

# Pastor Jonathan Mahnke

† 1913 - 1977 †



*"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you  
except Jesus Christ and him crucified."  
(1 Corinthians 2:2)*

Senior Church History Paper  
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"You said that your last name was Mahnke, right? A man named Jonathan Mahnke was my pastor at Mount Lebanon years ago. How are you related to him?" That is a question which a number of people have asked me already in my lifetime. And I hate to say this but my reply to their inquiry is always about the same. I'll shrug my shoulders and then respond somewhat embarrassingly, "I should know because I have been asked this before. But truthfully I am not really sure. I do know that I am related to him ... but I am not sure how!" Then I often attempt to explain how I think I am related to Jonathan Mahnke: "My great-grandfather and Jonathan Mahnke's father were ..." In the end I only confuse myself more and the person who asked me in the first place. In the past I didn't know how I was related to Jonathan Mahnke. And I certainly knew nothing about his life or his ministry.

All that has changed now. Over the course of the past couple of months I have learned very much about Pastor Jonathan Mahnke. I still am confused about how exactly I am related to him. Someone has told me that he was my first cousin three times removed. Another person has told me that he was my second cousin twice removed. I still am not sure. I do know that Jonathan Mahnke was a first cousin to my grandfather, Paul Mahnke. Regardless of how I am related to him, I have learned a lot about the life and the preaching ministry of my relative.

This paper is not intended to be a biography on the life and ministry of Jonathan Mahnke. My purpose is not to write a book about him. I don't know all the details of his life and of his ministry. Attempting to undertake something as enormous as writing his life's story is a task I am not capable of fulfilling.

The scope of this paper will be more limited. I will certainly cover the "highlights" of Jonathan Mahnke's life. However, I especially intend to focus on his ministry at Mount Lebanon

Evangelical Lutheran Congregation from 1937 to 1977. In this paper I especially want to concentrate on Pastor Mahnke's approach to evangelism. It is a known fact that the Lord richly blessed Jonathan Mahnke in the area of reaching out with the Word of God to the unchurched. I will look at how he carried out evangelism in his ministry. I also want to devote some time concentrating on Jonathan Mahnke as a preacher. Although he is perhaps best remembered as an evangelist, I have been told by people who knew him well that preaching might have been his greatest strength. Finally, as a Seminary senior awaiting my first assignment into the full time preaching ministry, I want to discover what I can learn and apply from the ministry of Jonathan Mahnke into my own ministry.

The Scripture passage which I quoted on the title page of my paper is one that is most appropriate and fitting as I consider the life and ministry of Jonathan Mahnke. He was a man who "resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Those are words of the Apostle Paul in the first letter which he wrote to the church in Corinth (2: 2). Incidentally, those words also served as the sermon text for President Oscar J. Naumann when he preached on the fortieth anniversary of Pastor Mahnke's public ministry. I don't know if any other words of Scripture better define Jonathan Mahnke as a pastor, a preacher and as an evangelist. A Seminary classmate of Pastor Mahnke is Erwin Schewe. He beautifully summed up the both the life and ministry of his friend and colleague. Pastor Schewe said, "For Jonathan Mahnke the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the most important thing in all the world; everything else took second place." Nothing was more precious to Jonathan Mahnke than the message of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ. Nothing was more important to Jonathan Mahnke than getting that precious message out to all people. The message of "Christ crucified" propelled

Jonathan Mahnke to reach out to all who didn't know Jesus as this world's Savior from sin. More than anything I hope to lead the reader of this paper to understand how Jonathan Mahnke carried out evangelism and to appreciate his dedication to Gospel outreach.

Jonathan Henry Mahnke was born on February 17, 1913 in the town of Newburg, Wisconsin. Newburg is located within one half hour driving distance of Milwaukee (by car - not by horse and buggy!). His parents were William and Alwina Mahnke. William Mahnke was the pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church of Newburg. Jonathan was the fourth of the nine children that the Lord blessed his parents with. When he was a young boy of four years the Mahnke family packed their possessions and moved from the small town of Newburg to the big city of Milwaukee, settling into a house at South 68th Street and West Forest Home Avenue. The reason for the move was that William had received and accepted the divine call to become the pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church of Root Creek (West Allis). It was at St. John's Lutheran School that Jonathan received his formal Christian education. And it was at St. John's Lutheran Church that young Jonathan was confirmed in the Christian faith.

After graduating from grade school Jonathan Mahnke attended Concordia College in Milwaukee. This school was located on 32nd and State Street. I suppose one would describe that school as being a high school and a junior college combined in one. It was at this institution that Jonathan received six years of pre-theological training. He enrolled at Concordia College in the fall of 1926. He graduated on June 3, 1932. After graduation he transferred to Northwestern College of Watertown, Wisconsin for the purpose of continuing his pre-Seminary training. It was at Northwestern College where something unfortunate happened to Jonathan; something that would be a source of discomfort and pain to him for many years. As part of being "welcomed"

by his older schoolmates to the Watertown campus, Jonathan was paddled with a wooden board. Evidently this paddling was severe enough that Jonathan's back was injured. As a result he was plagued with back problems for the rest of his life. But on a more cheerful note Jonathan graduated from Northwestern College in the spring of 1934. At this time of his life Jonathan was at a crossroads. He wasn't convinced if he really wanted to dedicate his life to serving the Lord as a full time pastor. Jonathan wrestled with thoughts of becoming a teacher instead. In fact, he spent the summer of 1934 taking teaching courses at the former State Teacher's College of Milwaukee.

