

ST. MARCUS – A METAMORPHOSIS

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"After our preceding meeting on the above-named date, a special meeting was held with members of our Ev. Lutheran congregations in this town who wanted to form a new congregation."¹

No reason for the formation was given, and hence the somewhat mysterious start of another Wisconsin Synod church: The Evangelical Lutheran St. Marcus Congregation. It should not be surprising that this church had an unusual beginning, for little about this church is usual. When you look at its age, its size, the people who have preached in its pulpit, you see that the pinnacles of St. Marcus' history match up with almost any congregation in the WELS today. When you look at its decline, its poverty at times, its near death experience, you see that St. Marcus' valleys are almost as deep as any congregation in the WELS today. Let's briefly look at this remarkable congregation.

I. The Formation

St. Marcus was organized on June 13, 1875, when the charter members met in the branch school of St. John's Congregation. St. John's was one of the mother churches of the young Wisconsin Synod. Located on the corner of 8th and Vleit St., St. John's had daughtered a school on the intersection of Beaubian and Short Streets (which would later be renamed Garfield and Island Streets.² Island would later be renamed Palmer.) But now, for some reason not recorded, members of area churches wanted to start another congregation, north of Grace Ev. Lutheran and east of St. John's. (One likely reason was that membership in other congregations was becoming so dense that a thinning out was deemed necessary.) So Ferdinand Harras, Friedrich Mueller, and Joachim Bismark from St. John's; Johann Puestow and Joachim Siggelkow from St. Matthew's; Christoph Differt, Herman Erdmann, William Last, Carl Krueger, and Carl Jeske from Immanuel's; and John F. Helm, Dietreich Engel, and Friedrich Zink from Trinity, founded St. Marcus.³

¹Minutes of St. Marcus Lutheran Church for June 13, 1875 through February 6, 1876, as taken by J.B. Denninger and C.J. Jeske. Translation by Mark Jeske.

²"Zum Goldenen Jubilaem der St. Markus Gemeinde" page 1.

³Minutes of St. Marcus Lutheran Church for June 13, 1875 through February 6, 1876, as taken by J.B. Denninger and C.J. Jeske. Translation by Mark Jeske.

At that first meeting, these men accepted the offer from St. John's to purchase the school, only three years old, for one-thousand dollars. "Such a price was far below value, but it obviously was arrived at a spirit of helpfulness to fellow Christians in a struggling enterprise."⁴ The only stipulation St. John's put on the offer was that St. Marcus had to become a member of the Wisconsin Synod. Thus a little congregation formed just to the south of North Avenue, which at that time was practically the northernmost border of the city. It was a humble beginning. Mr. Gustov Jeske, Sr. writes, "We had no sidewalks in those days. Often the paths were muddy. As a result the children entered the school with muddy shoes, and the janitor, Mr. Joachim Bismark, had an awful time cleaning the school."⁵ Little did that congregation know how fast cities grow.

At that same meeting the church leaders were chosen. F. Harras was elected the first president and treasurer. J.B. Denninger, who had taught at the school since 1873 when it was owned by St. John's, was called by this infant congregation to remain as the teacher of their school. Mr. Denninger accepted.⁶

The council then proceeded to start calling pastors, for it was announced in the *Germania* that the congregation would hold its first service on Sunday, July 4th, at 9:30am. The first call was issued to Pastor George Reinsch. He declined because he had just accepted another call to Hellenville, WI. The next call was issued to Pastor Streissguth. He also declined. During this interim, either Mr. Denninger would conduct services, or St. Marcus was served by pastors from sister congregations and students at the Seminary.⁷

Good news and bad news came in September of that first year. Teacher Denninger accepted a call he received to teach in Watertown, WI. But on that same day Pastor Joseph Westenberger, serving at Prairie du Chein, WI, was called to serve as both pastor and teacher.

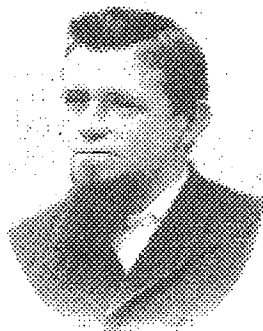
⁴"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

⁵"St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Church - Diamond Jubilee"

⁶"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 24

⁷"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 24

We received him through colloquy from the Iowa Synod. He accepted and in October was installed by Pastor Bading of St. John's.⁸



JOSEPH WESTENBERGER
1875 - 1878

For the first months of its existence, the congregation worshipped on the lower floor of the school. In January of 1876, the upper story of the school was converted into a more chapel-like setting.⁹

The young church underwent quite a bit of change in those early years, particularly among teachers. In May of 1877, Mr. F. Risch was called to take over the job of teacher from Rev. Westenberger. He accepted, but served only until February of 1878. At that time, Theodore Voss, a graduate, was put in charge of the school temporarily. On top of that, in October of 1878, Rev. Westenberger accepted a call to Ripon. It seemed like St. Marcus could not hold onto any of its called workers. "That was too be expected when there were so many larger opportunities, and for that matter, greater need elsewhere."¹⁰ This baby congregation wasn't experiencing anything that the older congregations weren't also going through. It was hard for the congregations to keep up with the immigration of Germans. But this will be a trend you will see time and time again at St. Marcus. The prosperity of the congregation is directly correlated with the ease by which they attain and keep their called workers.

Milwaukee's fame as a haven for Germans was already established by 1870. It even had the nickname "Deutsch-Athen." Most of the German immigrants seemed to prefer to send their children to German schools, which meant, for the most part, Lutheran parochial schools. Thus Lutheran school teachers were much in demand, and the result was quick turn-over.¹¹

⁸"Zum Goldenen Jubilaem der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 24

⁹"Centennial," p. 5

¹⁰"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

¹¹"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

The situation did not improve much with the calling of the next two called workers. From 1878 until 1880, the Seminary was located on the corner of Garfield and Hubbard. When Prof. Eugene Notz received the call to be pastor of St. Marcus, he figured that because of the proximity, he would be able to remain at the Seminary and be a full-time pastor at St. Marcus. This proved to be too much of a challenge, and in May of 1880 he had to resign. Less than five years into its existence and the young church had already had two pastors. In addition, a permanent teacher had been called in February of 1879, Michael Walz. But he took a call to Winona, MN, a few months after Prof. Notz resigned. That made it four teachers in less than five years.¹² There was no stability.



EUGENE NOTZ
1878 - 1880

In June of 1880, Pastor George Reinsch, the very first man St. Marcus had called to be pastor in 1875, was called again. This time he accepted and was installed in September. In that same month, Mr. S. Richter accepted the call to head up the school.¹³



GEORGE REINSCH
1880 - 1891

Though young, because of the continual flood of German immigrants into the Milwaukee, St. Marcus was increasing in size to the point that the chapel had become too small. Around the neighborhood, as many as three German families would be living in one house.¹⁴ Therefore, in February of 1881 the congregation officially adopted the plan to build a church. The church was built by a member, Mr. August Kelling, for the cost of \$5800. An altar and pulpit were purchased for \$500. A pipe organ was

¹²"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 26

¹³"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 26

¹⁴ Interview #1 with Rev. Mark Jeske

purchased for \$1700. The schoolhouse was moved to the back of the lot, and the church was erected on the corner. On December 11, 1881, St. Marcus dedicated its first church building.¹⁵

That same month, the church resolved to call another teacher because of the rapidly growing population of the school. Mr. Bauer accepted the call, but for some reason not recorded he only served for four months. In April, he was replaced by Mr. C. Daus.¹⁶

In May of 1883, Mr. Rudolf Fritzke replaced Mr. Richter, who had accepted a call to St. Peter's congregation in Milwaukee. His leadership was a driving force behind the continued growth of the school. He also worked to bridge the gap between the German-speaking parochial school children of St. Marcus, and the English speaking public school children, such as those that attended the school of Fourth Street.

The public school children, while many were German themselves, seemed to have a hostility toward what they considered "too much German." Their nickname for the St. Marcus students was "Pommeranzen," most likely a distortion of Pommeranian, an often slurred German ethnic group. (St. Marcus did have a large number of members who came from Mecklenburger.) This would result in the occasional snow-ball fight or bloody nose. So Mr. Fritzke decided to make friends with Mr. Pat Shaughnessy, the principle of the Fourth Street School.¹⁷

Mr. Fritzke also filled in on the organ regularly, and was known for his beautiful German organ pieces. It seems the music program really started up under his leadership.¹⁸

Already in that same year, the congregation resolved to call a third teacher and to build a second school. The lot just to the north of the church was available, and so St. Marcus purchased it at the price of \$2350. That was a bit pricy for just a lot, and the congregation's willingness to pay it stands testimony to their dedication to Christian education.

¹⁵"St. Marcus Ev. Lutheran Church Diamond Jubilee" by Rev. E. Ph. Dornfeld, p. 8

¹⁶"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 28

¹⁷"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

¹⁸"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

For reasons unexplained, perhaps lot size, the first school building was moved for a second time, onto the west half of the newly purchased lot. The new, two-storied school house, measuring 26 by 48 feet, was built on that vacated land for \$1843. And it was almost ready to go by October of 1883, when Mr. Fr. Nimmer was called as the third teacher. It was dedicated on November 18th of that year.¹⁹

Along with the school, collections were taken up for a new parsonage. In 1884 a parsonage was built just to the west of the church for the cost of \$1600.²⁰ It stands their to this day, unoccupied, but is currently scheduled to be moved to a vacant lot a few blocks away.

The school continued to undergo some unrest. In March of 1885, Mr. Daus resigned. Because of difficulty in finding a replacement, Paul Reinch, the pastor's son, served as a temporary teacher for one year. In May of 1886 Mr. G. Hartmann accepted the call to be teacher, but he too resigned after two years. He was replaced by Mr. Ph. Lucas.

