s till a peak in membership in 1959 — getting less members since 1959

8. How often were Mission Festivals held?

— perhaps 2 times a year  
— Out door was only once a year — in Hank Just grove, SW edge of W.L., also in Schulz grove  
— the other was in spring or fall in the church building  
— Centennial says June & Sept mission Fest started in 1961  
better info. on the back from 75+ Cent. book

9. Where were they held?

answered above

10. When did St. John's stop having special mission festival services outside?

A best guess is about late 30s or early 40s  
The cent. book says 1927 no longer out doors

11. When I was in grade school I went on several class trips. When you were in school did you also go on class trips? If so, where?

I remember state capital - I think other places but don't remember

12. Did St. John's begin using the 1941 The Lutheran Hymnal right away?

Dont know - perhaps took some time  
example - we only started with new hymnal about 1 year ago  
had the sampler before - used part of time

13. Do you recall much controversy over its use?

there was some controversy - people tend to buck changes,  
& always the cost factor involved

14. St. John's was started by Lutheran families who had moved to Wood Lake. Do you know anything of where they came from and how they became Lutheran?

I don't know - for sure but I think my grandparent were Lutherans in Germany - my ancestors came to W.L. in 1902

15. When was the clock in the church moved from near the pulpit to the balcony?

my guess is about the early 70s  
I think it happened under I was secretary from 68-73  
I think it was dumb - a way to time the minister - glad it was changed

16. Do you recall what happened to the old clock?

Dont know - perhaps went to school or basement

17. Do you recall any struggle or opposition to the dropping of German in the services until it was finally eliminated?

It got so that there were fewer & fewer old people to understand German  
I had been <sup>cong</sup> secretary & researched that the last regular German service were in 1951 to the best of my knowledge  
Perhaps an occasional festival service on an irregular basis  
From 1954-58 only 2 German services per month  
it says the last Ger service was Aug 1960 on the back

18. In your lifetime, what are the biggest changes that you recall that happened to St. John's?

The Synod split with Missouri in I think 1961

19. What are the saddest changes you have seen?

Decrease in membership — poor attendance — seems to be more dead timber in the church all time

20. If you could restore some old traditions, which ones would you bring back?

to kneel for confession — but we turned our backs to the altar & knelt in the benches facing east & also knelt upon return from communion — but the up & down was hard for old people

I would like to kneel as we receive communion as they do in some churches — but is not convenient here without a railing

21. Do you recall how the church survived the Great Depression years?

Everyone's wages were small - perhaps the clergy received more gratuities in the 29-33 years  
then now - the same story - I'm sure it was a struggle with the budget

22. When you were in Grade school, what was your average day like?  
Please include any stories you remember about being in school.

The first hour was Bible, hymnalogy, or catechism - What I recall, the teachers I had made school fun - it seemed we laughed often! and still learned a lot. Excellent years & perhaps is why I count myself among the faithful to this day.

23. In the years that you have been a member of St. John's, how have you seen God's love for mankind shown to our church? & school

Being a parochial school backer, I thought our school might have been closed by now, but thank God it's still going, for how long, God knows! Perhaps the school drew your parents to W.I.

24. What do you think the future will bring for St. John's.

Being a realist I think eventually we will share a pastor and I hate to see it but I think the school will close.

Harold Jeseritz

March 31, 1998

using the enclosed envelope

Please respond to my address at the seminary before April 20.

I am in the midst of writing a Church History paper for one of my classes. The topic of my paper is the history of St. John's Lutheran of Wood Lake. To help me in my research I have included many questions that would help me in completing an accurate history of our beloved church. If you could please take a few minutes to answer as many questions as best you are able, it would be most appreciated. Remember you don't have to answer any question you do not know. On the backsides of the sheets, please feel free to write down any memories that you would like to share about St. John's.

1. In 1884 the first service was held in the home of August Schulz. Services were conducted in his home for two years. Where were the services held after 1886, before the church was built in 1891?

?

2. In 1928 the janitor was instructed to ring bell at 6 o'clock on Saturday evenings because of an old tradition. What was the tradition and why was it stopped?

*I think it was to remind the people that tomorrow was Sunday? I don't know why it was stopped*

3. In 1949 the men and women attended communion together? What was the practice before 1949?

?