As he leads all his children, the Lord guided Jonathan Mahnke to the campus of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville, Wisconsin. He arrived on the Seminary hill in September of 1934. I don't have many details or stories to tell from Jonathan's days at the Seminary. What kind of student was Jonathan Mahnke? Classmate Schewe recalls that Jonathan was of "average intelligence, nothing super, but a student who was able to handle his subjects." Pastor Norman Engel was a schoolmate of Jonathan's both at Concordia College and at the Seminary. He told me, "Jonathan was neither an "A" student nor a "C" student but right in between." I read a copy of an assignment paper which Jonathan wrote for one of his Seminary professors. This paper was dated December 18, 1936. In this paper Jonathan wrote about the Sacrament of Baptism. His paper title was, "*Baptism as a Source of Comfort and Strength throughout a Christian's Career.*" I don't claim to be an expert when it comes to grading or judging a paper for its value and quality. After reading this paper I wouldn't say that this was an outstanding piece of work. The writer didn't teach me anything about baptism that I didn't know already. I would say that Jonathan wrote this five page paper very well. It was easy to read. The

language was simple. The language was direct. Being able to speak and write in a simple, clear, manner would be something that was a characteristic of Jonathan Mahnke throughout his ministry. I don't know which Seminary professor graded this paper. Whoever the professor was, he gave Jonathan this comment on the bottom of the last page: "Good." I have a hunch that adjective well summarizes Jonathan Mahnke as a student. He wasn't an outstanding student who was blessed with awesome intellectual gifts. He was a good student who was very practical and diligent in his studies. Jonathan made excellent use of the abilities and the talents his Creator blessed him with. One more thought I would like to share with you concerning his days at the Seminary. A hobby that Jonathan enjoyed immensely was table tennis, i.e. ping pong. As classmate Schewe said, "Jon was the table tennis champ on campus. No one could beat him. He just loved to play table tennis."

It was during his Seminary years that Jonathan was led by God to meet the woman who would stand by his side as a loving and faithful wife for forty years. Lydia Pickron served as a teacher at St. John's Lutheran School of Root Creek where Jonathan's father was the pastor. On weekends Jonathan would earn extra money to pay for his education by digging the graves for the members of his father's congregation who had died. The fact that he was home for a good number of weekends, coupled with the fact that Lydia Pickron taught Jonathan's youngest brother Elmer in the school (did young Elmer encourage his older brother? ), seemed to almost funnel Jonathan and Lydia together. Mrs. Mahnke, who is presently living at Luther Manor in Milwaukee, remembers how even during his time at the Seminary Jonathan wasn't one hundred percent convinced that the pastoral ministry was for him. She said, "He was thinking about the possibility of becoming an undertaker. I made it clear that I really did not want to become an

undertaker's wife. In fact at the time I wasn't even sure if I wanted to be a pastor's wife. But I told him that I would prefer being a pastor's wife rather than an undertaker's wife. So I guess that kind of swayed him to become a pastor." The Lord certainly does work in mysterious ways!

Jonathan graduated from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary on June 10, 1937. He was one of twenty-six students in the Seminary class of '37. Among his classmates were Carleton Toppe and Martin Albrecht. Back in those days calls into the ministry following graduation were few and far between. Jonathan did, however, receive a call from the Mission Board to teach the lower grades in a two room school at Mount Lebanon Congregation, replacing a female teacher who had resigned earlier in the summer of 1937. Jonathan would often joke about how he was called as a female teacher and received the salary of a female teacher. Because Mount Lebanon did not have a pastor at that time, Jonathan was also asked to serve as interim pastor. He served in both capacities until November 28, 1937, when Pastor Arnold Schroeder was installed as pastor of the congregation, thereby relieving Jonathan of his pastoral duties. It was during these winter months, December 26, 1937, to be exact, that Jonathan was married to Lydia after three years of courting. I might mention here that the Lord blessed their marriage with four children: Jon, Karen, Kurt and Barbara. Barbara, their firstborn, is with her father in heaven as she died as an infant.

After being relieved of the pastoral duties at Mount Lebanon Jonathan was soon asked to serve the mission congregation Homehurst until the time when it would receive a pastor. The proceedings of the Eleventh Biennial Convention of the South-East Wisconsin district has this to say about this small mission congregation that Jonathan served:

This is the youngest of our mission stations, and was started last summer through the efforts of Pastor Walter Kiebel and a member of his congregation. This preaching station has no organization as yet. The field, however, is a very

promising one, and we have all reason to look for a very fine growth here. Services are conducted every Sunday, and the average attendance is from 40 to 45. The Sunday School is being attended by about 25 children. It is the intention of your Mission Board to combine this parish with St. Paul's Congregation (Synodic Report, page 35).

Thinking back on those months when Jonathan served this mission congregation, Mrs. Mahnke remembers how her husband would conduct the Sunday worship service in a garage!

The permanent call to serve Mount Lebanon Congregation came in the late summer of 1938. Pastor Schroeder was called to be an institutional missionary in August of that year. After accepting the call, Pastor Schroeder received a peaceful release from the congregation in a special voter's meeting held on August 16, 1938. After details regarding Pastor Schroeder's farewell sermon were handled, the voters began taking care of the business at hand of calling a new pastor. The minutes of that meeting read as follows: "The meeting was then ready for discussion in regard to the calling of a new pastor. Motion made by Mr. J. Dirk and seconded by George Trautmann and carried to nominate Mr. J. Mahnke." Following his nomination, four other men were nominated to receive the call to become the pastor at Mount Lebanon. Then the minutes continue. "Motion made by Mr. H. Schmid and seconded by Mr. G. Trautmann to select the two names receiving highest votes and then select the candidate receiving highest votes of those two. Motion carried." The minutes reveal that Jonathan Mahnke received fifteen votes and that Reverend R. Zimmermann received seven votes. "Motion made by Mr. R. Schaber and seconded by Mr. C. Wendorf to make the vote for Mr. J. Mahnke unanimous." On the first day of September 1938 Jonathan Mahnke was officially called to be the pastor at Mount Lebanon (Appendix 1).

