

RESURRECTION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

1913-1985

Milwaukee, Wis.

THE SEMINARY LIBRARY
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Michael T. Barlow
Senior Church History
Prof. Fredrich
May 23, 1985

THE BEGINNINGS. PASTOR MARTIN KIONKA 1913-1926

In the years following the turn of the century the Town of Lake (what is now part of the south side of Milwaukee) began to grow and develop. Houses began to fill what was once farmland. In 1913 the tracks of the street car company of Milwaukee reached as far south as the intersection of Howell and Howard Avenues. This section of the Town of Lake was called Tippecanoe. On the corner of Howell and Howard stood the Town of Lake Town Hall (later this would become Tippecanoe Library). It was this section of town that Pastor Martin Kionka, a pastor of the Wisconsin Synod, decided to canvass to see if a congregation could be started there. Pastor Kionka was pastor at St. Thomas Lutheran Church, located on the northwest side of Milwaukee.

Pastor Kionka found a group of German Lutherans who wanted to start a congregation. On November 10, 1913, a group of men met at the home of Wilhelm Hertel and formed Evangelische Lutherische Auferstehungs Gemeinde. On November 16 they asked Pastor Kionka to serve them as their pastor, at a salary of \$ 10 a month. On November 22, 1913 five men signed the Articles of Incorporation, making the congregation a legal entity. They were Ernst Stauff, Ferdinand Meister, Wilhelm Hertel, Paul Hertel and George Niemann.

Pastor Kionka made the trip on Sunday afternoons to this section of the Town of Lake to conduct services. The services were held in the Town Hall and were conducted in German. But the members of the congregation wanted to establish themselves, so they began to look for a parcel of land they could purchase on which to build a church. On March 14, 1914 one acre of land was purchased from Mr. Vernon Howard for \$ 1200. The land was located on Howard Ave. between the Town Hall and Tippecanoe School (located on the corner of Howard and Whitnall). Several members, with a team of horses, dug the basement of the Church, and on July 12, 1914 the cornerstone was laid for the first church building. By September of that same year the church was completed. It had a seating capacity of 175 persons. The altar and pulpit were built by Herman Mittag, a member of the congregation. On September 20, 1914 the church was dedicated.

Besides building a worship facility, the members of Auferstehungs Gemeinde formed organizations to serve the Lord and his people. The Ladies Aid of Auferstehungs Gemeinde was organized ^{before the church} building was built, in April of 1914. This was and is a service organization. Throughout the years they have performed many deeds of service for the church and have demonstrated their concern for and support of the preaching of the Gospel.

Early on the congregation showed their concern for

the christian education of its youth. In October of 1914, the congregation started its Sunday School. Pastor Kionka conducted the classes after services on Sunday afternoons. The classes were held in the nave and the balcony until the heating and ventilation were installed in the church basement.

As stated before, the service were conducted in german, but becuse of the increased use of english in the community and by the people of the congregation consideration was given to having english services. In 1925 it was decided to have two english services a month.

For 13 years Pastor Kionka served Auferstehungs Gemeinde. But because of the demands on his time from St. Thomas, Auferstehungs Gemeinde was not able to have services every week. Also the people wanted to have their services on Sunday mornings instead of Sunday afternoons. Thus the congregation began to consider calling thier own pastor. Also late in 1925 Pastor Kionka was caught up in a troublesome situation at St. Thomas, involving an amalgamation with St. Matthew congregation. Although this writer doesn't know exactly what happened in that situation, the results seem to have been unpleasant. St. Thomas ended up in the ALC. After 1926 all signs of Pastor Kionka disappear from the Wisconsin Synod statistical reports. But back to 1925. Late in that year Auferstehungs Gemeinde requested that Pastor Kionka

resign so that they could call their own pastor. But apparently Pastor Kionka was reluctant to do so. For two or three months the congregation pressured him for his resignation. Finally on February 18, 1926, Pastor Kionka handed the congregation his letter of resignation. He must have said some rather unkind things in that letter, because the minutes of that February 18 meeting records that the congregation protested to every portion of that letter, except the portion in which he stated that he resigned. Nothing is mentioned concerning Pastor Kionka after that until March 1933, when he died. The congregation sent a letter of condolance to his family.