Despite the turnover, the school continued to prosper, for the desire for a German educational system was still strong. In late 1888 a fourth teacher was called. St. Marcus' first female called worker was Miss Ueckert, who only had to move about a mile, from Grace Church downtown. In December of 1989 Mr. Lucas resigned and was replaced by Mr. William Amling of Defiance, Ohio. Mr. Lucas would bounce in and out of the teaching profession, and eventually end up as Assistant Superintendent of Public Schools in Milwaukee.²¹

One of the low points of St. Marcus' history occurred one year later, in December of 1890. Apparently some impropriety, combined with some gossip, forced Pastor Reinsch to resign. The church minutes make this announcement mercifully short. A blessing which resulted from this hardship came in February of 1891. St. Marcus' fourth pastor, August Pieper, was installed. He was returning from somewhat of a sabbatical year where he went to Arizona to recover from respiratory problems.²² Seemingly recovered, he resumed his ministry in

¹⁹"St. Marcus Ev. Lutheran Church Diamond Jubilee" by Rev. E. Ph. Dornfeld, p.17

²⁰"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 28

²¹"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 28

²²Interview with Rev. Mark Jeske on April 15, 1997

Milwaukee. Among some of the first things Rev. Pieper set about accomplishing was the abolition of beer and gambling at the church picnic, which was resolved in 1893.²³



AUGUST PIEPER
1891 - 1902

Later that year Miss Ueckert resigned, and was replaced by Mr. Herman Rau. He taught the class for two years and was replaced by Mr. Carl Sorg. He taught the remainder of the school year, and was replaced by Mr. Henry Wagner in May of 1894. During that same span of time, Mr. Amling took a call to Manitowoc and was succeeded by Mr. Herman Gruel. Despite all this, the school remained stable. By 1894 there were 322 children attending in St. Marcus' two school-houses.²⁴ Even with two school-houses, there was not enough room. So the congregation resolved to build a new school house to replace the two. Again, this is a testimony first of all to the dedication the church had to Christian education. But it also shows the congregation's trust in God that they were willing to rip down an eleven-year-old building in times that weren't exactly booming economically. They were only able to sell the two school-houses for \$805. The original school-house was moved to an alley at 2717 N. Pierce Street, just north of Center Street, where it stands to this day.²⁵ The second schoolhouse was moved to 21st Street and North Avenue, where it served as a hardware store for awhile.²⁶

The lot on which the congregation wanted to build the new school was 50 by 150 feet, and was owned by Carl and John Teich. When you added that onto the land St. Marcus already owned, the congregation now owned a vacant lot of 100 by 150 feet. That was adequate for the school which they planned, which was to measure 80 by 80 feet, plus amply play space outside.

²³"History of St. Marcus Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin -- 1875-1900," p. 4

²⁴"Zum Goldenen Jubilaem der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 28

²⁵Historic Brewers Hill Tour Book, p. 26

²⁶"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

The plans called for six large classrooms and an auditorium. The purchase of the lot and the cost of the new school increased the church's debt to \$18,925.²⁷

The design for the school building was done by Henry Messmer, who was a famous architect in Wisconsin and has a few buildings downtown which are his work as well.²⁸ The construction itself was accomplished largely by contracting members to do various aspects of the work. On November 4th, 1894, the new school was dedicated. The only thing ~~it~~^{is} was missing was a school bell. Mr. Gustov Jeske tells the story about how the school got one:

"Pastor Pieper came to me one day while I was at work on the tower and asked: 'Of what good is the tower without a bell?' Then he went to Mr. August Buttock, the carpenter contractor, with the same question. Mr. Buttock suggested that Pastor Pieper and he pay half of what the bell would cost, and that I (Mr. Jeske) pay the other half. And so we got the bell." ²⁹

Rev. Pieper was always respected as a scholar and a theologian, and received his first teaching call that same year in September. The call was for professor and dean at Northwestern College. But things in the congregation seemed to be running smoothly, so when the congregations unanimously refused to grant him a release, he returned the call.³⁰

With the bell in place, the school was complete. It stands to this day. With the new school providing plenty of room, and with Rev. Pieper providing plenty of leadership, St. Marcus remained stable for six years.

On June 24, 1900, the church celebrated its 25th anniversary. Former pastor Prof. Eugene Notz preached at the morning service. And Pastor Ernst F. Dornfeld got the feeling of St. Marcus' pulpit in the evening. In between those services another service was held, but this one celebrating the 50 years of grace God had showered on the Wisconsin Synod. The Sy~~o~~^dical

²⁷"St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Church - Diamond Jubilee," p.18

²⁸Historic Brewers Hill Tour Book, p. 26

²⁹"St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Church - Diamond Jubilee," p.18

³⁰"History of St. Marcus Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin -- 1875-1900," p. 5

convention was being held at St. Marcus at the time. Also, Rev. Pieper wrote a history of the first 25 years of St. Marcus, a source that was of great value in the production of this paper.³¹

That year was not all happy, however. Mr. Fritzke and Mr. Nimmer, both of whom had taught for seventeen years, resigned on account of poor health. (However, Mr. Fritzke, whose ailment is listed in biographical documents as "nervous exhaustion,"³² would recover and go into politics, eventually reaching the State Assembly.)³³ Mr. William Amling, who had previously taught at St. Marcus and was now at St. Matthew's, accepted the call back to replace Mr. Firtzke. And Mr. Ed. Gleichmann succeeded Mr. Nimmer. Shortly after, Mr. Gruel resigned, and Mr. Dorn of Indiana was called to replace him. Within the span of months, St. Marcus had three new teachers.³⁴

The respiratory problems of Pastor Pieper never left him. This seems to be the thorn in his flesh, because it kept it from doing what loved the most – the pastoral ministry. So when in August of 1902 Pastor Pieper received a call to the Seminary, now located in Wauwatosa, he accepted.³⁵ (Stories are told around St. Marcus that one of the reasons Prof. Pieper is reputed to be so stern is because he was somewhat bitter for having to leave the pastoral ministry. They may be just prideful stories.) Other histories will prove that St. Marcus' loss was the Synod's gain.

Pastor Ernst Dornfeld would return to St. Marcus, but not as guest preacher. He was called to be St. Marcus fifth pastor, and was installed in October of 1902. He seemed to have an interest in writing, and in January of 1905 published the first *Markusbote*, a church paper which would remain in existence, off and on, until the 1960's. Money management seems to have been another of Rev. Dornfeld's talents. From 1903 to 1910 the congregational debt hovered at almost \$10,000. By 1911 it was wiped out.³⁶

³¹"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 30

³²"History of St. Marcus Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin -- 1875-1900," p.7

³³St. Marcus Messenger, Feb. 1948

³⁴"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 30

³⁵"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 30

³⁶"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 30, 32

The Lord continued to send St. Marcus capable teachers. On October of 1906, Mr. Gleichmann had to resign on account of his poor health. Mr. William Manthey of Watertown, WI accepted the call to replace him. When Mr. Amling resigned in June of 1907 to join his brothers in their floral business in Maywood, IL, Henry Braun of Neenay, WI succeeded him.³⁷ With the ample supply of called workers, St. Marcus was flourishing.

As St. Marcus debts declined during Pastor Dornfeld's pastorship, the congregation started to dream of a new building project -- that of a new church. Already in 1905, the Ladies' Aid had begun collecting money for this project. Members of this society had collectors who made monthly visits to communicants who were willing to contribute to the building fund.³⁸

On January 23, 1911, a tragedy and triumph befell St. Marcus. Rev. Dornfeld had been growing ^{ill} sick of an illness. (The specific ailment is not recorded in any records.) He died on that day after undergoing an operation. The congregation had lost a capable pastor, but Rev. Dornfeld went to his triumphal home. The congregation, so pleased with the work Rev. Dornfeld had done, decided to call his son, Pastor Ernst *Philip* Dornfeld.³⁹ (It is that middle name which is often used in historical records to distinguish between father and son.)



ERNST F. DORNFELD
1902 - 1911

II. Into the Twentieth Century

The second Rev. Dornfeld seemed to be a man with many talents as well, and ^{was} will the pastor who modernizes St. Marcus. He had served in three congregations when St. Marcus called him. He was an accomplished musician, equally talented on the piano, violin, and clarinet. His academic love was Hebrew. Rev. Dornfeld spent time studying the language with some of the

³⁷"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the St. Marcus Messenger, April 1948-October 1949

³⁸"St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Church - Diamond Jubilee," p. 9

³⁹Zum Goldenen Jubilaem der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 32

more prominent rabbis in Milwaukee, to glean from their knowledge. The biographical brief of Rev. Dornfeld records that he also did translating for the Synod -- material to send to the Lutheran Church in Germany. His preferred method of translation was to take the English and put it into Hebrew, and then take the Hebrew and put it into German. The biography summarizes



ERNST PH. DORNFELD
1911 - 1955

his tenure at St. Marcus like this: "The parish was in serious financial and spiritual trouble and he was successful in bring^g_{ing} the congregation together again."⁴⁰

The school entered into a new era that same year. In June of 1911 Mr. Wagner, who had been a teacher at St. Marcus for seventeen years, resigned. Miss Dorthy Gamm was called to succeed him. Not only did she take over his work, but Miss Gamm also started St. Marcus' first Kindergarten.⁴¹

One year later Mr. Manthey took a call to LaCrosse, WI. Since the attendance was down to 160 children, no new teacher was called.⁴² The era of the German-schooling was coming to a close. In the late 1800's, German immigrants preferred to have their children instructed in the German language. Therefore many of the students attending St. Marcus' school weren't members' children, but neighborhood children whose parents didn't want to send them to public school, which used English. But those sentiments were changing. No longer were the German immigrants so interested in having their children studying in German. The fear of being "Americanized" was diminishing. And as this happened, attendance dropped.⁴³

On February 25, 1912, it was officially adopted to collect subscriptions for a new church. At that first meeting alone, \$4280 was pledged. By April of that same year over \$13,000 had been pledged. Combined with the money collected by the Ladies' Aid for the past seven years, the building fund now stood at \$18,690. In that month, the congregation resolved to build. As with

⁴⁰Biographical brief on Rev. Ernst Philip Dornfeld stored in the archives

⁴¹"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 37

⁴²"A Century of Grace - St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

⁴³Interview of Rev. Mark Jeske on April 15, 1997

the first church building, ^{many} much of the contracts were awarded to members -- Louis Borchard, Gust. Jeske, Sr., and Emil Wartchow among them.⁴⁴