After reading the call from the Mission Board and the "job description" letter from "The Board of Mount Lebanon" (Appendix 2) it is no wonder that Jonathan felt a bit intimidated. He



knew that it would be an awesome responsibility to be in charge of the spiritual welfare of a congregation. Because Jonathan was so overwhelmed and unsure of what decision to make, he decided to speak with one of his Seminary professors, August Pieper. Jonathan basically told Professor Pieper that he didn't feel he was capable of handling all the responsibility that would come with the territory of being a pastor. After listening to Jonathan, Professor Pieper remained sitting in his chair and stared out into the darkness of the night. After what seemed like an eternity of silence, Professor Pieper turned to him and said, "You are right. You can't handle this calling by yourself. But remember it is the Lord who called you to be the pastor at Mount Lebanon. He will be with you. He will strengthen you. Now go!" That visit, Mrs. Mahnke believes, helped lead her husband to accept the divine call to become the full time shepherd of the souls at Mount Lebanon Congregation.

Jonathan wrote his acceptance letter on September 13, 1938 (Appendix 3). In his letter Jonathan was fully aware of his responsibilities as a pastor. He also was fully aware of his own limitations and weaknesses. In his deep humility one also sees his deep trust and faith in his Lord. Jonathan wrote in his letter, "Nevertheless, I am convinced that your call is the Lord's voice calling me and therefore I trust His promise, that He will be my help and stay. Since it is the Lord's work and not mine I know that He will build His kingdom through His Word and Sacrament in your congregation under my pastorate to His glory and the eternal welfare of immortal souls."

So the full time pastoral ministry of Jonathan Mahnke began at Mount Lebanon Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. This ministry would by God's grace last for just over forty years. And what a ministry it was! God richly blessed both the shepherd and the flock in many

ways. The scope of my paper will be directed at Pastor Mahnke as an evangelist and a preacher. Therefore, I am not intending to go into great detail about his ministry. I would be making a mistake, however, if I failed to not even present a general overview of what the Lord accomplished through Jonathan Mahnke during his ministry. Perhaps the best summary of Pastor Mahnke's tenure at Mount Lebanon are words which he himself wrote. I received from Pastor Marvin Otterstatter, who has served at Mount Lebanon since 1964, a little booklet which captures the history of this congregation from its origin in 1927 up until the present. It is entitled, "*The Little White Church On The Outskirts Of Town.*" The majority of this booklet was written by Pastor Mahnke himself. I have photocopied the portion of the booklet which highlights the years of Pastor Mahnke's time at Mount Lebanon (Appendix 4). Let me just note that perhaps the "pinnacle" of Pastor Mahnke's ministry was the building of a new church and school. The church building was dedicated to God's glory on July 21, 1957. The school was dedicated on October 20, 1960.

The building of a new church and school were necessary because of the remarkable growth which Mount Lebanon experienced. The table on the next page demonstrates the growth in both the church and the school. From the time Pastor Mahnke began his ministry in 1938 until 1957, the year the present church building was first used for public worship, Mount Lebanon grew by nearly 300%. Of special notice is the number of adults that were confirmed each year at Mount Lebanon. More will be said about that later in this paper.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Souls</b>	<b>Communicant Members</b>	<b>Lutheran Elementary School Enrollment</b>	<b>Adult Confirmations</b>
1936	400	163	77	0
1938	450	200	92	6
1940	525	250	106	2
1942	620	300	118	8
1944	660	350	134	5
1946	665	355	137	11
1948	660	400	120	10
1950	715	460	129	8
1952	825	500	151	15
1954	1104	600	180	24
1956	1120	675	181	14
1957	1250	700	186	12
1958	1325	750	205	33
1959	1500	900	223	35
1960	1600	950	256	30
1961	1700	1000	267	32
1962	1800	1050	262	25
1963	1850	1100	263	29
1964	1965	1150	269	17
1965	1978	1175	270	22
1966	2057	1200	257	46
1967	2021	1225	267	30
1968	2018	1225	259	31
1969	2010	1245	237	29
1970	2000	1250	230	18
1971	1954	1250	218	30
1972	1855	1210	216	20
1973	1773	1200	218	27
1974	1734	1262	209	28
1975	1680	1175	189	27
1976	1665	1200	193	40
1977	1626	1212	199	8

Why did Mount Lebanon grow so quickly and immensely? One reason certainly is because that part of Milwaukee was rapidly developing with the building of new houses. Other Wisconsin Synod churches in the area also were blessed by God with an increase in the number of people who joined their church family. Atonement Lutheran Church grew from a

congregation of 560 souls in 1938 to one of 1,340 souls by 1958. North Trinity Lutheran Church numbered 1,000 souls in 1938 and enlarged to 1,800 souls by 1958. Garden Homes Lutheran Church grew from 480 souls in 1938 to 1,305 souls twenty years later. Hundreds upon hundreds of new homes were being erected and constructed in this area of northern Milwaukee. Just the sheer number of new families who built new houses for themselves would result in some natural growth at Mount Lebanon. But an unbeliever doesn't clamor for attention. An unbeliever won't wake up on a Sunday morning and suddenly have the urge to go the church down the street to hear the Word of God. The Bible is clear that all people by nature are God's enemies. The sinful nature of every person wants nothing to do with Jesus because he sees no need for a Savior from sin. To many people, and certainly to many of the people who moved into the area near Mount Lebanon, the message of Jesus Christ crucified for the sins of the world was one of foolishness.