After Pastor Kionka resigned, Auferstehungs Gemeinde called Pastor Emil Schulz to serve as interim pastor. He held that position from April to July of 1926. At this time the congregation was given mission status and began to receive a subsidy from the Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Schulz, with the Southeastern Wisconsin District Mission Board of the Synod, recommended that the congregation call a pastor. On June 22, 1926, in a special meeting, the congregation called Arthur F. Krueger to be their first full-time pastor.

II. PASTOR ARTHUR F. KRUEGER 1926-1949

Pastor Krueger accepted the call extended to him by Auferstehungs Gemeinde. Pastor Krueger was born (September, 1900) and raised in Milwaukee. He went to Concordia

College in Milwaukee and from there to the Seminary in Wauwatosa. He graduated and was ordained in 1922. The date of his ordination was August 6. His first call was to Frieden Carlock, S.D. (1922-1923) From there he went to Stanton, Nebraska, where he served Bethlehem and St. Paul congregations until 1926 until he received the call to serve Auferstehungs Gemeinde. He was installed on August 8.

When Pastor Krueger started the congregation was growing and the Lord continued to bless it with more members. According to the 1927 Statistical Report of the Wisconsin Synod, the congregation had 125 souls and 97 communicant members. By 1949, it was a congregation of 600 souls with 446 communicant members. In January of 1927 the congregation began to discuss other kinds of growth. They wanted to provide a house for their pastor and a school for their children. A lengthy discussion was held and the church council was directed to investigate the matter. In March of that same year it was decided to build a parsonage. It was to be built next to the church, facing Howard Ave. In less than 4 months the parsonage was completed and on July 27, 1927 it was dedicated.

During the pastorate of Pastor Krueger, as the congregation continued to grow, various organizations were formed to give the people an opportunity to serve the Lord. In

1927 a Bible Class was organized. In the same year a mixed choir was formed. 1930 saw the formation of the Men's Club. Not only was this a service organization, but it also provided recreation and fellowship for the members. Dartball was a popular activity. The 50th anniversary booklet of the congregation says that "it was a member of Resurrection who brought dartball to Milwaukee county." (p.10). Unfortunately due to the lack of interest, the Men's Club was disbanded in 1937. But in 1944 the Club was revived and in 1949 it joined the Lutheran Men's Club Association. The Usher's Guild was formed in 1949. In March of 1929 the congregation also became involved in the radio ministry in Milwaukee.

Auferstehungs Gemeinde was also involved in community affairs to an extent. In 1930 the town officials were allowed to construct a voting booth on the church premises. During WW II the Red Cross used the church basement for making bandages. Also Civil Defense officials inspected the church for possible use as an air raid shelter.

As stated before, the congregation began to use english in 1925. In 1930 the name of the congregation was changed from Evangelische Lutherische Auferstehungs Gemeinde to Resurrection Evangelical Lutheran Church, although both names remained legal. By May of 1931 the german name was dropped altogether. The use of german in the worship services also began to decrease. The congregation decided,

- 7 -

in November of 1931, to have one german and one english service each Sunday. By March of the next year the number of german services was dropped to twice a month and by October of 1934 that number was changed to once a month. In June of 1949, in order to get the opinion of the entire congregation, an announcement was made in the Sunday bulletin that the church council was considering the recommendation of dropping german altogether. On August 8, 1949, that was the decision of the congregation.