4. At one time the men and women sat on different sides of the church. About when did they start sitting together?

P

5. How many rooms were in the old school?

*1 Room*

6. Which classes were held together?

*Music was held together 5 through 8 grade*

7. In 1971 it was determined to have only one service each Sunday. Was there always two services each Sunday before that?

8. How often were Mission Festivals held?

*once a yr.*



9. Where were they held?

*Walter Schulz Grove which was also his cattle pasture*

10. When did St. John's stop having special mission festival services outside? ?

11. When I was in grade school I went on several class trips. When you were in school did you also go on class trips? If so, where?

*no*

12. Did St. John's begin using the 1941 The Lutheran Hymnal right away? ?

13. Do you recall much controversy over its use?

*no*

14. St. John's was started by Lutheran families who had moved to Wood Lake. Do you know anything of where they came from and how they became Lutheran?

*St John's was started by pastor Schertel from prison.  
Most of the people that settled in the Wood Lake Community came  
from Germany in & were Lutherans.*

15. When was the clock in the church moved from near the pulpit to the balcony? ?

16. Do you recall what happened to the old clock? *no.*

17. Do you recall any struggle or opposition to the dropping of German in the services until it was finally eliminated?

*It was gradually phased out like one Sunday a month  
and would also have English Service the same Sunday.*

18. In your lifetime, what are the biggest changes that you recall that happened to St. John's?

New school. our present church was built the yr.  
New Entry I was born 1926  
New organ  
New lights  
Cushions in the pews.

19. What are the saddest changes you have seen?

The loss of our old Hymnals  
The reason for that is the wording is ok, but the music is hard in some of the Hymns. The new commission service is really hard. If my parents were still living they no way could follow and that would be a shame. I can't read notes and there are many others. Not count why the music was changed so much I don't know. I had around in church and there are many people not singing cause the can't follow

20. If you could restore some old traditions, which ones would you bring back?

I guess any body can kneel and say a pray when you come back from taking communion. But no one does any more. But it was a more private prayer to God when we did. The larger membership in men club. what has now dwindled to 8 to 10 people.

21. Do you recall how the church survived the Great Depression years?

I remember our parents telling how the pastors took a cut in salary.

22. When you were in Grade school, what was your average day like? Please include any stories you remember about being in school.

We only had 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades and I only went to school there in my 6<sup>th</sup> + 7<sup>th</sup> grade. one teacher had all 5 grades. Three times a week we had instruction class by the pastor. We also had Bible history every morning. Every Friday we had to learn a Hymn. 3 or 4 verses.

23. In the years that you have been a member of St. John's, how have you seen God's love for mankind shown to our church?

By being able to support a day school.

By most of the time we had dedicated hard working pastors & teachers

24. What do you think the future will bring for St. John's.

I think in the future the farms will be getting bigger which will have an effect on membership. which maybe some of the smaller church will be forced to close. Being St. John's is in town it probly will get some of those members. If the school can remain open it will also get members.

Dale Rhode

March 31, 1998

use the enclosed envelope

Please respond to my address at the seminary before April 20.

I am in the midst of writing a Church History paper for one of my classes. The topic of my paper is the history of St. John's Lutheran of Wood Lake. To help me in my research I have included many questions that would help me in completing an accurate history of our beloved church. If you could please take a few minutes to answer as many questions as best you are able, it would be most appreciated. Remember you don't have to answer any question you do not know. On the backsides of the sheets, please feel free to write down any memories that you would like to share about St. John's.

1. In 1894 the first service was held in the home of August Schulz. Services were conducted in his home for two years. Where were the services held after 1886, before the church was built in 1891?

Old school house in the afternoon

2. In 1928 the janitor was instructed to ring bell at 6 o'clock on Saturday evenings because of an old tradition. What was the tradition and why was it stopped?

the first day was Sunday  
the bell had a crack in it

3. In 1949 the men and women attended communion together? What was the practice before 1949?

they sat separate

4. At one time the men and women sat on different sides of the church. About when did they start sitting together?

1941 1936 OR 1939

5. How many rooms were in the old school? |

6. Which classes were held together? 5, 6, 7, 8

7. In 1971 it was determined to have only one service each Sunday. Was there always two services each Sunday before that?

yes, yesterday

8. How often were Mission Festivals held? Once a year

9. Where were they held? *Wethers Lent Grove*

10. When did St. John's stop having special mission festival services outside? *1927*

11. When I was in grade school I went on several class trips. When you were in school did you also go on class trips? If so, where?  
*I did not go to grade school*