In this situation of a rapidly growing community we see how beautifully and remarkably the Lord of the church used Jonathan Mahnke for the expansion of his kingdom. The growing neighborhoods which bordered Mount Lebanon on all sides were ripe mission fields just waiting to be harvested. There were countless number of souls which were headed on the road to an eternity of death and despair in hell. Yet who should tell these people about salvation in heaven as being a free gift? Who should proclaim to them the Gospel message that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life?" The hymnist asks the question, "Hark! The voice of Jesus crying, 'Who will go and work today? Fields are white and harvests waiting; Who will bear the sheaves away?' Loud and long the Master calleth; Rich reward he offers thee. Who will answer, gladly saying, 'Here am

"I-send me, send me?" The Lord moved Jonathan Mahnke to raise his hand high and to open his mouth wide and answer, "Here am I-send me, send me."

Simply put, Pastor Mahnke was an evangelist in every sense of the word. The term evangelist comes from the Greek verb ευαγγελιζω. This verb literally means "to preach the good news." The Greek noun for the person who preaches the good news is ευαγγελιστης. As the Scripture verse on the title page suggests, Jonathan Mahnke was a pastor who was "resolved to nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The command which Jesus gave to his disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," was one which Pastor Mahnke took very seriously. And in that time of our synod's history being outreached-minded was uncommon.

One should not get the impression that the majority of pastors and congregations weren't serious about reaching out with the Word of God to the unchurched in their community. Nor should one think that churches purposely intended not to carry out the Great Commission. Yet back in the 1950's one could say that, in a sense, evangelism was a "naughty" word. Evangelism was often associated with Billy Graham and was seen as some type of religious revival movement. Evangelism was something that the Baptists or the Jehovah Witnesses did. Evangelism was viewed as being extremely liberal and therefore it should be avoided. The feeling of some people in the Wisconsin Synod was that because we have the truth of the Gospel people will come to us. Again, we are making a mistake if we want to point an accusing finger at that generation of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans for failing to evangelize with the Word of God. More often than not people simply didn't fully understand what it meant to evangelize.

The Lord created in Jonathan Mahnke a deep desire to be an εὐαγγελιστής. The people who knew him and were associated with him saw this. Curtis Buerger was one whom Pastor Mahnke reached out to with the Word. Curtis was confirmed as an adult by Pastor Mahnke in 1947 following a Bible instruction class. Curtis saw in Pastor Mahnke a man who was consumed with taking the message of Jesus Christ crucified into the community. Curtis said, "Pastor Mahnke's love for doing the Lord's work shone right through him. It was obvious that at every opportunity he wanted nothing more to do than to witness to someone about the Lord or to teach that person about Jesus." Pastor Bob Michel grew up at Mount Lebanon congregation. He had the privilege of working during his Seminary years as a vicar under Pastor Mahnke. Pastor Michel said that Pastor Mahnke believed "that you should feed everybody the Word of God one time before you feed anybody a second time." Son Jonathan, who serves the Lord as a pastor at Apostle's Evangelical Lutheran Church in San Jose, California, saw in his father the burning desire to proclaim the message of the cross to all people, particularly to those who were without a church home. Jon said of his father, "He was a person who loved people. He had a zeal for those who were spiritually lost and a great desire to help people in their relationship with God. If someone was apart from the family of God he was zealous to bring him into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. I remember my father as a being a person who was intense in his love for helping spiritually lost people."

Jonathan Mahnke was an evangelist, a proclaimer of the good news, because he first realized what that message of good news meant to him and where he would spend his eternity. He realized that he himself was a sinner who deserved only the punishment of hell. His soul needed to hear that Jesus, with his perfect life and substitutionary death, was his personal Savior.