Although in 1926 Resurrection began to receive support from the Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod, like any other mission congregation, they wanted to become self-supporting as soon as possible. In February and March of 1929, the congregation began to reduce the amount of subsidy they received from the Synod. Of course, in October of 1929, the bottom fell out of the economy, as the Great Depression struck the country. Resurrection, like the Synod, and the rest of the country was affected by the Depression. On more than one occasion it was discussed in council and congregation meetings whether to drop the insurance on the church or what kind of coverage would be cheapest. The congregation discontinued their checking account. In April of 1933, a representative of the church council had to tell Mr. Vernon Howard that they were unable to pay him the interest due because the bank was holding their money. Pastor Krueger voluntarily took

a \$15 a month salary cut, to \$90 a month. One would think that the Depression would be a strange context to become independent of financial support of the Synod, but that is what they did. As mentioned before, in 1929 the congregation reduced the amount of subsidy received from the Synod on their own. Even after the Depression had settled in, in May of 1932 there was a motion made at the voter's meeting to become independent of the Synod. This motion was defeated. Then, in July of that same year, the Synod reduced the subsidy it was giving mission congregations. Recall that in November of that year Pastor Krueger voluntarily took a cut in his salary. But in December at the voter's meeting, Pastor Krueger reported that the Synod was asking mission congregations to cut salaries by 20%. He then suggested that Resurrection become self-supporting. The congregation accepted this suggestion. The Motion was passed, that effective January 1, 1933, Resurrection would become independent of financial support from the Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Krueger also took another \$5 a month cut in his salary.

Although the country might have been suffering from the Depression, the Lord continued to bless Resurrection with growth in membership. In 1930 there were 437 souls and 240 communicant members. That number had increased to 549 souls and 344 communicants by 1940. Thus in 1940 and 1941 the congregation began to discuss what might be

-7-

called a pleasant problem, that of trying to find space for the people in the church. From these discussions it was decided to start a Major Improvements Fund in June of 1942. The fund was to be used for expanding the present church building, building other structures and a new organ, among other things. Plans called for the fund to reach \$50,000 by June of 1949. The fund consisted of war bonds.

The congregation continued to show its concern for and support of christian education. In September of 1944 Resurrection heard a presentation by Pastors Westendorf and Trapp concerning the Lutheran High School Conference. The next month the congregation voted to join the Conference. In 1947 they gave their support to the building of the Lutheran High School at the present site of Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

On July 17, 1949, the Lord of Life and Death called Pastor Krueger from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. The Northwestern Lutheran reported that he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage July 15 and died two days later. The congregation was shocked and saddened by the loss of their pastor. They acted quickly to fill the vacancy. On August 8, 1949, in a meeting led by Pastor Dahlke, Resurrection called Pastor Roland W. Ehlke to be their second pastor.

III. PASTOR ROLAND W. EHLKE 1949-1983

Pastor Roland Ehlke graduated from the Seminary in Thiensville in 1940. Before he was called to Resurrection, he served at St. John's Lutheran Church in Two Rivers, Wisconsin. He was installed as pastor of Resurrection on October 9, 1949. The Lord's blessings on the congregation were evident. Although the congregation had suddenly lost one pastor and a new one was just starting, the growth of the congregation was not slowed. By 1952 the congregation had grown to 754 souls and 560 communicant members. By 1953 both a Boy's and Girl's Club were formed. These organizations would later become the Boy's and Girl's Pioneers. The Men's Club gave much financial, moral and spiritual support to these groups. In their continuing efforts to obtain christian education for the youth of the congregation, Resurrection made an agreement with St. Lucas Lutheran Church (located on K.K and Dover St.) in 1949, to send their children to St. Lucas' school. The congregation paid the tuition for these children. This was started in 1955. Later, this same agreement was made with other congregations to whose schools members of Resurrection were sending their children.

It was in 1940 that Resurrection began to realize that their facilities were not adequate for the number of members. This was the reason they started the Major Improvement Fund. In June of 1952 it was decided to build