12. Did St. John's begin using the 1941 The Lutheran Hymnal right away?  
*DON'T KNOW*

13. Do you recall much controversy over its use?

14. St. John's was started by Lutheran families who had moved to Wood Lake. Do you know anything of where they came from and how they became Lutheran?  
*Pesh township ~~Wish~~*

15. When was the clock in the church moved from near the pulpit to the balcony?  
*~~1958~~ 1968 or 1969*

16. Do you recall what happened to the old clock?

*don't know*

17. Do you recall any struggle or opposition to the dropping of German in the services until it was finally eliminated?

*not enough ~~was~~ one left*

18. In your lifetime, what are the biggest changes that you recall that happened to St. John's?

lot people have more away ~~on~~ the church

Memberships if yellow ~~from~~ ~~smaller~~

19. What are the saddest changes you have seen?

Pastor Meyer got in in ~~related~~ with a woman ~~in~~ our church. also people just attending church but going ~~on~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~

20. If you could restore some old traditions, which ones would you bring back?

the old hymnal because it is easier to understand

Ring the Bell again Saturday ~~night~~ again

21. Do you recall how the church survived the Great Depression years?

*the members manage to ~~live~~ through it*

22. When you were in Grade school, what was your average day like? Please include any stories you remember about being in school.

23. In the years that you have been a member of St. John's, how have you seen God's love for mankind shown to our church? *many times*

24. What do you think the future will bring for St. John's.

*I hope the church can remain open for a long time*

Erin Munsch

March 31, 1996

Please respond to my address at the seminary before April 20.

I am in the midst of writing a Church History paper for one of my classes. The topic of my paper is the history of St. John's Lutheran of Wood Lake. To help me in my research I have included many questions that would help me in completing an accurate history of our beloved church. If you could please take a few minutes to answer as many questions as best you are able, it would be most appreciated. Remember you don't have to answer any question you do not know. On the backsides of the sheets, please feel free to write down any memories that you would like to share about St. John's.

1. In 1884 the first service was held in the home of August Schulz. Services were conducted in his home for two years. Where were the services held after 1886, before the church was built in 1891?

*In the old wooden church that they built right beside north of the parsonage.*

2. In 1928 the janitor was instructed to ring bell at 6 o'clock on Saturday evenings because of an old tradition. What was the tradition and why was it stopped?

*It was a custom that the Janitor would ring the bell at 6:00 clock. It was first stopped no one knows why.*

3. In 1949 the men and women attended communion together? What was the practice before 1949?

*The men went alone and the women went alone.*

4. At one time the men and women sat on different sides of the church. About when did they start sitting together?

*They started sitting together in 1949.*

5. How many rooms were in the old school?

*1 room and 1 classroom*

6. Which classes were held together?

*5th 6th 7th 8th*

7. In 1971 it was determined to have only one service each Sunday. Was there always two services each Sunday before that?

*No*

8. How often were Mission Festivals held?

*once a yr.*



9. Where were they held?

*Aug. Schurz + Iust grove*

10. When did St. John's stop having special mission festival services outside?

11. When I was in grade school I went on several class trips. When you were in school did you also go on class trips? If so, where?

*no*

12. Did St. John's begin using the 1941 The Lutheran Hymnal right away?

*yes*

13. Do you recall much controversy over its use?

*no*

14. St. John's was started by Lutheran families who had moved to Wood Lake. Do you know anything of where they came from and how they became Lutheran?

*no*

15. When was the clock in the church moved from near the pulpit to the balcony?

16. Do you recall what happened to the old clock?

*no*

17. Do you recall any struggle or opposition to the dropping of German in the services until it was finally eliminated?

*no*  
*There weren't too many Germans left anymore*

18. In your lifetime, what are the biggest changes that you recall that happened to St. John's?

*Smaller attendance and Contributions  
are smaller.*

19. What are the saddest changes you have seen?

*Smaller attendance  
Contributions*

20. If you could restore some old traditions, which ones would you bring back?

*Ring the bells at 6 o'clock again.*

21. Do you recall how the church survived the Great Depression years?

God showed his love so we could  
keep it going it was hard but we made.

22. When you were in Grade school, what was your average day like?  
Please include any stories you remember about being in school.