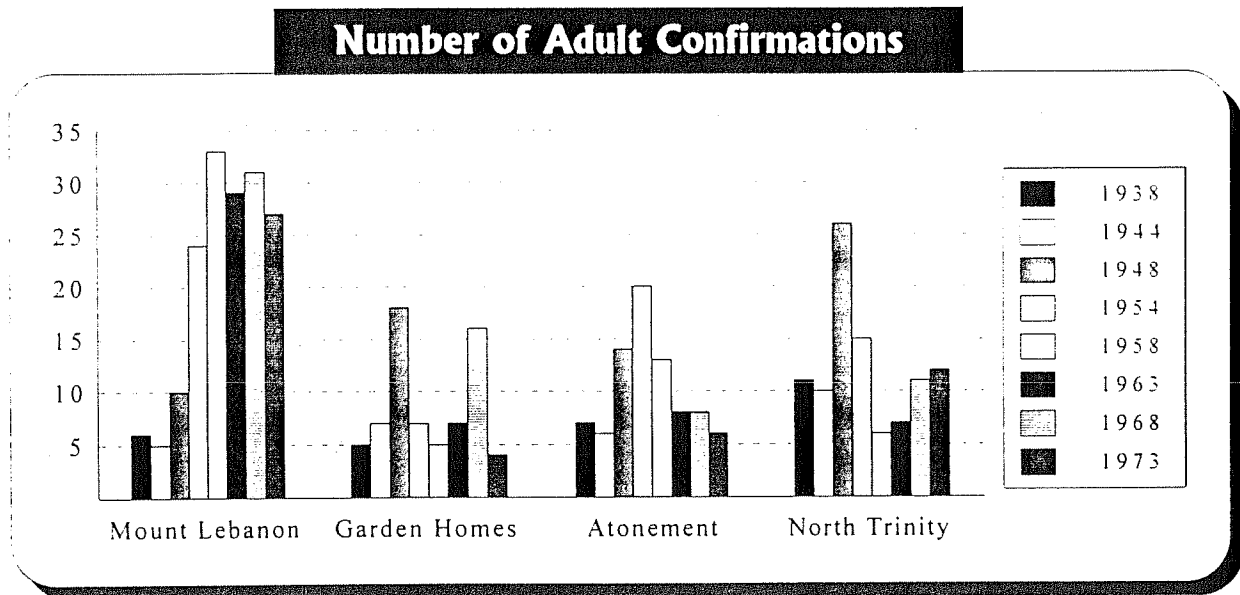
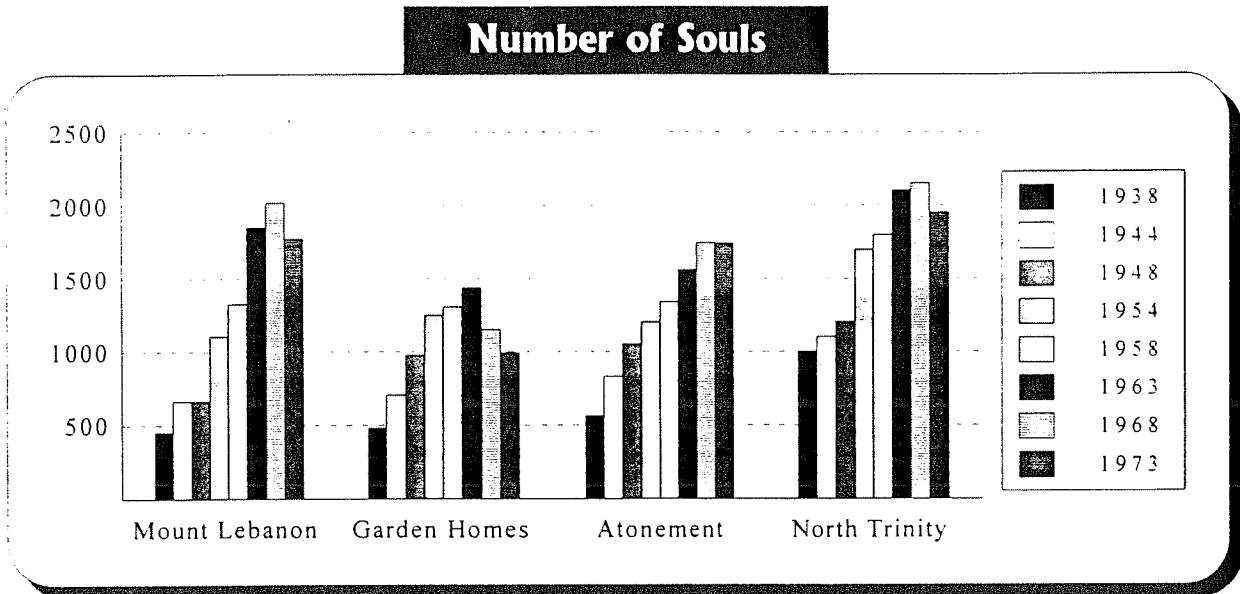
This joy over that Gospel message opened his mouth to speak. Pastor Mahnke wrote an evangelism paper entitled, "Gaining and Instructing the Adult." I am not exactly sure when this paper was written or to whom it was delivered, although judging by the content of the paper I think it was written around 1966 or 1967 and was most likely delivered at a pastor's conference. I should also say that I don't have a copy of the official paper that he delivered. I have what appears to be a "near final stage" manuscript that underwent some editing. Therefore I will not give exact page numbers when I quote the paper. In the introduction of this paper Pastor Mahnke spoke about the miracle of the Gospel and what it meant to him.

We above all must be saturated with this Gospel. We above all must appreciate the wonderful fact that we are children of God. Imagine, you and I, sinners in the worst degree, are saved because of the blood of Jesus Christ our Savior. We have been saved from the dominion of sin and from the condemnation of sin. We have the peace of God that passes all understanding. And we know that when we close our eyelids in death, we will open them in heaven. Certainly this truth we cannot keep to ourselves but must share it with as many people as possible. We must be the most hard-hearted individuals if we know someone has not this joy and is going to hell and we neglect to share this truth. In fact it must become an obsession with us to share this truth.

As I mentioned earlier in this paper all the congregations in northern Milwaukee experienced remarkable growth during the 1950's and the 1960's. The statistics reveal that Mount Lebanon was no exception. Yet a closer look at the numbers reveals something which staggers the mind. I am speaking about the number of adults who were confirmed every year at Mount Lebanon. Look back at the chart on page ten and notice how many adults were confirmed each year at Mount Lebanon.