a new church. A committee was formed to organize and promote the efforts. The firm of Steffen and Kemp of Wauwatosa was retained as architects. This firm was the official architect of the Wisconsin Synod Mission Board. They had and were doing several churches in the Wisconsin Synod. With the help of this firm a booklet explaining the need and design of the new church was produced, in order to inform the members and gain support for the project. The new church would be built on the present church grounds. Because of the size of the new structure, the old church had to be moved to the rear of the lot. The new church would be 129 ' long and 64' wide. The nave would be 83' by 31' and have a seating capacity of 324 people. An additional 35 people could be seated in the balcony and 28 in the choir loft. The estimated cost of the church was \$150,000, although the actual cost was closer to \$200,000. A three year drive was started to pay for the project, but this didn't work out, and they ended up taking out a loan. The cornerstone of the new church building was laid on November 7, 1954 and in June of 1955 the new church building was dedicated. The new structure not only accommodated the members that already belonged to Resurrection, but it also seemed to help bring more members in. By 1961, just 6 years after the new church was dedicated, the membership grew to 1031 souls and 742 communicants. This was the largest the membership ever was and ever has been.

When the Wisconsin Synod broke fellowship ties with the Missouri Synod, Resurrection did not suffer any sort of substantial loss of members. But there was a question of how to deal with those who request a transfer to a Missouri Synod congregation. In 1962 there were several situations like this. Action was delayed on these until a definite policy was established. In April of that year the policy was set down. It stated that any request for transfer was to be made in writing (this was changed a year later because of the difficulty in getting people to write). A transfer would be granted to another Wisconsin Synod congregation or a congregation belonging to a church body with which we are in fellowship. A release would be given to those wanting to join a Missouri Synod congregation only after efforts have been made to convince the person to join a congregation in fellowship with us and those efforts have failed.

1963 marked the 50th anniversary of the congregations' existence. A week of special activities were planned, including dinners, entertainment and special worship services. The worship services featured as guest speakers President O.J. Naumann and Pastor Richard Balge, a son of the congregation. A special 50th anniversary booklet was produced, entitled "Fifty Years of God's Blessings". The booklet outlined the history of the congregation.

In 1966 a milestone was reached in Resurrection's Sunday School. Frieda Hertel retired after 45 years of service in this branch of the congregation. Another member who rendered outstanding service to the Sunday School is Ervin L. Schulz. With these two, as well as many other faithful workers, the Sunday School prospered. The average enrollment was 180 for over 15 years. As the years passed, this number decreased because of the smaller amount of children in the congregation and an increase in the number of children attending christian day schools.

The Vietnam War also left its mark on Resurrection. In July of 1970, the church council recommended and the congregation approved a one year leave of absence for Pastor Ehlke to serve as civilian chaplin in Southeast Asia. The leave of absence began September 7, 1970. During Pastor Ehlke's leave of absence, Pastor Robert Michael and Senior Vicar Roland Cap Ehlke served the congregation. Things continued to run smoothly during Pastor Ehlke's absence. In September of 1971 Pastor Ehlke returned from Southeast Asia and resumed his duties as pastor of Resurrection. On February 27, 1972 Dr. Ulrich Larson, a chemistry teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, was ordained into the ministry at Resurrection and for a time served as an assistant pastor, helping with the distribution of communion and preaching.

Because of Resurrection's commitment to christian

education they wanted to encourage more students to attend Wisconsin Lutheran High School. In an effort to do so, in 1972, a motion was made at a voter's meeting that the congregation would pay the tuition of any high school student who wanted to attend the high school. Unfortunately a legalistic stipulation was added that stated that from such families regular church attendance would be required. Also, their contributions would have to equal the amount of the tuition plus what would be considered regular contributions to the church. The motion was defeated.

In 1973 the congregation took active steps to demonstrate their support of higher christian education. In October they joined the Wisconsin Lutheran College Conference. They also established a scholarship fund for those people who were studying for the teaching and preaching ministries of the Wisconsin Synod.