In July of 1912, however, the debate arose over whether nor not St. Marcus was centrally located enough. Garfield and Palmer Streets sit just to the west of the Milwaukee River, in the at-that-time affluent neighborhood known as Brewer's Hill. Due to the natural boundary of the river, immigrants were spreading to the north and west of Brewer's Hill. Thus St. Marcus was located in the very south-east corner of the people it served. The congregation decided to set a deadline. They would not start any construction until January 1, 1913. In the meantime, they would take bids on the property. Fortunately, the property could not be sold, and St. Marcus stayed where it was. On Sunday, February 16th, 1913, the last services were held in the old church. Pastor Dornfeld preached in the morning. Prof. Pieper made a guest appearance in the afternoon. And Rev. Jenny of Jacobi preached in the evening.⁴⁵

The church was designed by the firm of Leiser and Holst⁴⁶, and built again largely through contractors that were members of the congregation. Church services were held in the school until February 22, 1914. At that time the new church building was dedicated. It was a grand day in the history of St. Marcus. Prof. Pieper preached in the morning. Rev. Carl Dietz from Immanuel preached in the afternoon. And that evening Rev. John Brenner from St. John's preached a service as well. The attendance of the three services averaged almost 1700...each.⁴⁷

The final cost for the beautiful building was about \$50,750. It was truly a group effort, as many groups gave generously back to God what he had first given to them. The Ladies' Aid donated almost \$4000 for pews and carpets. Another \$4000 was contributed by the young people's society for the organ. The Ladies's Aid, Mixed Choir, and Male Choir contributed over \$2000 for the windows.⁴⁸

⁴⁴"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 34,35

⁴⁵"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 35

⁴⁶Historic Brewers Hill Tour Guide, 1995

⁴⁷"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 35

⁴⁸"Cennential History of St. Marcus," p. 9

1914 was a banner year for St. Marcus, but the new church wasn't the only reason. In September, Pastor Dornfeld informed the congregation that a number of parents requested ^{that} their children be instructed in English. A number of adults taking instruction asked to be taught in English as well. The congregation, seeing the growing interest of English-speaking prospects in their church, resolved to start holding English services. St. Marcus started with two evening, English services a month. That fall, the English Sunday school was started with Miss Eleonore Otto as its first teacher. St. Marcus had its first teacher who taught only in English.

Other modernizations St. Marcus underwent was the envelope system in 1915. The membership was divided into sixteen districts, and each district had a collector and a bookkeeper. The collector only called on communicants "who were in arrears."⁴⁹ During that period in history, it was not uncommon for a congregation to have dues.

Despite the fact that the school hadn't grown substantially in size, in February of 1915 the congregation resolved to call a fourth teacher. The current trend in education was a lower student to teacher ratio. Mr. Herman Martin from Plymouth, WI accepted the call. In addition, tuition was no longer charged for members' children, and an eighth grade was added. Commitment to the school remained strong. When Mr. Dorn resigned in September of that year, the school immediately started looking for a replacement. In April of 1916, Mr. Hugo Wachholz of Juneau, WI accepted the call. When Mr. Braun, a teacher at St. Marcus for nine years, accepted a call to Reedsville, WI in September 1917, the congregation called Mr. Kirschke of Gethsemane Congregation in Milwaukee within two months.⁵⁰

The commitment to the English worship services remained strong as well. On June 23rd, 1918, the first regular Sunday morning service was held at 11:00am.⁵¹

For seven years, Dorthy Gamm had been teaching both the Kindergarten and first grade. This load was proving to be too heavy. So in October, Dorthy's sister, Leonore Gamm, was

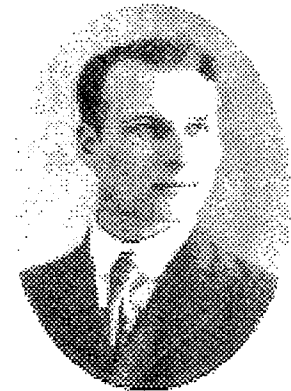
⁴⁹"Zum Goldenen Jubilaem der St. Markus Gemeinde", page 37

⁵⁰"Zum Goldenen Jubilaem der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 37, 39

⁵¹*Markusbote*, April 1918

called to take over the Kindergarten. The salary of this additional teacher was paid for two years by the Ladies Aid.⁵²

In April of 1921, Rev. Dornfeld received a call to teach at the college at Watertown, WI. His first inclination was to accept. He felt that he was no longer able to keep up with the workload required of him at St. Marcus. The congregation, however, was not inclined to let him go. They convinced him to stay by calling a second pastor. On Sunday, August 7th, 1921, Adolf Zeisler, a seminary graduate, was installed as assistant pastor. He served that position until July of 1923, when he accepted a call to a congregation in Minocqua, WI, where he was the sole pastor.⁵³ Unfortunately, eventually Rev. Zeisler would leave the Wisconsin Synod and become a Protestant.⁵⁴ He was succeeded by Pastor Walter Gieschen of Goodrich, WI.



ADOLF ZEISLER
1921 - 1923

In August of 1923, Mr. Martin, the principle, resigned. Rev. Gieschen served as teacher and administrator during the vacancy. But by December of that year, Mr. Christian Heine of



WALTER GIESCHEN
1923 - 1926

Hinckley, IL was installed as Mr. Martin's replacement.⁵⁵ Almost everything recorded about him in the annals of St. Marcus mentions his musical ability. The current church historian, Mrs. Leola Stabelfeld Gruenzel (St. Marcus Class of 1919) recalls that he was a strict director. Yet he was able to convince the mixed choir to rehearse for two hours every Tuesday evening.⁵⁶ He seems to be one of the finest musicians ever to grace St. Marcus.

Mr. Heine was also somewhat of an educational

⁵²"Zum Goldenen Jubiläum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 39

⁵³Markusbote, June 1923

⁵⁴Interview with Rev. Mark Jeske, April 15, 1997

⁵⁵"A Century of Grace - St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

⁵⁶"A Century of Grace - 'I Remember When'," p.2

progressive and convinced the congregation to call its sixth teacher in June 1924. Miss Ruth Hahm, a member of the congregation, received and accepted the call. This was the largest the St. Marcus school faculty had ever been.⁵⁷ It has never been larger since.



PROFESSOR
J. P. MEYER
1927 - 1949

In November of 1926, Rev. Geischen left St. Marcus to take a call as assistant pastor at Jerusalem. Needing some sort of help for Pastor Dornfeld, the congregation asked Prof. J.P. Meyer, who was teaching at the Seminary, to fill in as a preaching assistant. That year Mr. Wachholz also resigned. Mr. Guenther Waidelich accepted a call to replace him.

Within four years, Mr. Waidelich would also resign and was replaced by Mr. Walther P. Denninger of Decatur, IN. Three years later, in 1933, Ruth Hahm retired when she married Rev. Martin Rupprecht, an Evangelical Pastor. They would eventually take a number of mission tours together and Ruth would go on to give lectures about the tours in Evangelical churches in Florida.⁵⁸

The school added another teacher, Mr. Alfred Nicolaus.⁵⁹ Things were running fairly smoothly. (The school, in a moment of whimsy and as an effort to encourage fellowship, installed a bowling alley in the basement.)⁶⁰ Rev. Dornfeld, now in his twenty-fourth year at St. Marcus, proved to be a evangelical and creative leader.

Here is an example. In 1934, the Pastor wanted to be able to budget for the following year. Times were still difficult after the 1929 stock-market crash. So he came up with an idea some churches still use today -- the pledge card. Rev. Dornfeld wrote in the *Markusbote*: "How much do you think you will be able to give in the year 1935? Kindly write the amount on the card^d which you have received from the finance committee and mail it... If you find it impossible to give

⁵⁷"Zum Goldenen Jubilaeum der St. Markus Gemeinde", p. 39

⁵⁸Ruth Rupprecht's obituary, printed in two unknown papers

⁵⁹"A Century of Grace - St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

⁶⁰"A Century of Grace - 'I Remember When'" by Leola Gruenzel, p.2

as much as you stated on the card, all that is necessary is that you report it to the finance committee."⁶¹

His compassion for the sick was very high. He went to see Clara Henning when she was twelve years old. She was sick at home with diptheria (from which she eventually died), and Rev. Dornfeld had to keep his hat and gloves on just to keep from violating the health department. Many members in the congregation strenuously objected to this, but Rev. Dornfeld insisted.⁶²

His capable guidance helped St. Marcus through tough times, and the people loved him for it. He helped the people to understand the changing times, writing discourses in the congregational paper on "swing" music, fortune tellers, Scouting, the lodges, evolution, and even the church growth movement. (Rev. John Booth in Chicago started doing magic tricks in the pulpit, to his congregation's delight.)⁶³

The people of St. Marcus showed their affection for their pastor with the gift they gave him in early 1935 -- a new car. This event is recorded in the *Markusbote*: "The love which could buy so expensive a car and give it to the pastor is worth more to him than all the money in the world. And so this wonderful gift is and shall always be to him an incentive to serve his congregation faithfully."⁶⁴

Things remained fairly calm for almost a decade. Occasionally things slightly controversial would pop up, and Rev. Dornfeld would handle them through publications in the *St. Marcus Messenger* (formerly the *Markusbote*. Another example of Rev. Dornfeld's progressivism.). You can find articles on everything from Unionism to the debate over whether or not to put in short, love-seat styled pews to attract the youth. (Rev. Dornfeld was strongly against this idea.)⁶⁵ Even the transition from the German hymnal to the English TLH version went smoothly. The Lutheran Hymnal was used for the first time on January 1, 1942. The congregation had been aware that

⁶¹*Markusbote*, January 1935

⁶²"A Century of Grace - 'I Remember When'" by Leola Gruenzel, p.4

⁶³*Markusbote*: Nov. 1929, Jan 1931, Aug. 1934

⁶⁴*Markusbote* May 1935

⁶⁵*St. Marcus Messenger*, March 1945 Issue

this date was coming for over six months. That first year Rev. Dornfeld used 130 new hymns, with no major complaints.⁶⁶

In 1944, Christian Heine had to resign as principal. Rev. Dornfeld, the other teachers, and the school board all tried to convince the principal of twelve years to stay, but poor health prevented him. He went into a sort of semi-retirement, starting up his own real estate business.⁶⁷ Mr. William Kirsche took over the principal duties, and Mr. Herman Fehlaur of Crete, IL was called to replace Mr. Heine.⁶⁸

The school was doing well at that time. In March of 1945, St. Marcus started a school library with 406 books.⁶⁹ Enrollment was hovering around two-hundred in the 1940's, and the conventional thought of the day was for a lower student / teacher ratio. This had been pushed by Mr. Heine as well when he was there. So in 1945 the congregation decided to call another teacher. Mrs. A. Maas agreed to teach for one year, until Walter Vater, a son of the congregation, graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College. He did so in 1946 and became a teacher at his home congregation.⁷⁰

The very next year, Mr. Fehlaur resigned. The school decided not to replace him, but a bigger blow came in June of 1949. After nineteen years, Mr. Denninger left St. Marcus to take a call to be principal of St. Martini School. Thus in August of that year, Miss Dorothy Wolf, a daughter of the congregation, took the call to replace him. Her teaching experience had been at the Indian Mission School at Peridit, AZ.⁷¹ She proved to be an extremely valuable asset to St. Marcus.