From 1956, the year in which I was able to access yearly statistics, until 1977, the year he died, Pastor Mahnke instructed and confirmed 583 adults. That number averages out to 26.5 adult confirmations a year! We have seen how other WELS congregations located in northern

Milwaukee by God's grace experienced fantastic growth in the number of souls added yearly to their church memberships. How did those congregations compare with Mount Lebanon as far as the number of adults who were being instructed and confirmed each year? I randomly selected the years 1938, 1944, 1948, 1954, 1958, 1963, 1968 and 1973. The three congregations I compared with Mount Lebanon are North Trinity, Garden Homes and Atonement. The first chart will compare the growth in the number of souls. The second chart will compare the number of adult confirmations.





The numbers speak for themselves. All the congregations reached out with the Gospel to the unchurched in the community. But the numbers clearly indicate that Pastor Mahnke and the members of Mount Lebanon were "extra zealous" in their efforts to reach out with the Gospel in their community. A pastor, and a congregation for that matter, can't expect to have a large number of adult confirmations unless they work at finding them and getting them into the Bible instruction class. Under the guidance of Pastor Mahnke, Mount Lebanon certainly did work at finding and instructing adults who did not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior!

When I first read the statistics on the number of adults yearly confirmed at Mount Lebanon, I wondered about the kind of evangelism program that Pastor Mahnke must have had. Surely he had initiated an evangelism program that was very detailed and well organized. I envisioned a large Evangelism Committee that had monthly meetings to organize the next congregational canvass of the area. This Evangelism Committee no doubt sent out mailings and made telephone calls to invite the unchurched of the community to Sunday morning worship services. I was positive that Pastor Mahnke himself spent a couple of hours each day pounding the pavement and knocking on doors in the neighborhood, looking for someone without a church home!

Imagine my surprise to find out how different things actually were! I would even admit that at first I was a bit disappointed. But fancy methods and detailed programs are not everything. At least in the first half of his ministry Pastor Mahnke did not even have an official Evangelism Committee. Yet evangelism was obviously done, and done quite well, at Mount Lebanon.

A slogan of Nike, a popular athletic shoe company, is "Just do it!" That little saying summarizes Pastor Mahnke's evangelism program at Mount Lebanon. Son Jon said this about his father's "just do it" approach to reaching out with the Word of God: "That was his philosophy. He didn't want to just sit around and talk about doing evangelism. He wanted to just go ahead and do it."

Evangelism takes effort and it takes time. Pastor Mahnke was aware of those facts. He also was aware that a pastor doesn't have a lot of spare time. Therefore, he involved the members of his congregation in reaching out to the unchurched. This fact of stressing member involvement was known by many people outside of Mount Lebanon. Pastor Norman Engel said, "One of the main reasons for the high number of adult confirmations was that Pastor Mahnke strongly encouraged his congregation to go out into the community and bring people in." One should note that Pastor Mahnke didn't expect that every member be able to deliver a Law & Gospel presentation each time they came in contact with an unchurched person. Pastor Mahnke trained his members not so much as to be personal witnesses as they were encouraged to be like the disciple of Jesus named Philip. This disciple simply told Nathanael to, "Come and see" (John 1: 46).

Pastor Mahnke strongly encouraged his people to invite their unchurched neighbors and friends to "come and see" his adult instruction class. (Pastor Mahnke called it his "Religious Instruction Class.") Pastor Otterstatter said, "The fundamental principle of Pastor Mahnke's approach, and that which we continue to use here at Mount Lebanon, is that you invite the unchurched to the Religious Information Class. That is it! There is nothing more involved than an invitation. Then we let the Gospel naturally produce its results."

Pastor Mahnke enabled the Holy Spirit to plant the seed of faith by conducting his Religious Information Class two times a year. And this he did "religiously" year in and year out! Pastor Mahnke wrote in his paper, "In order to gain as many people as possible and also to enable prospects who at various times wish to attend the class, we have one continuous class from the second week in September to the last week in June. Our fall class begins in September and terminates the last week in January. The second class begins in February and terminates the last week in June." Having the dates and times for the class always set consequently put the pressure on Pastor Mahnke to make sure that there were people who would be in the class. "Having two classes a year, that always start at the same time, also puts good evangelical pressure upon the pastor as well as the members of the evangelism committee. If one waits until a group has been gathered to begin to instruct, the starting time may be delayed again and again. But if one sets two permanent dates as the beginning of another class, one will plan sufficient time in advance to reach this goal."

Pastor Mahnke knew that "the Gospel and the Gospel alone converts." After working hard to lead an unchurched person into his Religious Information Class he made sure that no barriers would hinder the Holy Spirit's work of conversion. At this time I would like to quote extensively a fair portion of Pastor Mahnke's paper in which he speaks about his Religious Information Class. Take special note of how Pastor Mahnke paid attention to anything and everything which he thought might cause an obstacle for the Holy Spirit.

The first lesson is of utmost importance for it is here where they receive their first impression. The pastor should be in the room as least thirty minutes before the class begins. The room should be spotless and the furniture neatly arranged. The pastor should be well groomed and neatly dressed. The members of the evangelism committee should call for the prospective members or at least be present when they arrive. Members of the evangelism committee should attend all the classes with the friends they have found. The pastor should introduce all

present to each other and make them feel welcome. The class should begin on time. But most important of all, the pastor must be exceptionally well prepared. He must know exactly what he wants to say and say it so interestingly that the class will want to return.

It is very important that each class begins at the same time and ends at the same time. Classes should never be too long. I only have mine for an hour. When the hour is up, I stop. If someone has a question just as the time is up, that person will be informed that his question will be answered next time. Here some pastors make their mistake. They get so wound up in their subject that they keep talking on and on, and the members of the class become more and more disinterested. When we attended school, no period lasted longer than an hour even at the Seminary. How, then, can we expect people, who are learning the A B C's of Christianity to listen for two or three hours? We must be careful that they do not become saturated and unable to digest what we tell them.