In late 1974 one of the more unfortunate chapters of Resurrection's history began. In December of that year Pastor Ehlke was hospitalized because of illness and an injury sustained in a fall. He remained in the hospital several months. During this time Pastor Johnston, of St. Lucas helped out at Resurrection. At the January 1975 voter's meeting, Pastor Ehlke was given sick leave for February and March. The entire situation was to be reviewed at the next meeting. That next meeting was held on March 10, 1975. A report on Pastor Ehlke's health was

given. It was reported that the Pastor's health was improving and that he hoped to start back at Resurrection soon, slowly in March and full time by April. Then one of the members, a man who held several positions in the congregation read a statement concerning Pastor Ehlke. He accused the pastor of neglect of duties, including Sunday School teachers' meetings, confirmation instructions and other church functions. Because of this he made the following motion, as recorded in the minutes of that meeting;

"That Pastor Roland Ehlke be advised to actively seek and accept a call to another Wisconsin Synod position and that pay and benefits to him continue to be paid through June 30, 1975 at 11:59 P.M. Should he fail to seek and accept a call by said time, then all services and pay as well as all other direct or indirect benefits derived as a result of his being pastor of Resurrection be terminated hence forth."

Voting was by secret ballot and the motion was passed by a 19-18 count. It was decided that Pastor Ehlke would continue his duties as his health permitted until June 30, with the exception of confirmation classes.

When this was announced to the rest of the congregation the next Sunday, it caused quite an uproar. Some members demanded that a special meeting be called to discuss the matter again. That meeting was held on April 6, 1975. Pastor Johnston opened the meeting. About 250 people were in attendance. The charges of neglect of duty were reviewed. After discussing the reason for calling this special meeting, a motion was made "to ask Pastor

THE LORD

Ehlke to stay at Resurrection until ^{THE LORD} sees otherwise". After a brief statement concerning the pastor's health, an amendment was made to the first motion, which stated "that the motion passed at the meeting of March 10 terminating Pastor Ehlke's services as pastor of Resurrection Church be recinded." Pastor Ehlke was allowed to speak in his defense, and the member who had brought up the charges was also allowed to clarify what he said. After much heated discussion it was pointed out that there was a definite lack of christian love, especially for the pastor. Before the motion was voted on, it was decided that a 2/3 majority would be needed to recind the March 10 motion. After the votes were counted, the totals were 79-29 in favor of recinding the March 10 motion. Pastor Johnston asked that this vote would not divide the congregation.

But things were not forgiven and forgotten. In the following months, several families left Resurrection, transferring to other congregations, including the president of the congregation and the Sunday School Superintendent. This did not help what was already a declining membership. By the end of 1975, Resurrection had 765 souls and 636 communicant members.

Although Pastor Ehlke returned to health and resumed his duties as pastor, it was apparent that there was too much work for one man to do at Resurrection. So

late in 1975 the congregation began to consider calling an associate pastor or a vicar. In December the choice was narrowed down to a vicar. Provisions were made for a vicar in the 1976 budget. Then in April of 1976 the congregation voted to call a vicar, by a vote of 14-11. The first vicar assigned to Resurrection was W. Paul Brinkmann. He served from September 1976 to August 1977. Resurrection would have 6 more vicars. They were the following: Mark Zander (1977-78); Dale Schaffer (1978-79); Mark Guthmiller (1979-80); Dale Hella (1980-81); William Runke (1981-82) and Kevin Salzwadel (1982-83). In May of 1978 Resurrection purchased the property adjacent to the church (the Krahn property), which was used as a vicarage and later a teacherage.

In November of 1981 Pastor Ehlke celebrated the 40th year of his ministry. One year later, in November of 1982, Pastor Ehlke announced that he would retire at the end of 1983. The congregation began discussing the calling of another pastor. It was decided to drop the vicar program because they would have a younger pastor. On April 20, 1983, Resurrection called W. Paul Brinkmann to be their third pastor.

IV. PASTOR W. PAUL BRINKMANN 1983-1985

When Resurrection called him to be their pastor, Pastor Brinkmann was serving Christ Lutheran Church in

Eden Prairie, Minn. He was installed at Resurrection in September of 1983. Pastor Ehlke stayed on as assistant pastor. It might be said there was a lot of work to do at Resurrection. Membership was still on the decline. In 1983 it reached its lowest numbers since 1950, with 602 souls and 510 communicant members.

