

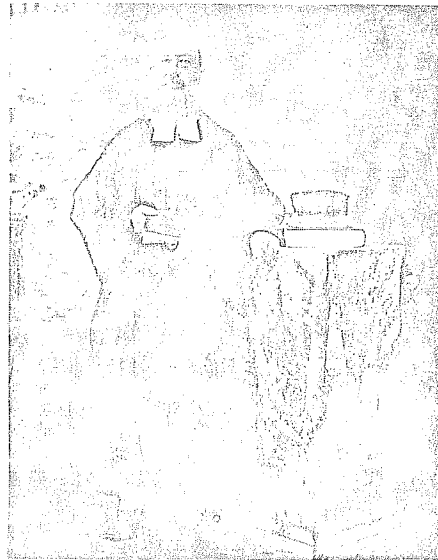
FRANZ JOHANNES KILIAN

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PASTOR FRANZ JOHANNES KILIAN



Pictures are taken from the anniversary booklets of St. John's  
and St. Paul's, Lomira.

## Franz Johannes Kilian

As with most of our early pastors, Kilian came from Germany. He was born in the free imperial city of Bremen on June 24, 1828.<sup>1</sup> Although he was given the name Franz Johannes, in later life he would use his middle name as his first name. Even on official documents his name would appear as Johannes Kilian of J. Kilian. Seldom can we find even a trace of his given name Franz.

In Kilian's hometown of Bremen, there was a "Diasporage-meinde" of the Brudergemeinde" to which Johannes' parents belonged. Through this association, Johannes became well acquainted with the mission reports and writings of the "Brudergemeinde."<sup>2</sup> These were used by the Lord to awaken in his heart a desire to preach the Gospel- a desire that would lead him into his life's work.

In 1853, Kilian came to America at the age of twenty-five. After he arrived he spent "some time with merchant friends at New York who had been hosts to Muehlhaeuser and the other early Langenberg missionaries."<sup>3</sup> For the next eight years he served Moravian congregations throughout the country. These years of service were divided among Hartford, Connecticut, Jefferson County, Wisconsin and Clayton County, Iowa. The modes of transportation of his day did not seem to restrict him too much.

Kilian was married to Chlothilde Gaebler, whose brother was a musician at Watertown, Wisconsin. This should be noted

for it, in part, explains his first contacts with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In fact, Koehler feels it was through the efforts of his fellow missionaries and his brother-in-law, Gaebler, that he landed in Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup> This in time led to his encounters with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It wasn't long before he became acquainted with Bading and asked to join the synod.

In the fall of 1861, Johannes passed a colloquium and joined the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. His first assignment was the congregation in Greenfield, just southwest of Milwaukee, which today is known as St. John's, Root Creek. After a few short years, Kilian's work there was interrupted in a very unusual way. The Civil War had dragged on longer than expected and was requiring a great deal of manpower. As a result, the draft had been instituted and Kilian was drafted.<sup>5</sup> Not wishing to serve as a soldier and leave his work of caring for souls, Johannes paid his way out of service at a cost in excess of \$300.00.<sup>6</sup> To us that may not seem like a lot of money, but for those times it was a tremendous price. Kilian's annual salary was \$225.00. (Because of the war time inflation, it had just been raised from \$180.00 to \$225.00.) The parsonage in which he lived had only cost \$540.00 to build.<sup>7</sup>

After he paid his way out, he accepted a "call" as chaplain for the 26th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. This regiment was made up of all German volunteers and, hence, its members

were mostly Lutheran. Kilian entered the service on November 5, 1864, and was mustered out in June of 1865. He spent only a little over a half of a year in the service. His unit was attached to General W. T. Sherman's command. During these last six months of the war this unit did not see much action. It took part in the campaign through North and South Carolina but mainly in a supporting role, and remained relatively inactive,

Considering the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod position today, it seems a little ironic that one of the early pastors of the synod served as chaplain. But this is just what happened. It might be good to stop and take a look at what the chaplaincy was like during the Civil War. When the War between the States broke out there were only thirty chaplaincy posts.<sup>8</sup> As the army grew in size, it soon became evident that the chaplaincy program must also grow. As a result, general order 15 was issued. It provided for the organization of volunteer regiments and authorized the commanding officer of each regiment to appoint a chaplain chosen by the vote of the field officers and company commanders.<sup>9</sup> It was hoped that in this way the chaplain and a majority of men in each regiment would be of the same denomination. These chaplains were not to be just anyone who was willing to serve, but they were required to be ordained ministers. It is interesting to note that the wording of this general order had unintentionally made the Jewish rabbis ineligible. However, after a year this problem was

corrected and rabbis served Jewish soldiers in the army.