Another valuable asset gained that year was a young assistant pastor named John Jeske. He was installed on July 24th, 1949 in a service that was half-German / half-English. Prof. Meyer delivered a German sermon. John Jeske, Sr., pastor at Divine Charity Church, delivered a second

⁶⁶*St. Marcus Messenger*, December 1942

⁶⁷"When I Went to St. Marcus School" by Rudolph E. Fritzke, Jr. Published in the *St. Marcus Messenger*, April 1948-October 1949

⁶⁸"A Century of Grace - St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

⁶⁹*St. Marcus Messenger*, June 1945

⁷⁰*St. Marcus Messenger*, June 1946

⁷¹*St. Marcus Messenger*, September 1950

sermon at his son's installation, in English.⁷² The young Rev. Jeske's presence was appreciated by both the congregation and by Rev. Dornfeld. It was a time when pastors could use mutual reassurance, as the Wisconsin Synod was facing some tough decisions. Already in the December 1949 issue of the *St. Marcus Messenger*, there was warning about the sister synod, Missouri. It had been published that some of Missouri's pastors "insisted that a 1% disagreement in a smaller matter does not cancel out a 99% agreement in all of the great fundamental doctrines." The Messenger then includes an explanation of Galatians 5:9.⁷³ Not only did St. Marcus' two pastors want to be honest with the people about this difficult issue, they wanted to help them understand the Biblical principles behind the issue.

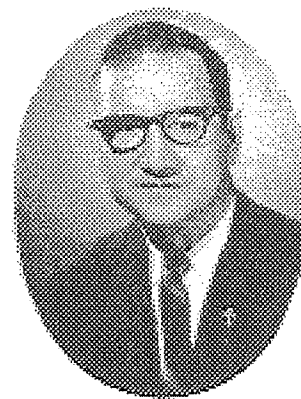
That year the church also organized the "Diamond Jubilee Committee." Their main goal was to come up with a plan of renovation for the church, to be accomplished in 1950. Much of what they accomplished was excellent. The current church, when it was originally built, was lit largely by arches of individual light-bulbs (similar to St. John's, Vleit). Those were removed and chandeliers were put in instead. The sponge-stucco glazing and stenciling was painted over. But the major renovation was the chancel furniture. For some unexplained reason, they removed the original English Gothic style chancel furniture and replaced it with a blond, boxy, modernistic furniture. (That was an architectural movement in post World War II years, likely brought on by sentiment against anything that looked remotely German.) Yet they did not replace the dark wood pews. The result was a church interior that was not architecturally matched, and not very aesthetic.⁷⁴

⁷²*St. Marcus Messenger*, September 1949

⁷³*St. Marcus Messenger*, December 1949

⁷⁴Interview #2 with Rev. Mark Jeske

Rev. Jeske didn't stay too long. On January 21, 1953, he presented the congregation with the call he had received to St. John's Church on, S. 68th Street. The congregation had a young Christian day school which looked like it could take off under the proper leadership. Rev. Jeske, as well as the St. Marcus congregation, knew he could provide it. And he took the call.⁷⁵



JOHN C. JESKE
1949 - 1953

III. The Transformation

This was about the time in St. Marcus' history that the issue of race relations started being discussed. It seems it first happened over the request of a black family to admit their child in the school. The September 9th, 1953 church council minutes read simply: "A delicate subject, in regards to a colored family seeking admittance to our school, is to be presented to the Congregation without recommendation." The minutes for the meeting held on September 14th of that same year read: "Since the Todd family is of the Lutheran faith, it was moved and seconded, and carried that they be admitted to our school. It was further resolved that the application for admission of any other colored children must be acted upon by the congregation in meeting assembled, and that each case be a separate action." This was a decidedly different procedure for admittance than was required of white students. This was remedied at the June 1st, 1955, church council meeting when it was resolved that admission of black students was upon the recommendation of the pastor and church council, the same as it was for white students. (Incidentally, the student's name was Leon. He went on to be the first black man to attend Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He did not finish, but rather eventually went into education. He currently serves on the Milwaukee County School Board. Mr. Todd is no longer in the WELS.)⁷⁶

November 6th, 1954 was a sad day in St. Marcus' history. After thirty-seven years serving as teacher, principal, choir director, and organist, Mr. Kirsche died. Mrs. Howard Luedtke, a

⁷⁵St. Marcus Messenger, January 1953

⁷⁶Interview #1 with Rev. Mark Jeske

member, agreed to fill in for the remainder of the year. Mr. Vater took over the principal duties.⁷⁷ In 1955, Mr. Robert Eberhardt left Peace Lutheran Church in Green Lake, WI to take the call to fill the vacancy left by Mr. Kirsche's demise. He had somewhat unusual ties to St. Marcus. Earlier in his ministry, Rev. E. Dornfeld made a social call on a wrong house. Looking for the home of some new members, he ended up at the home of the Wedel family, and visited with them for awhile. The members of that family remembered that visit when the father died. The mother sent her son, Carl, to St. Marcus to ask Rev. Dornfeld to bury his father. The family had attended a number of services, so Rev. Dornfeld consented. The Widow Wedel, Carl, a brother, and Carl's sister Bertha ended up joining St. Marcus. Bertha not long after fell in love with a young man with the last name of Eberhardt. They married, and eventually had a son whom they christened Robert, at St. Marcus.⁷⁸ In 1955, Robert was coming home.

Two huge blows occurred that same year. On June 1, 1955, Pastor Dornfeld published his letter of resignation. He mentions the fact that he had reached the age of "threescore years and ten" as one of the main reasons. But there was more. Rev. Dornfeld's daughter-in-law had died. In an uncharacteristic moment of poor judgment, Rev. Dornfeld cites in his letter his wife's decision to move into the home to take care of her grandchildren. He then writes, "As far as I can see, I cannot perform my duties as pastor unless she lives with me in the parsonage. I need her to keep house and also to act as my assistant in answering telephone calls and receiving visitors when I am not at home, and in many other ways."⁷⁹ Thus Mrs. Dornfeld was pulled in as a primary source of the resignation of St. Marcus' beloved pastor of forty-four years. Fortunately, the congregation seems to have been very understanding and granted the Pastor's release. Their only request was that he remain until the vacancy was filled, to which he agreed.⁸⁰

The first call went to Rev. Ernst Wendland of Benton Harbor. He declined. The next call was a difficult decision. The church council was evenly divided between calling Rev. Karl Gurgel

⁷⁷*St. Marcus Messenger*, December 1954

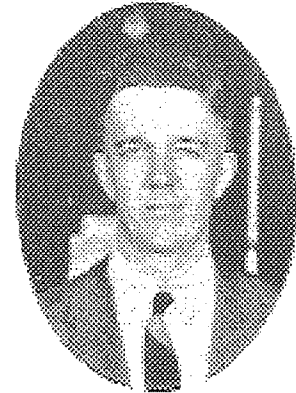
⁷⁸Published in the *Geimeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 92, pp. 376-377, 1957

⁷⁹"Pastor Dornfeld's Letter of Resignation" printed in *St. Marcus Messenger* in August, 1955.

⁸⁰Church Council Minutes, August 1955

and Rev. Paul Knickelbein. After much discussion and four different votes, eventually the call was issued to Rev. Knickelbein, who at that time was serving as the head of the "Colored Mission of Milwaukee."⁸¹ He was unsure of his ability to preach in German, but the church council assured him he could receive pulpit assistance for those services⁸² (presumably from Prof. Meyer, who was still the regular pulpit assistant.)

For one specific reason, Rev. Knickelbein was a logical choice. The biographical records about Rev. Knickelbein states the reason: "[St. Marcus] had been one of the largest Lutheran churches in Milwaukee, but was gradually getting smaller and smaller, due to the white people moving out of the area and being replaced by colored." He accepted the call, but with stipulations. Up to that time, the church council had always referred black prospects to St. Phillip's congregation. Rev. Knickelbein explained to the council that upon accepting the call, the policy would be to accept black members at St. Marcus. The church council consented, so long as Rev. Knickelbein also told the black prospects about St. Philip's.⁸³ St. Marcus had begun a new era.



PAUL KNICKELBEIN
1955 - 1967

Another difficulty the church encountered shortly after Rev. Dornfeld's resignation was the resignation of the Gamm sisters. Dorthy had been there for forty-five years. Leonore for thirty-eight. They had been pillars of the school for many decades. They were succeeded by Miss Rose Marie Wisenbaugh and Miss Ruth Schaller. Then in May 1959 Dorthy Wolf also resigned. The enrollment had been declining for a number of years, so it was determined to continue with only four teachers. Thus the only teacher left who had been at St. Marcus for some time was the principal, Mr. Vater.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Church Council Minutes, September 12, 1955

⁸² Church Council Minutes, September 28, 1955

⁸³ Church Council Minutes, September 28, 1955

⁸⁴"A Century of Grace - St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

If Rev. Knickelbein has any legacy, it would be this... he changed the way many WELS members viewed having black people in the church. The Wisconsin Synod had always been interested in cross-cultural ministry, but keeping with the sentimentality of that day, most felt segregated congregations were the best way to accomplish this task. Already in 1934, the *Markusbote* had mentioned the Negro Missions. At that time there were 34 congregations with over 3500 souls. There were even 627 schools. The congregations were almost entirely black, and had almost exclusively black pastors. This was funded largely through the Synodical Conference.⁸⁵

Sentimentality had not changed much by the 1950's. If a black member visited a WELS church, they were welcome to be WELS members, but not necessarily of that particular congregation. This is one of the reasons why Rev. Bertram Saur was ordained in 1952 as "Missionary to the Colored People of Milwaukee." He could win them over to Christianity, and then have them join the colored mission of St. Philips.⁸⁶ "Many still felt that because Milwaukee had a Colored Mission, that was the place for them to go, and they did not always welcome the Negro into their white churches."⁸⁷ (Rev. Knickelbein fought against this, as stated earlier, from the moment he accepted the call to St. Marcus.) It was a time when the racial makeup of the inner-city changed from white to black, and many Wisconsin Synod churches decided to relocate to the suburbs as their members left. St. Marcus wrestled with this decision as well, but in the end, it was largely because of Rev. Knickelbein's commitment to the people who lived around the church that the congregation remained where it was.