What course should a person use to instruct the adult? There are many good courses on the market. Pastors have used them and have had good results with them. But I am of such nature that I cannot place myself in another author's line of thinking, and therefore if I used such a course, the class would be stale and uninteresting. I do not condemn the use of a prepared course. If someone can use it effectively, let him do it. Some pastors use the Bible solely as the textbook, others use the catechism. Regardless of what method is used, it must be made interesting. A pastor must know the material he is presenting. He cannot be tied down to the manuscript. He must constantly have eye contact. Having a course where either the pastor or the members of the class are constantly reading should be discarded. If the course only consists of reading something somebody else has written, then the members of the class could just as well have taken a correspondence course. The Word of God is something living. It changes the heart and it must be presented in such manner.

Since my course is called a "Religious Information Class," I do not use the catechetical method. I promise the people before they come that no questions will be directed to individuals. I, therefore, only use the lecture method.

It is very helpful that the members of the class have an outline before them. This outline should have all the basic fundamental doctrines with the pertinent passages written out, according to the pastor's judgment. Some pastors prefer to have the members of the class look up the passages as they proceed and thus acquaint the people with the Bible. The pastors, who follow this procedure, claim that in a short period of time the members of the class become very adept in finding the passages. I formerly did this but have discontinued this practice. I now print out all passages. The reason for the change was that in every class there were some who had difficulty in finding the passages, others who had difficulty in reading and felt embarrassed that they could not keep up with the others. After a number of people discontinued the class because they were embarrassed, I changed my mind. I even personally recite all Bible passages and let no one read them since time is of the essence and because I can explain more by reciting the passage.

The course that is presently used at Mount Lebanon is not necessarily original. It is about the fifth one that I have compiled. As the years go by one learns something from experience as in what order the doctrines should be presented. One reads other courses and finds other ways to explain a certain doctrine and also what additions could be made to the course.

Experience has taught me that the best way to begin is with the natural knowledge of God, followed by the fact that the true God reveals himself in his Word, and that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. Much time is spent on this fact because this is of utmost importance. Usually when people are shown that we accept the Bible as the only norm of faith and that everything we teach or believe is foursquarely based upon Scripture, they are willing to listen. After the doctrine of God is presented, the creation story is read with all members having a Bible. After a discussion on the doctrine of preservation, the fall into sin is read with all members having a Bible. One lesson is used to give the history of man from the fall into sin unto the giving of the Law. During this period man's sin and God's grace is especially stressed. A number of lessons are given on the Law of God and the punishment of sin. This is followed with a number of lessons on the Second Article and Third Article. After the Lord's Prayer is explained, the course is completed with a number of lessons on each of the Sacraments.

Regardless of what course a person may follow, it should be a thorough one. There is nothing like three easy lessons into true Lutherandom. The exact number of lessons each pastor should have is very difficult to determine. It depends upon the pastor's personality and the method of instruction he uses. Personally, I cannot see how anyone can cover all fundamental doctrines in less than twenty lessons.

The course should also be an interesting one. The pastor, as he delivers his lectures, must be alive. He must give something of himself. Christianity is not a dead subject like Latin or mathematics. It is not something of the mind but of the heart. The use of illustrations is very necessary. Our Savior often spoke in parables. A pastor should constantly be on the look-out for illustrations he can use in his course, and whenever he finds one, he should immediately write it down in his notes for the course.

The course should also touch upon the most common and disturbing issues. After a firm foundation has been laid, after the Bible has been established as the Word of God, after sin and grace have been explained, one should not be afraid to mention lodgery, scoutism, unionism - wherever in the course the Bible speaks against them. But one must be careful though not to ride one subject. The course dare never be a negative one, showing everything we are against, but it must rather show everything the Lord has done for us.

One must be careful not to over-stress polemics. After the foundation has been laid, one should answer questions someone may have of his former religion. One dare not flavor the entire course by constantly showing what is wrong with a certain religious denomination. If it happens that there is a individual member of a class who is especially interested in what a certain church body teaches contrary to Scripture, it is better to take this person privately.

Church attendance should be stressed throughout the course. One should repeat the fact again and again that the Holy Spirit works only through the Word and that the more they hear this Word the stronger their faith will be. The pastor can create an incentive for the members of the class to attend the church services by telling the class what the theme of the sermon on Sunday before was or what it will be on the following Sunday.

As you read I am sure that you noticed the incredible amount of attention Pastor Mahnke gave to his Religious Instruction Class. Once he and the members of Mount Lebanon had led the potential confirmand into the classroom, Pastor Mahnke did everything possible to keep them there so that the Holy Spirit might touch the heart of the hearer. But how did these people ever become led into Pastor Mahnke's classroom?

As has been noted before, Pastor Mahnke was a person who was "resolved to know nothing while I was among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." He loved everything which in any way was associated with taking God's Word and proclaiming it to the community. He isn't remembered as being someone who had a lot of interest in organizational matters and concerns. Based on my conversations with people who knew him well I don't believe that Pastor Mahnke had an extensively well organized filing cabinet. He was, however, well organized when it came to evangelism. One way in which he was notably well organized was in the filing of cards in what was known as the "Prospect Member File." These were simply 3 x 5 index cards on which names and general information of unchurched people were written. It was the members of Mount Lebanon whom Pastor Mahnke counted upon the most for providing names to be placed into this filing system. He writes in his paper that "at Mount Lebanon we place an insert into the bulletin as well as in the Monthly News Letter periodically requesting names of unchurched people. Many a person was won in this manner."