Since a chaplaincy program had never really existed in any size before the Civil War, there were many changes and problems in the program that had to be worked out as things went along. After selection, one of the first problems that came up was pay. Some of the paymasters would not pay three month voluntary chaplains. They did not recognize them as men in the service of the government. It wasn't until the Secretary of War issued a specific order, that all chaplains, permanent and volunteer, received their pay. The amount of pay, also, came into question. At the beginning of the war (May and June of 1861) general orders were issued fixing the pay and allowances of a chaplain at the same level as a captain of cavalry. This amounted to \$1,746.00.<sup>10</sup> As the war dragged on, Congress felt that this was too much, and reduced the pay to \$1,200.00 and two rations per day while on duty, plus forage for one horse.<sup>11</sup> Because of a forgotten comma, some paymasters read the order to mean that not only did a chaplain<sup>not</sup> receive his rations when not on duty but he also did not receive his pay. As a result, some chaplains who were sick, wounded or captured did not receive any money. However, by the end of the war, the President himself, saw to it that chaplains received all of their pay, whether sick, wounded or imprisoned.

When the war began, the standard uniform for the chaplain was a black frock coat with a standing collar. Down the front

of the coat were nine black buttons. Plain black pantaloons and a black felt hat without ornament completed the uniform. Before the first year of war had ended, there were some minor changes. Herring-bone of black braid was added around buttons and button holes, and a gold wreath encircling the silver letters U. S. was placed on the hat. Sad to say, some chaplains wanted a more military uniform, including even a side-arm.

We have already mentioned that to be a chaplain you must have been an ordained minister, but this is not the only factor that was considered in choosing a chaplain. A handbook on the chaplaincy listed five major qualifications for a good chaplain.<sup>12</sup> First, he must lead a pious life, and thereby, provide a good example to the men in the regiment. Second, he must be a proficient teacher, since part of his duty was instructing the men. Third, he must have a suitable personality. In other words, he should be kind, generous, patient, cheerful and courteous. Fourth, he must have good health for he would have to undergo the rigors of army life. Fifth, he would have to be a man of courage. His ministry would take him to the battlefield and primitive field hospitals. Not only would he have to view sickening sights but at times he would be in danger of losing his life.

The duties of a chaplain were many and varied but they can be divided into two major categories- Official and unofficial but understood. Included in his official duties were

quarterly reports to the commanding officer. These contained the location, date, attendance and number of services conducted. It also included a report on the moral and religious condition of the men in the regiment. Each week the chaplain was required to hold services and whenever necessary conduct funerals. Their duties did not end with capture. It was expected that he continue his work with those whom he had been imprisoned.

The chaplain's unofficial but understood duties were of both a religious and secular nature. Quite naturally, he was expected to comfort the sick and the dying. It was also understood that he would celebrate the Lord's Supper, baptize converts, and distribute religious literature (from the ABS). But he had many <sup>he</sup> other duties as well. He served as stretcher bearer and regimental librarian. He wrote letters for the sick and the illiterate. Courses of formal instruction and hobbies were promoted by him. He took collections for charity and even served as the general business agent for the men of the regiment.<sup>13</sup>

The above picture of the Civil War chaplaincy will give us a pretty good idea of the kind of position Kilian was in. It was not quite as structured as the chaplaincy is today and most of his duties were understood instead of official. He also had the advantage of serving a regiment of Germans who were predominately Lutheran.

As was already mentioned, his service in the army was rel-



atively short. He was mustered out in June of 1865 and returned to his congregation in Greenfield. He served them faithfully for three more years. In late 1867 he received and accepted a call to a triple parish in Theresa and Lomira. The three congregations were St. Jacobi, Town Theresa, St. Paul's, Town Lomira and St. John's, Lomira. He was installed into his office on January 12, 1868, and lived in the parsonage of St. Jacobi, Town Theresa. Kilian continued to serve all three congregations until 1870, when the parish was divided.<sup>14</sup> St. Jacobi called its own pastor and St. Paul's and St. John's continued under Kilian's guidance. Jointly they built a new parsonage for \$1,203.00, on a lot that had been donated for such use.<sup>15</sup>

In 1902, Pastor Kilian decided that it would be advisable to resign and retire from the active ministry because of a prolonged and troublesome throat ailment.<sup>16</sup> As a result, St. John's called Pastor Pietz and the members of St. Paul's hoping that serving only one congregation would bring the needed relief, called Pastor Kilian to remain the shepherd of their congregation. He accepted. However, by March of 1904 his throat had not gotten any better and he was forced to resign from the public ministry.<sup>17</sup> Since it was a throat condition that caused his resignation from the ministry, it might be interesting to note that he had a high pitched voice and that it was his custom to chant the communion liturgy.<sup>18</sup> This was an unusual prac-

tice at the time and was not continued after his resignation.

He retired in Lomira and remained there until his death on January 23, 1917. His wife had preceeded him in death but he was survived by his three children, Maria, Magdalena, and Hermann. His son, Hermann, had followed his footsteps and gone through the seminary. However, Hermann was <sup>un</sup>frocked possibly because of a broken engagement.<sup>18</sup> His father was instrumental in his removal. Despite this incident, Hermann remained a devoted and faithful layman until his death.

Kilian was not a flashy character who drew a lot of attention to himself. Instead, he was a quiet and dedicated minister of the Gospel. His public service to the Lord lasted over 50 years, 43 years of which were in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We can give him no higher tribute than Koehler's remark that he was "faithful to the Lutheran confessions."<sup>20</sup>

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15. St. Paul's, Lomira - 1855-1955, p. 3.
16. St. John's, Lomira - 110th Anniversary, p. 16.
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18. Interview with President Carl Lawrenz.
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