This story was chronicled in a July 13th, 1967 copy of the *Milwaukee Journal*. At that time, at the district conventions, pastors were discussing what they called the "Negro problem." Basically, black people in the 50's and 60's were moving into the heart of Milwaukee. White people were moving to the suburbs. As the WELS members went, they would transfer their children to closer WELS Christian day-schools. Eventually, they would join the congregations

⁸⁵*Markusbote*, October 1934

⁸⁶*St. Marcus Messenger*, October 1952

⁸⁷Biographical information of Rev. Paul Knickelbein, stored in the archives.

closer to them. This caused a huge decline in membership in many of these core congregations. St. Marcus was the perfect example. In the ten years before Rev. Knickelbein came, Brewer's Hill, the neighborhood in which St. Marcus is located, declined in population by only three percent, despite a large turnover in house ownership. (i.e.- As people moved out, there were people to move in.) Yet the congregation membership list decreased by over fifty-percent. Stated another way, in 1953, 320 of St. Marcus' members were within a mile of the church. Now only 157 lived in the neighborhood.⁸⁸

The result was that when congregations were faced with death, they often chose to relocate out of the city. Rev. Knickelbein didn't want to do that. He found a third option -- become a cross-cultural mission. The Journal article quotes Rev. Knickelbein, "The Lord has surrounded us with a mission field. It would not be right for us to leave it. Our church can either close its doors and rot on the vine, or open its doors to the people of the neighborhood and grow."⁸⁹

Rev. Knickelbein was strict and his leadership very strong. It seems he was truly a disciplinarian. He would frequently chastise members through bulletin announcements for things like talking during the collection.⁹⁰ Already in 1958, he published in the congregational newspaper that he thought Wisconsin Synod should break with Missouri.⁹¹ When it was starting to become apparent that St. Marcus' suburban members wanted off-street parking, he began to look at property expansion.⁹² Perhaps that stern leadership is what St. Marcus needed in one of the most rocky periods in its entire history. It was a transitory time. No longer was the steady influx of Germans what would keep the church alive. In March of 1960, the church council voted eighteen to six that German services be conducted only once a month.⁹³

⁸⁸"St. Marcus Celebrates Its 100th Birthday," printed in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, June 1, 1975

⁸⁹*The Milwaukee Journal*

⁹⁰Bulletins for the month of July 1960

⁹¹*St. Marcus Messenger*, March 1958.

⁹²Church Council Minutes, April 1960

⁹³Church Council Minutes, March 1960

On top of that, the congregation was starting to feel the anxiety that all WELS churches felt at this time, as the tension between Wisconsin and Missouri grew. Rev. Knickelbein took a direct, but somewhat hard-nosed approach. In the church bulletin on August 13, 1961, he wrote the following about the WELS.

The question is, what or who determines whether people, who are causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine, should be avoided. According to the official position of the Wisconsin Synod today, that decision would have to be made by human judgment; delegates would have to reach a conviction that further admonition is of no avail. *But this is not a Scriptural position.* (emphasis mine)

Fortunately, in the August 20th bulletin Rev. Knickelbein was able to publish that Wisconsin had broken with Missouri, otherwise who knows if St. Marcus would have stayed within the WELS.

Perhaps the greatest challenge the congregation faced that decade was the emotional roller-coaster it was riding over the decline of the school. Early in 1960, Mr. Herman John was hired as a vicar, who helped with preaching once a month and teaching Bible class. This relieved Rev. Knickelbein as he took on more responsibility of handling the tumult the school was going through. Evangelism was handled by getting Seminary students to come downtown (often at the prodding of Prof. Meyer) and canvass the neighborhood.⁹⁴ The tumult was over the fact that it seemed like St. Marcus couldn't get or keep a teacher very easily.

In July of 1960, Louis Lemke took a call, and Rose Weisenbaugh, who was now married ^{as} and was Rose Petchell, resigned because of scheduling conflicts between her and her husband's job.⁹⁵ In August of 1960 Mr. Eberhardt was called to Winnebago Academy, a call he seemed inclined to take, but returned because of the loss of two teachers the month before. In July of 1961, Mr. Eberhardt received another call, this time to Lakeside Lutheran High School. Despite the church council, board of education, pastor, and congregation begging him to stay, he accepted

⁹⁴Conversation with Cora Bublitz, April 15, 1997

⁹⁵Church Council Minutes, August 1960

it. To show how desperate St. Marcus was getting at the time, they issued a call to Mr. Eberhardt to come back to St. Marcus within a month of him taking the call to Lakeside. He declined that one. Rev. Knickelbein was forced to take over teaching the seventh and eighth grades. Not knowing what to do, St. Marcus issued a call to Dorothy Wolf, trying to entice her out of retirement. But she would not accept.⁹⁶

On September 3rd, 1961, Mr. Vater took a call to be principle at the Christian day-school in Weyauwega, WI. The school was collapsing. Meetings were held with St. Philip's school to see if the two shouldn't combine.⁹⁷ Somewhat of a rescue came later that month when Mrs. Jeanette Hando, whose husband taught at Jerusalem, agreed to teach 5th and 6th grades until they could be filled by a permanent teacher. Later that year, Mrs. Miriam Gronholz agreed to be a temporary teacher as well. A bit more relief came in the following year when Mr. Jerry Gronholz came as principal. Yet by the end of winter in 1962, Lois Lemke took a call to teach at the Spanish Mission in Tuscon, AZ. In the second semester of 1962, Russell Schwalbe was assigned by Dr. Martin Luther College as an emergency instructor to St. Marcus. At the start of the next school year, Mrs. H. Lochner agreed to help teaching wherever she was needed.⁹⁸

As soon as St. Marcus would fill one position, someone else would leave. It was just a complete turnover of teachers for the rest of the decade. Charlotte Wacker came in 1962 for one year. Eunice Jessen came in 62 to replace Ms. Wacker. Yvonne Janosek and Frederick Berg came that same year. Sandra Jaber replaced Ms. Wacker in 1963. Mary Deglow replaced Ms. Janosek in 1964. Susan Kolosick replaced Eunice Jessen in 1965, but stayed only one year. Mr. Berg became principle in 1965 when Mr. Gronholz took a call, but no teacher was called as a replacement until 1966, when Marie Sprengler came. Mr. Fred Hagedorn accepted a call to be principal in 1967.⁹⁹ It was hoped that he would be able to handle the cross-cultural situation because of his previous mission work, teaching at the Indian Mission School in Gresham, WI.

⁹⁶Various bulletins from the bound bulletins for 1961 and 1962

⁹⁷School Board Minutes, February 1966

⁹⁸Various bulletins from the bound bulletins for 1962

⁹⁹"A Century of Grace - The Celebration of the St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

(Mr. Berg stayed as a teacher at that time, however.) Along with Mr. Hagedorn, his wife Ada began teaching as well. Eileen Feld came in 1968 for a one year call.¹⁰⁰

It is difficult to tell from the records which of these teachers were called in the standard fashion, which were emergency assignees, and which were just members filling in for a time. But the pattern is obvious. St. Marcus couldn't hold its teachers. Perhaps the most startling trend of this time is noticeable only when you page through all the council notes for the 1960's. Almost *thirty* people returned calls to St. Marcus in this decade. Hardly anyone wanted to teach there.

This isn't to be unexpected. The neighborhood, and for that matter, the city, had changed completely in the last three decades. It was now half white and half black, and the sinful natures of both races would show up from time to time, manifesting itself in fear or bigotry. When Mr. Fred Hagadorn and his family were moving to Milwaukee in March of 1967, the Milwaukee riots were going on. Members had to help him unload the moving van, because the regular workers couldn't work past the curfew.¹⁰¹ On May 16th, he just about died as a rock came through his window, just missing his head. The shattered glass cut a number of students.¹⁰² It seems the racial divide was perhaps the biggest factor in the devastation of the WELS's Milwaukee churches in the 60's and 70's. A study for just the 70's to the 90's gives these startling statistics. From 1974 to 1994, Milwaukee's north side church dropped from 13,923 to 8,981, a decline of almost 36 percent.¹⁰³

On top of "the danger factor," the congregation was in financial trouble. The membership was shrinking, and members taken in from the neighborhood were often poorer. Yet the buildings were deteriorating to the point that something had to be done. In 1963, a complete renovation was done to the school building. One of the classrooms and first floor kitchen was converted into a church office, nurse's room, teachers' lounge, and copying room. New windows

¹⁰⁰"A Century of Grace - The Celebration of the St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

¹⁰¹Biographical information on Mr. Fred Hagadorn, contained in the St. Marcus' archives

¹⁰²School Board Minutes, May 1968

¹⁰³"Revitalizing Urban Parishes" by Rev. Mark Jeske

were put in. Asbestos tiles were ripped out. Ceilings and stairways were renovated. The final cost was \$64,000. This put a huge financial strain on the congregation.¹⁰⁴

Rev. Knickelbein published the announcement in the March 1964 bulletins that the called workers were only able to be paid half their salaries because of budget crunches and low offerings. The announcements always concluded, "Were you one of the guilty ones who did not contribute?" It was a difficult time to be at St. Marcus.

Another sad event of that decade came on November 10th, 1964. Prof. Meyer died after serving St. Marcus as pulpit assistant since 1928. Prof. Siegbert Becker took over some of his duties.¹⁰⁵ St. Marcus ^{could} can now boast five men who taught at the Seminary and also served in its pulpit: Notz, Pieper, Meyer, Jeske, and Becker.