There were many small changes that occurred when Pastor Brinkmann arrived, such as the changing over from the KJV to the NIV in the worship services. But the most significant thing to happen, not just in Pastor Brinkmann's pastorate, but in the recent history of the congregation was the starting of a school. This had been a desire of the congregation through out its history. Even though they agrreements with St. Lucas and other congregations to send their children to those schools, this desire to have a school of their own was still in the back of their minds. But it was realized that because of the cost of land and building, this would be financially impossible. In November of 1981, a meeting was held with members of Messiah Lutheran Church (located at 2015 E. Fernwood) to discuss the possibility of starting a joint day school. A boost was given to this effort when St. Lucas informed Resurrection and Messiah that because of overcrowding, they might not be able to accept any children from these congregations in their school. The two congregations realized that the most economical thing to do would be to look for at existing

building to buy or rent. This was a realistic idea since the Milwaukee Public School system had closed a number of grade schools in the area and some of those buildings were available. One of those buildings was Tippécanoe School, right down the block from Resurrection. In January of 1984 a committee, made up of members from both congregations began to negotiate with the City of Milwaukee, to either buy or rent Tippécanoe School. In June of that year Resurrection and Messiah congregations leased Tippécanoe School from the City of Milwaukee, with the option to buy the building in the future. The School was named Risen Christ Lutheran Center. Not only would a day school be conducted there, but also a day care center. Space was also rented to Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, for a southside counseling center and to the Lutheran Woman's Mission Society. In July of 1984 the following received and accepted calls to Risen Christ; Oscar Vogel (psh); the Faculty Administrator; Johnathan Earl, principal; Richard De Frain, Marlene Strandt, Susan Benzel and Colleen O'Connor as teachers. In September of 1984 the school was dedicated and began operation with an enrollment of over 100 pupils.

On April 21, 1985 Resurrection received some news that surprised most of the people and upset many in one way or another. At the beginning of the worship service that Sunday, Pastor Brinkmann announced that he

had received and accepted a call from the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots. (LAMP) He would be leaving the congregation May 5. In a newsletter, dated May 1985, Pastor Brinkmann explained his decision to the congregation:

"As most of you are aware by now, the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots (L.A.M.P.) has extended a call to me to serve as their national Director of Development..... Having arrived at the conviction that the Lord wants me to accept this call I have requested a peaceful release from the call under which I am presently serving to be effective May 5, 1985. Under ordinary circumstances this process would not have transpired so quickly, and I would have continued as your pastor for a number of weeks to facilitate a smooth transition of ministry within the church. However, officials of the Wisconsin Synod advised me to move as soon as possible because the Wisconsin Synod does not approve of fellowship ties with the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots."

In the letter, Pastor Brinkmann also explained that L.A.M.P. is an independant mission society that assists in bringing the Gospel to people in sparsely populated areas. They were operating in Canada, but to be able to work in Alaska, they needed a U.S. office, and that is what Pastor Brinkmann would be establishing. On May 6 the congregation granted Pastor Brinkmann his peaceful release and asked Pastor Ehlke to serve as vacancy pastor.

Humanly speaking, it might be said that Pastor Brinkmann picked a poor time to leave Resurrection, with a new school just starting out and the oppurtunity ofr growth that is present. But through out its history, by the grace of God, Resurrection has survived "tough times." The Lord

has blessed this congregation in the past 72 years, and we can be sure that he will bless it in the years to come. The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." (Rom. 8:28)

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Minutes of the Church Council and Voters meeting of
Resurrection Evangelical Lutheran Church. 1913-1985

Fifty Years of God's Blessings, 1913-1963

With His Help We Build to the Glory of God and The Good
of Ourselves (This is the booklet produced in 1954 to
promote the building of the new church.)

Statistical Reports of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran
Synod; 1927-1985

I would like to thank the following people who helped me
with the research for this paper; Pastor Roland W. Ehke;
Mrs. Maria Stunek, who translated the early minutes of
the meeting, which were in German; Mr. Herman Schulz; and
Mr. Walter Berndt. I would also like to thank Resurrection
Lutheran Church for allowing me to use the minutes of their
meetings.