I went to school in Posen - that's  
why some of these questions are hard for me to  
answer - I got confirmed in Posen too.

23. In the years that you have been a member of St. John's, how have  
you seen God's love for mankind shown to our church?

We've always had ~~good~~ devoted  
pastors - in our church -

24. What do you think the future will bring for St. John's.

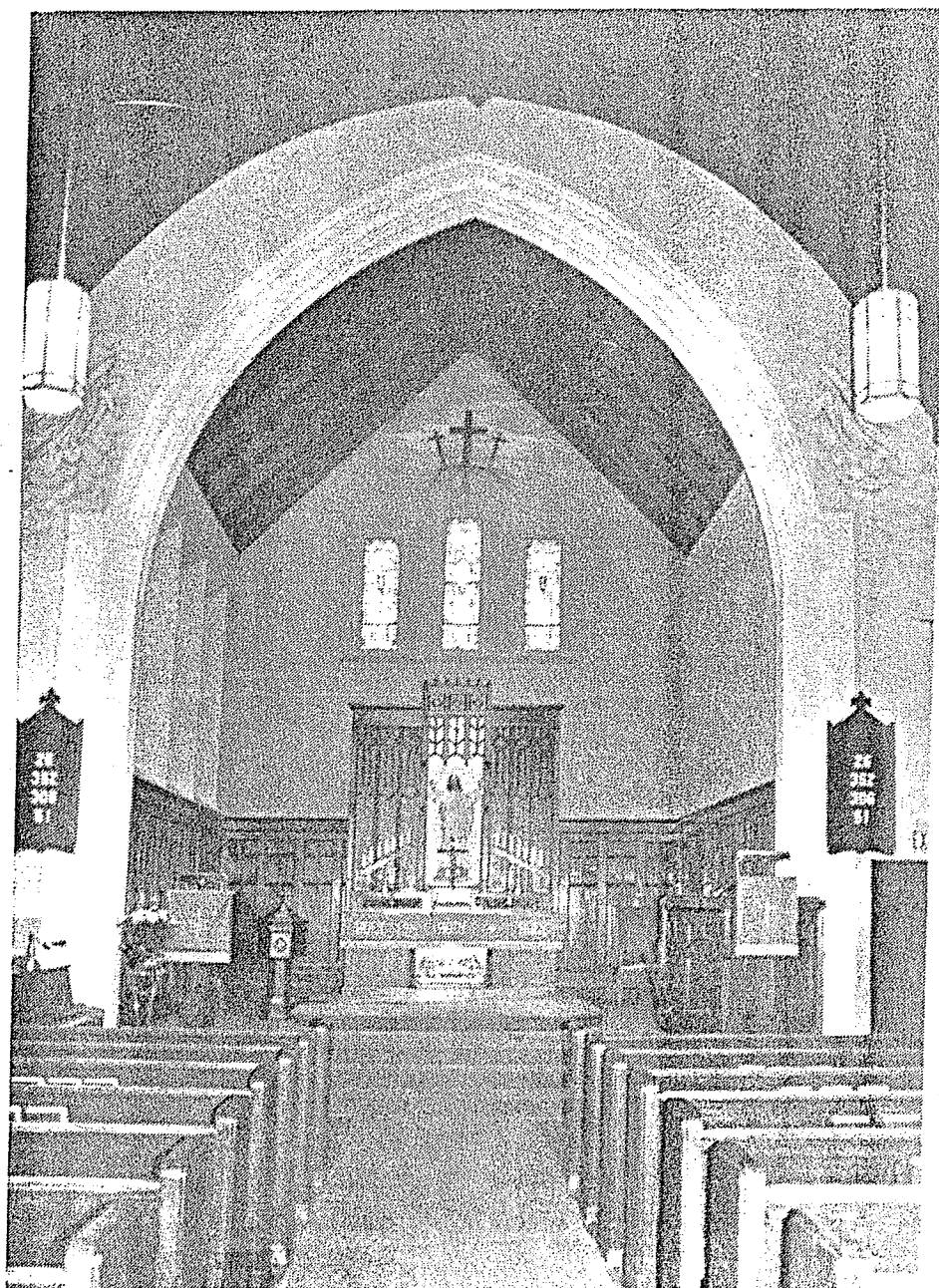
No one knows. our attendance  
hasn't been too good - We don't know how long  
it can survive.