Another difficulty arose when Rev. Knickelbein took a call in January of 1967 to a country congregation in Cleveland, WI. It was an old, well-established church with about 400 communicant members, yet no day school. Rev. Knickelbein thought this would be his challenge, to help build a school. For some reason they never did. Within a one and a half years, Rev. Knickelbein would take a call to become the first missionary in the state of Oklahoma. He would serve at three other congregations, until on May 13, 1993, a massive stroke would end his ministry, forty-eight years to the day of his ordination.¹⁰⁶

St. Marcus had about as much success calling pastors as they did teachers. The Rev. John Chworosky, who was teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, served as vacancy pastor, but he was also holding a call to be pastor at Ephrata. Rev. E. Breiling was the first man called as pastor, but returned the call.¹⁰⁷ In April, Rev. Kobs was called and returned it as well. St. Marcus decided to call Rev. Chworosky to stay permanently. He returned the call as well.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴"Centennial" by Rev. Richard Seeger, p. 13

¹⁰⁵Church Council Minutes for October 1964

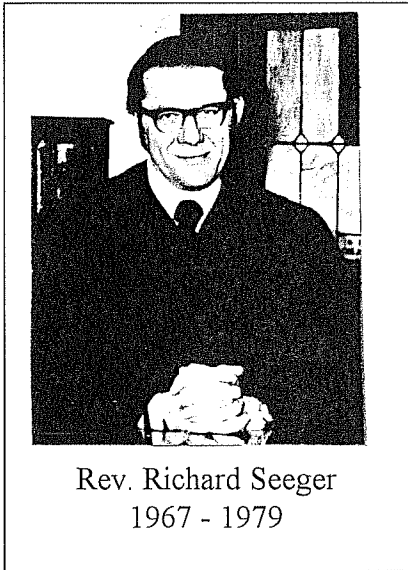
¹⁰⁶Bibliographical information on Rev. Paul Knickelbein, contained in the St. Marcus' archives

¹⁰⁷Church Council Minutes for March 1967

¹⁰⁸Church Council Minutes for April 1967

Rev. Wayne Bartlet received the call in May, but he was serving two congregations in the Allenton area, and so returned the call.¹⁰⁹

In July of 1967, the congregation called Rev. Richard Seeger. He accepted it the next month. Rev. Seeger had been no stranger to difficult ministries. His first call had been to Japan in May of 1956. But in February of 1957, the missionary that was in Japan severed fellowship with



the Wisconsin Synod over doctrinal disagreements. Rev. Seeger got to Japan two months later and had the job of putting Japan back together.¹¹⁰ In 1966 he had gone to Hong Kong as the counselor to the Chinese Lutheran Church. This call included being the director and professor at the seminary there.¹¹¹ He was now at his first stateside congregation.

One of the first orders of business for Rev. Seeger was to decrease the congregational debt from the school renovation, still at over \$41,000. The monthly interest payments alone were costing \$509. In March of 1968, Rev. Seeger asked for at least three-hundred members to lend \$100 each to the church interest free, ⁱⁿ on order to eliminate some of the interest. The response in loans and gifts was so enormous that the bulletin for December 14th, 1969 reads, "We have enough! Don't bring any more money as loans. We are starting to pay it back now." The debt was repaid in its entirety by the end of 1971¹¹². Money was now directed towards campus expansion. In December of that year, the 50 by 150 foot lot to the north of the building was purchased.¹¹³ Over the next couple years, it would be repaved and

¹⁰⁹Church Council Minutes for May 1967

¹¹⁰ "They Come To Thee! Progress and Prospects of the World Mission Program of the WELS" by Edgar Hoenecke, p. 18 *Date ?*

¹¹¹Autobiographical information about Rev. Richard Seeger, contained in the St. Marcus archives

¹¹²"Centennial" by Rev. Richard Seeger, p. 13

¹¹³"Centennial" by Rev. Richard Seeger, p. 14

fenced. This gave the school a playground during the weekdays, and the church a parking lot on Sunday mornings.¹¹⁴

The school seemed to stabilize around this time as well. Daniel Gartner was called in 1971. He would stay at St. Marcus for 20 years. Diane Lecker came as a one year replacement in 1972 when Ada Hagedorn resigned. But Bonnie Lange came that same year, and would stay for eight years in all. In 1973 Carol Sbresny Niedfeld accepted a call, and would stay for six more. Principal Hagedorn had to retire in 1974 when Parkinson's disease made teaching impossible. However, he continued to play organ and direct choir for years.¹¹⁵ Mr. Gartner would ^{took} take over as principal, and Steven Hahnke ^{came} would come to replace Mr. Hagedorn in the classroom. He would stay for five years.¹¹⁶

St. Marcus basically had a brand new faculty, and one that was stable. On top of that, Rev. Seeger had continued to build on the foundation of Rev. Knickelbein. St. Marcus was obviously committed to becoming cross-cultural, with over ten percent of its membership being black. It was appropriate, then, that the theme for the 100th anniversary of St. Marcus was "Abide With Us." In the century of its existence, the congregation had gone from over 2000 communicants to 330. Its school had reached an enrollment of almost 400 at the turn of the century. Now it was at 88.¹¹⁷ It had gone from being on the northernmost border of the city to being in the southern corner of the inner-city. It had gone from being a church of German immigrants to a church which wasn't so concerned with serving an ethnic group as it was serving a community. Truly, a metamorphosis. Yet one thing had not changed. God was still holding his hand of blessing over this church. The Gospel was still being proclaimed. St. Marcus was still alive, both spiritually and as a congregation. The celebration went on for the entire year. Different guest preachers and choirs came in every month. People who shared in the celebration that year included: the Seminary Choir, Prof. Carl Lawrenz, Prof. (and former pastor) John Jeske,

¹¹⁴"St. Marcus Celebrates It's 100th Anniversary" written by Fred Hagedorn, Northwestern Lutheran, June 1, 1975

¹¹⁵Autobiographical information on Mr. Fred Hagedorn, found in the St. Marcus' archives

¹¹⁶"A Century of Grace," the celebration of the St. Marcus Lutheran School Building dedicated on Nov. 4, 1894

¹¹⁷"St. Marcus Celebrates It's 100th Anniversary" written by Fred Hagedorn, Northwestern Lutheran, June 1, 1975

Prof. Martin Albrecht and the Martin Luther Academy Choir, Missionry R. Poetter of Japan, the Wisconsin Lutheran High School Choir, Rev. James Schaefer and the Lutheran Chorale, and many others.¹¹⁸

In the summer of 1979, Rev. Seeger received a call to be missionary on the island of Antigua, located in the Caribbean. A few years later, when asked to write an autobiographical account for the St. Marcus archives, Rev. Seeger kept it very brief, just summarizing where and when he served. However, the paragraph which tells of his St. Marcus' years concludes with the following sentence: "These were the happiest years of my ministry."¹¹⁹ Rev. Seeger would take one more call after Antigua, to King of Kings Lutheran Church in Alexandria, LA, where he retired from the ministry in 1996 with a weak heart.¹²⁰

The congregation immediately called Rev. Elton Huebener as vacancy pastor.¹²¹ He accepted. Not much is recorded about Rev. Huebener's tenure at St. Marcus, other than that he very capably handled two congregations. But what he does help us see is the evolution the congregation had gone through in the past decades. It was only the 1950's when black students had to have special, congregational permission to attend St. Marcus. Yet when St. Marcus issued the call to Rev. John Widman, a missionary in Hong Kong, this is a portion of the letter Rev. Huebner wrote to him:

The Council members to whom I spoke were of one mind that St. Marcus should be a community church as much as possible. They are eager to seek out their black brethren. It would appear that the maintenance of the Christian day school demonstrates this desire. All 84 children are black. Sixty-two of those children are non-members. The Church Council members with whom I had an opportunity to share your questions would have no objections to your working with the black youth as best you can.¹²²

¹¹⁸"St. Marcus Celebrates It's 100th Anniversary" written by Fred Hagadorn, Noethwestern Lutheran, June 1, 1975

¹¹⁹Autobiographical record of Rev. Richard Seeger, contained in the St. Marcus archives

¹²⁰Autobiographical record of Rev. Richard Seeger, contained in the St. Marcus archives

¹²¹ Special Voters Meeting, August 19, 1979

¹²² Letter written by Elton Huebner to John Widman on October 22, 1979

Rev. Widman returned the call. The next call went to Rev. John Guse.¹²³ He returned the call. A call was extended to Rev. Byersdorf.¹²⁴ It was returned as well. St. Marcus decided to go to the assignment committee. On May 20th, 1980, Prof. Jeske's son, Mark Jeske, was assigned to St. Marcus. Thus St. Marcus has had two father / son pairs pastor St. Marcus. (In addition, Rev. Peiper was Rev. Jeske's ^{great-}grandfather.)

Rev. Jeske's experience was limited to a vicar year in Guadalajara, Mexico, and tutoring for two years at Northwestern Preparatory School, where he taught Religion, history, geography, and English. He was installed into his first parish on June 29th, 1980.¹²⁵



In the school, it seems that it had become easier to replace teachers that in had been one decade before. In 1979, when Carol Niedfeld and Steven Hahnke left, Robert and Ruth Huebner accepted the calls to replace them. In the following year, Judith Gartner, Principal Gartner's wife, accepted a call to teach in the lower grades. When Mrs. Huebner resigned in 1983 to raise a family,¹²⁶ Judith Thrams ^{came} would-come in and stay ^{ed} for fourteen years.

Rev. Jeske, early on in his ministry, realized the importance of bridging any racial gaps that he could. He had evangelism as a top priority, and the first evangelism committee at St. Marcus was formed in his early years.

In 1983 two new projects got underway that helped immensely by making St. Marcus recognizable in the community. These programs began officially as successive paragraphs in the December 11th, 1983 church council minutes. First, the Social Services Committee was organized. It was under the direction of Mrs. Mary Luter. The church archives were moved and

¹²³ Church Council Minutes, January 9, 1980
¹²⁴ Church Council Minutes, March 5, 1980
¹²⁵ Autobiographical record of Rev. Mark Jeske, contained in the St. Marcus archives
¹²⁶ Letter of resignation of Ruth Huebner, dated January 1, 1983

a food pantry was put in its place. This served as a means for the congregation to help the needy in the neighborhood. Eventually other congregations, such as St. John's, Vliet; St. John's, S. 68th; Grace; and Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service would also contribute to this worthy effort.¹²⁷

The second thing accomplished at that meeting was the organization of a youth choir "to co-exist with the senior choir to present other than traditional Lutheran music, such as modern and gospel music." Darlene Jones, an adult confirmand from earlier that year, had agreed to direct. This choir provided an opportunity for many of the black members to participate in the worship service in a style they had perhaps cherished since childhood. That choir would eventually become one of the Lutheran Gospel choirs which make up "The United Voices of Praise." (The others are the Gospel choirs of Siloah and St. Philip's.)