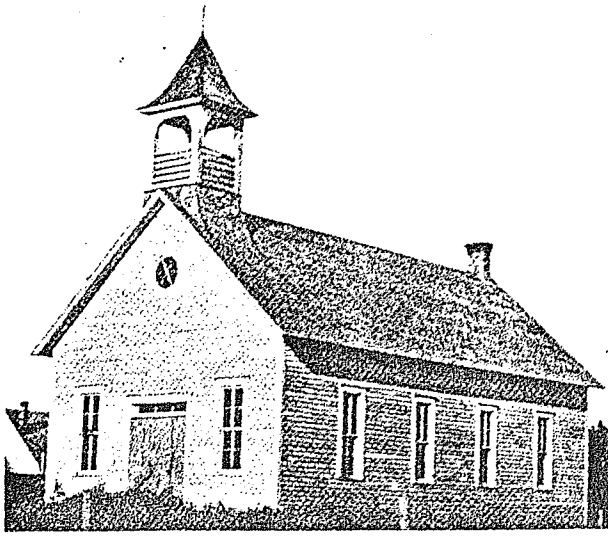
Addendum B.

Selected Photos of Interest

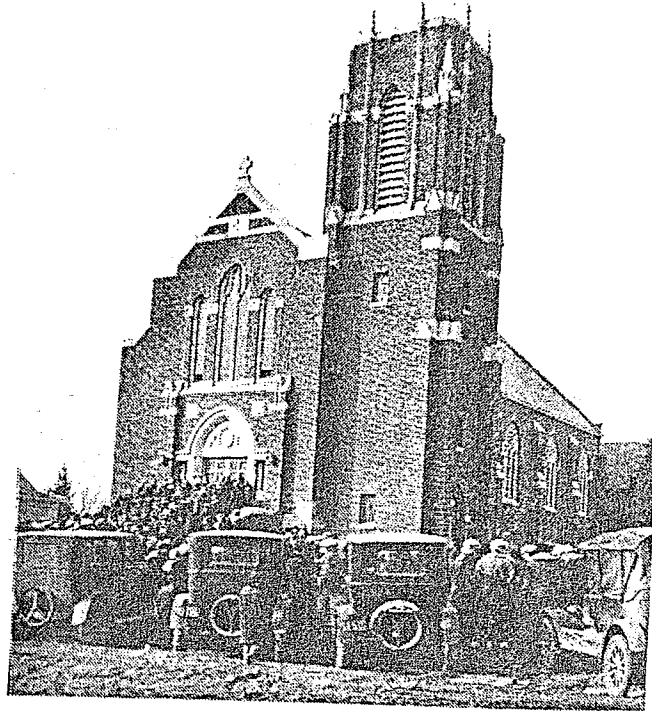
# St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