Another big project got underway in 1985 when the four-year-old kindergarten was established. Virginia Engle was the first teacher.¹²⁸ It proved to be popular. In 1987, Pamela Merten agreed to teach part time just so she could pay for her child to attend the four-year-old kindergarten.¹²⁹

In 1986, Rev. Jeske received a call to serve as vacancy pastor at St. Philip's, which he accepted. It only lasted until 1987, when a Seminary graduate was assigned. Also in that year, on July 6th, Rev. Jeske married Carol Wynkoop. (A humorous side-note: Pastor and Carol Jeske have four children: John, Samuel, Elizabeth, and Michael. As stated, Mark Jeske is the son of St. Marcus' former pastor John Jeske. John Jeske's father was John Gustov Jeske. His father was Reinholt Jeske was a member of the first graduating confirmation class, confirmed by Rev. Westenburg. And his father was Carl Jeske, a saloon keeper on 4th St. and one of the founding members.¹³⁰ Thus six generations of Jeskes have belonged as members of St. Marcus. About this unlikely feat, Prof. John Jeske likes to say, "It tells me God has a sense of humor.")

¹²⁷ Church Council Minutes, November 7, 1985

¹²⁸ "A Century of Grace - The Celebration of the St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

¹²⁹ Special Council Meeting Minutes, August 23, 1987

¹³⁰ Interview #2 with Rev. Mark Jeske

Perhaps one of Rev. Mark Jeske's greatest achievements is St. Marcus' property expansion. Already in 1988 it was debated whether or not the Lenten and Advent Services should be dropped because they were poorly attended in the evenings.¹³¹ St. Marcus had so few parking spaces, and few people were willing to park on the streets and walk a few blocks to church. So in 1989 the congregation purchased a lot and two houses just to the north of their property line for \$12,000.¹³² This allowed further expansion of the parking facilities. No longer was "no safe parking" a good excuse not to attend St. Marcus. This program of expansion continues today. Currently St. Marcus owns most of the block that it stands on, and the Council plans on buying the remaining lots when they come up for sale. Long-range plans include parking which extends all the way to North Avenue, which is a main arterial road through the inner city, and a church marker which will stand on the corner of North and Palmer. On the opposite corner of the block, St. Marcus hopes to maintain a counseling center.

In the last decade, the school has stabilized. Teacher shortage seems a thing of the past. Either the teachers stay for some time or it is not difficult to find temporary help. Laurie Schwark and Regina Rogers helped in the school from 1989 to 1990. Susan Keese came in 1990, and remains a teacher at St. Marcus to this day.¹³³

A huge teacher turnover came in 1991. Nathan Sebald, Jacqueline Bauer, and Janice Goodger came, staying for one, one, and two years respectively. And Paul Jacobs was called as principal, a position he serves in to this day. The following year, Karen Jacobs and Brad Schaper accepted calls to St. Marcus. And Katherine Hartman joined the staff in 1993.¹³⁴ They all remain at St. Marcus as well. Heidi Borgwardt filled in for one year from 1996-1997.

St. Marcus continues to define urban ministry in the WELS. In 1993, Terry McSorley, a member at St. Lucas in Milwaukee, was upset that he couldn't convince his congregation to do any street mission work, which is somewhat popular in black culture. So St. Marcus decided to

¹³¹ Voter's Meeting Minutes, September 8, 1988

¹³² Letter from Rev. Jeske to the congregation dated May 17, 1989

¹³³"A Century of Grace - The Celebration of the St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

¹³⁴"A Century of Grace - The Celebration of the St. Marcus Lutheran School Building"

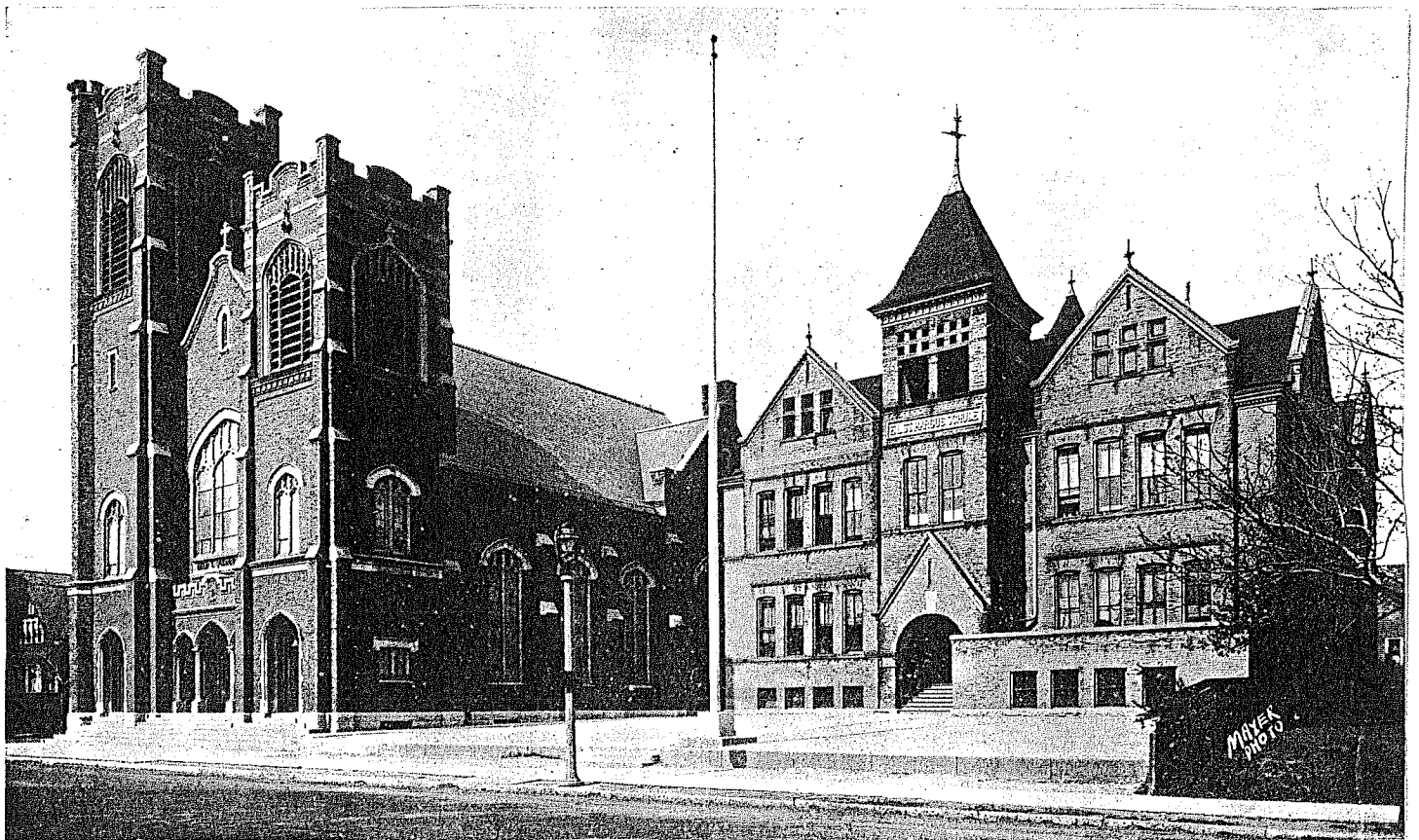
give it a try. It started as being a worship service in the church, followed by a meal in the fellowship hall. But in the second year, it moved outside. It included an outdoor worship service, a Gospel choir concert, games which Mr. McSorley brought from his city job, and a barbecue meal. It was preceded by the Evangelism committee doing a neighborhood canvas, inviting people to come.¹³⁵ It has become known as "Juneteenth Day," a popular day in black culture commemorating the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, of which (the signing date is uncertain other than it occurred in June). Average attendance is over 400.

St. Marcus' dedication to urban ministry apparently has been noticed in the synod. In 1995, St. Marcus received one of ten synod-subsidized, home-mission vicars, Jonathan Hein. It was the only church to receive one of these vicars which really *wasn't* a mission in age. But it is a mission in mindset.

Current projects at St. Marcus include another renovation for the church building. But this one is somewhat retroactive. St. Jacobi Lutheran Church was built in 1905 in a similar Gothic architecture to St. Marcus. In 1976, when the church was demolished, one of the members named Gilbert Manske, could not bear to see St. Jacobi's beautiful chancel furniture lost. So he kept the dismantled alter, pulpit, lectern, and communion rail in his garage. In 1980, Rev. Jeske attended a party at Judy nee Manske Schaefer's house. He was looking through some photograph books, when he saw the pictures of the chancel furniture. Judy explained what it was, and eventually Rev. Jeske met with Mr. Manske and convinced him to donate the furniture to St. Marcus. In 1983 the congregation thought about putting the furniture into the church, but due to a lack of money and some initial opposition, it never happened. But in 1996 the subject came up again, because the congregation wanted to install new carpeting, and knew that now was the time to change chancel furniture if it was ever going to be done. In the annual meeting of December 1996, the congregation voted to install the furniture. The project is being completed as this paper is being written.

¹³⁵ Interview #2 with Rev. Mark Jeske

Thus St. Marcus, in a sense, has come full circle. It started as a classical Lutheran German, congregation, and it remains one to this day, in a number of different aspects. In its architecture, St. Marcus remains one of the most beautiful examples of Modern Gothic architecture in the WELS, especially now that the chancel project is underway. In its standard Sunday worship, St. Marcus continues to use the liturgy to focus attention on the Word and Sacrament. In its theology, the message of justification, of "Christ for us," is proclaimed every week. Yet, in another sense, St. Marcus has truly undergone a metamorphosis. For while its theology and its architecture might be good German Lutheran, its members are not (at least not all of them). And the members of St. Marcus feel blessed that they are not all the same. For their differences in culture, in worship styles, and even in the color of their skin, seem to remind them all the more of the unity they do have in Christ. God has held his hand of blessing over St. Marcus for 122 years. May he continue to do so until all his people are finally united in heaven.



SUCCESSION OF TEACHERS AT ST. MARCUS

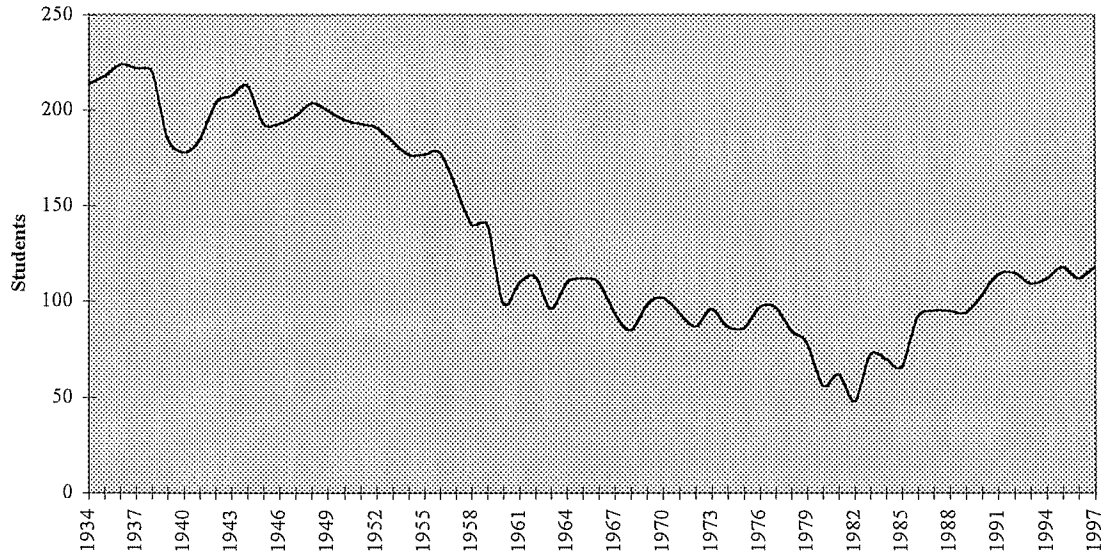
1875	J.B. Denninger (from June to September)
1875-1877	Rev. Jakob Westenberger teaches school
1877-1878	F. Risch
1878-1879	Candidate Theodore Voss and other students
1879-1880	Michael Walz
1880-1883	S. Richter serves as principle
1881-1882	Mr. Bauer opens a second classroom
1883-1885	C. Daus replaces Mr. Bauer
1883-1900	Rudolf Fritzke replaces the tempory teacher, Sem. student Gustave Schoewe and becomes principal
1883-1900	Fred Nimmer opens a third classroom
1885-1886	Paul Reinsch
1886-1888	G. Hartman
1888-1889	Philip Lucas
1888-1891	Miss Ueckert opens a fourth classroom
1889-1892	William Amling
1891-1893	Herman Rau
1892-1901	Herman Gruel
1893-1894	Carl Sorg
1894-1911	Henry Wagner
1900-1907	William Amling returns as principal
1900-1906	Edward Gleichmann
1901-1915	Richard Dorn
1906-1912	William Manthey
1907-1917	Henty Braun serves as principal
1911-1956	Dorothea Gamm opens the kindergarten
1915-1923	Herman Martin; will become principal in 1917
1916-1926	Hugo Wachholz
1917-1954	William Kirschke; will become principal in 1944
1918-1956	Leonore Gamm takes over the kindergarten
1923-1944	Christian Heine called as principle
1924-1933	Ruth Hahm
1926-1930	Guenther Waidelich
1930-1949	Walther Denninger
1933-1935	Alfred Nicolaus
1944-1947	Herman Fehlauer
1947-1961	Walter Vater; will become principal in 1954
1949-1959	Dorthy Wolf
1955-1961	Robert Eberhardt
1956-1960	Rose Wisenbaugh Petschel

SUCCESSION OF TEACHERS AT ST. MARCUS (cont.)

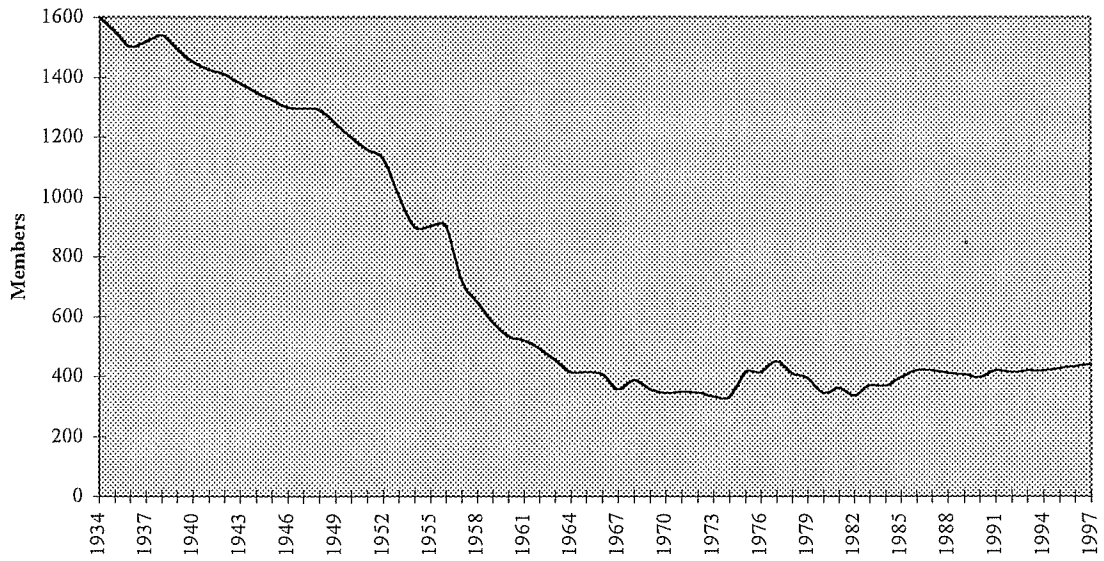
1956-1961	Ruth Schaller
1960-1962	Loris Lemke
1961-1962	Jeanette Hando
1961-1962	Miriam Gronholz
1962-1965	Jerry Gronholz called as principal
1962-1963	Charlotte Wacker
1962-1965	Eunice Jessen
1962-1964	Yvonne Janosek
1962-1971	Frederick Berg; will serve as interim principal in 1965-66
1963-1967	Sandra Jaber
1964-1972	Mary Deglow
1965-1966	Susan Kolosick
1966-1980	Marie Sprengler
1967-1974	Fred Hagadorn called as principal
1967-1972	Ada Hagedorn
1968-1969	Eileen Feldt
1971-1991	Danial Gartner; becomes principal in 1974
1972-1973	Diane Lecker
1972-1980	Bonnie Lange
1973-1979	Carol Sbresny Niedfeld
1974-1979	Steven Hahnke
1979-1991	Robert Huebner
1979-1983	Ruth Huebner
1980-1991	Judith Gartner
1983-1997	Judith Thrams
1985-1989	Virginia Engel establishes the 4-year-old kindergarten
1987-1989	Pamela Merten
1989-1990	Laurie Schwark
1989	Regina Rogers
1990-	Susan Keese
1991-1992	Nathan Sebald
1991-1993	Janice Goodger
1991-	Paul Jacobs called as principal
1991-1992	Jacqueline Bauer
1992-	Karen Jacobs
1992-	Brad Schaper
1993-	Katherine Hartman
1996-1997	Heidi Borgwardt

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

St. Marcus' School Enrollment



St. Marcus' Communicant Membership



Note: Statistics for these charts start in 1934, when accurate records were kept yearly.

Resources consulted

A number of histories have been written throughout St. Marcus history. These were valuable in producing a chronology of teachers and pastors. They were, in order:

"History of St. Marcus Ev. Luther Church in Milwaukee, WI - 1875 - 1900" by Rev. August Pieper. The translator is not known.

"Zum Goldenen Jubiläum der Ev.-Luth. St. Markus-Geimeinde zu Milwaukee, Wis." It was written in 1925. No author is given, but it might be Rev. E. Ph. Dornfeld.

"St. Marcus Ev. Lutheran Church - Diamond Jubilee," written in 1950 by Rev. E. Ph. Dornfeld.

"Centennial," written in 1975 by Rev. Richard Seeger.

In addition, a number of personal memoirs were consulted:

"When I Went to St. Marcus School," written by Rudolf E. Fritzke, Jr. It was published in a series of *St. Marcus Messenger* articles from April 1948 to October 1949.

"A Century of Grace - St. Marcus Lutheran School Building" is really the February 19th, 1995 service bulletin which contained some historical information, including Leola Grunzel's memoir *"I Remember When..."*

A number of outside articles were also consulted:

"A Church With A Mission," printed in the July 13th, 1967 *Milwaukee Journal*

"St. Marcus Celebrates Its 100th Birthday" by Fred Hagedorn. It was published in the June 1, 1975 *Northwestern Lutheran*.

Bound historical information found in the St. Marcus' archives includes:

The Church Council minutes. The very first minutes from July 13th, 1875, were translated by Rev. Mark Jeske. The other Church Council minutes consulted were from 1947 to 1997. The exact dates used are recorded in the footnotes.

Das Marcusbote and *The St. Marcus Messenger* issues. The dates used are recorded in the footnotes.

Biographical briefs of: Rev. E. Ph. Dornfeld; Rev. Paul Knickelbein, Rev. Richard Seeger, Rev. Mark Jeske.

Ideas and information for the paper were also the result of interviews conducted in April 1997 with:

Rev. Mark Jeske (on two occasions)

Mrs. Cora Bublitz (at 98, the oldest living member of St. Marcus)

Mrs. Leola Gruenzel (the church archivist and graduate of the school, class of 1919.

Rev. Paul Knickelbein

Mr. Robbert Rehm (the current head of the Trustees)

Mrs. Barbara Mayes (the current head of "Loving Hearts, Helping Hands) and one of the early African-American members

Other works consulted:

"Historic Brewers Hill House Tour Guide" by the Brewers Hill Neighborhood Association and Friends of the Milwaukee County Historical Society, printed in 1995.

"Revitalizing Urban Parishes" by Rev. Mark Jeske. It was presented at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary on February 4th, 1997.

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