## Wood Lake, Minnesota

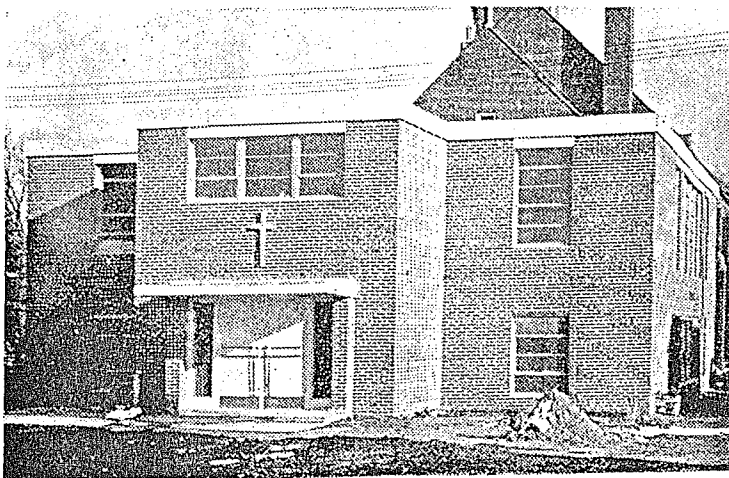




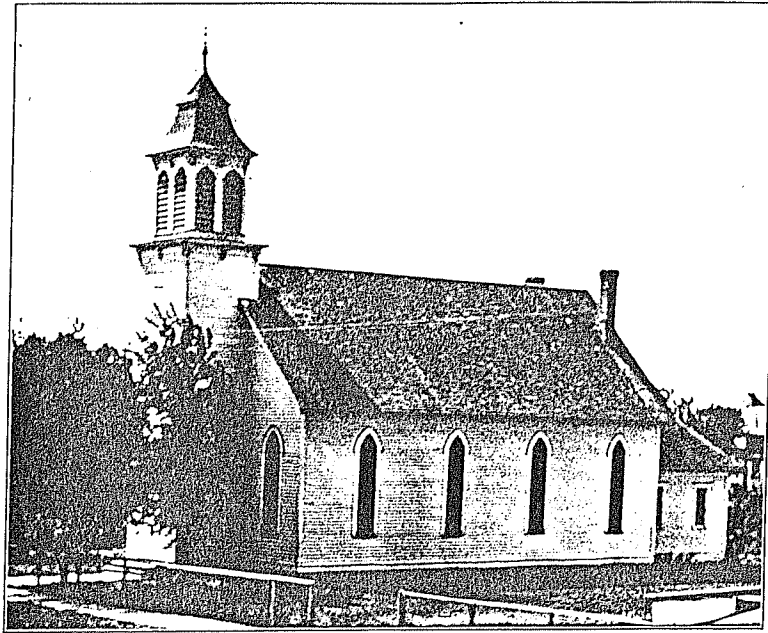
OLD SCHOOL



Church Dedication — February 27, 1927.



NEW SCHOOL



THE OLD CHURCH



# Pastors



Pastor William Schictel  
1885—1892



Pastor August Arndt  
*First Resident Pastor*  
1892—1904



Pastor Justus H. Naumann  
1904—1913



Pastor J. H. Hinck  
1914—1926



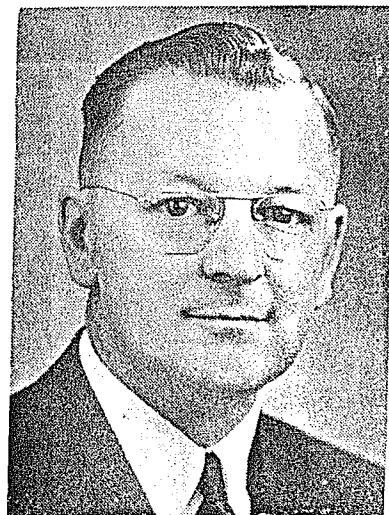
Pastor Carl G. Schmidt  
1926—1936



Pastor F. E. Traub  
1937—1944



Pastor G. F. Zimmermann  
1944—1948

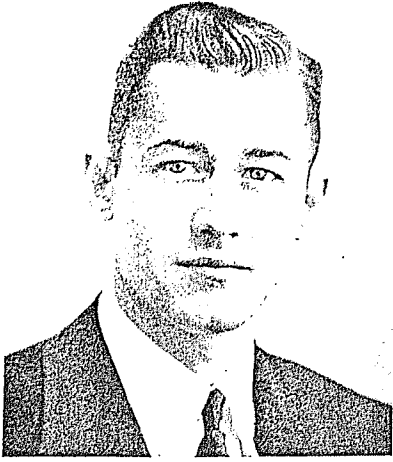


Pastor John W. Stehr  
1948—1954



Pastor Loyd Huebner  
1954—1958

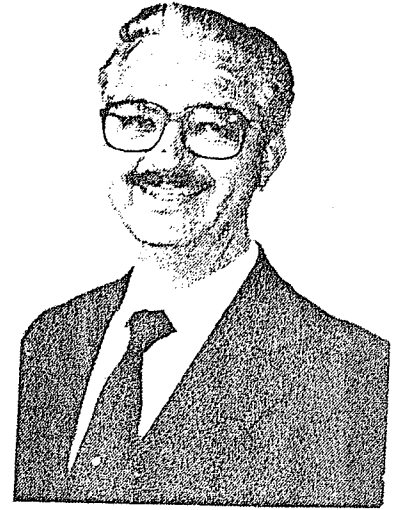




Pastor N. W. Kock  
1958 - 1966



Pastor Gieschen  
1967 - 1974



Pastor David Meyer  
1975 - 1985

## Teachers



Teacher George Kiecker  
1927—1929



Teacher Miss Alma Sievert  
1929—1936