There were a number of different sources from which his members could supply names of unchurched people in the neighborhood:

- ♦ **From persons in an instruction class or from those who had just finished the course**
- ♦ **From an unchurched person who requested to have her child baptized**
- ♦ **From members who knew of an unchurched friend or neighbor**
- ♦ **From members who would inform Pastor of an acquaintance who was sick or ill and in the hospital**
- ♦ **From a person who signed the guest book after a Sunday worship service, especially if they did not designate a church affiliation**
- ♦ **From a member of Mount Lebanon who had an unchurched spouse**

Every year a canvass of the neighborhood was conducted by volunteers under the supervision and guidance of the Evangelism Committee. Pastor Otterstatter recalled this yearly event. "The essential procedure was that we would canvass one quarter of the area every year. We would spread out about a mile around the church and divide that area into quadrants. Each year we would then canvass one of those quadrants. And we did that religiously for many years." Whenever an unchurched person or family was discovered on the canvass their name was written down and then placed on a card into the Prospect Member File.

The Vacation Bible School and the Sunday School at Mount Lebanon were both extremely successful programs. Both also served as excellent sources for mission prospects. Pastor Vilas Glaeske served as a vicar at Mount Lebanon. He saw how vital these programs were in finding the spiritually blind in the community: "Sunday School and Vacation Bible School were Pastor Mahnke's two main sources for adult prospects. Mount Lebanon had a well-polished Sunday School with a staff of well-trained teachers (you had to take Mrs. Mahnke's course on teaching Sunday School before you were allowed to teach). Vacation Bible School was a big event. Careful records were kept. Thorough training accounted for everyone

knowing what to do." Records show that by God's grace one year had as many as 250 children being fed the Word of God at Sunday School! Records were kept of every child who attended either Vacation Bible School or Sunday School. Cards were given to the parents of the children requesting needed information: address, telephone number, birth-date, whether the child had been baptized, whether the parents were affiliated with any church at the present time or what religious affiliation they had. Information from the cards of all non-members was transferred onto another card, which was then placed into the Prospective Member File.

These people on the Prospect Member File were then visited by a member of the Evangelism Committee. For many years Pastor Mahnke did the visiting himself. He wrote in his evangelism paper:

Years ago I was under the erroneous impression that this was solely the duty of the pastor. I thought that only a pastor had the proper training and ability to win someone for Christ. I personally made many a call, spent many an hour with unchurched people, yes, invited and revisited them again and again. But as my congregation grew, it became a human impossibility to continue to spend that much time on this one facet of church work. This forced me already a number of years ago to enlist the help of my members. This has been a blessing. I now realize I should have done this a long time ago. I denied my members the joy of witnessing. I did not make use of the tremendous potentiality that is in every congregation, namely, that each member can be a missionary.

I am not sure when Pastor Mahnke formed an evangelism committee at Mount Lebanon.

Perusing through the minutes of Church Council meetings I found the first mention of its existence in 1966. The minutes of the meeting held on July 11, 1966 read: "EVANGELISM COMMITTEE: An Evangelism report was given by Ted Hauf. Its purpose is to encourage any unchurched people to join our pastor's religious classes. A motion was carried that we recommend to the Congregation the changes in and the additions to the Constitution By-Laws." Speaking with Pastor Otterstatter and with members who served on this Evangelism Committee



indicated that this committee was run quite loosely. Pastor Mahnke himself would choose the man to be the chairman and the people to be on the committee. Again I quote his words in his paper, "The pastor should know his members and will select the most conscientious, consecrated people of his congregation, people who realize the importance of the work and will be determined, with the help of God, to do all they can for him, that souls may be saved."

After the committee was selected, all the members were carefully and thoroughly trained and instructed in how to make a Law and Gospel presentation. After being well prepared, the "missionaries" were sent out by Pastor Mahnke, going out in pairs. They would call upon those people whose names were in the Prospective Member File, presenting a witness about Jesus. After finishing the presentation, Pastor Mahnke instructed his members to receive a commitment from the unchurched person to attend the Religious Information Class. Because sinful man has no desire to hear the Word of God, it would happen often that the person who promised to come would fail to do so. But Pastor Mahnke and his Evangelism Committee would never give up easily, as they would go back again and again to issue another invitation to "come and see." Pastor Mahnke was persistent when it came to winning an unchurched person's soul for Jesus. He mentioned in his paper visiting a person twenty times before he finally showed up at the Religious Information Class. Pastor Glaeske remembers as a vicar calling on people whose names had been entered into the Prospective Member File as much as 10 to 12 years earlier!

When it came to securing souls for heaven there was nothing more important to Pastor Mahnke than proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified. The numbers reflect his burning desire and his relentless attitude. He knew how to reach the unchurched and the Lord richly blessed him in his efforts. He concluded his paper on evangelism with these words: "I am no authority on the

subject of gaining and instructing the adult. I just love and enjoy this type of work, and I hope that what I have said may have set you to think that perhaps it is possible for us to gain a few more adults and to instruct them more effectively. Oh, may the dear Lord grant you and me the grace that we will never lose this zeal for lost souls."

As gifted as he was in the area of evangelism, Pastor Mahnke was also recognized as being an excellent preacher. Certainly this paper would be incomplete if I would not give some attention to Pastor Mahnke as preacher. His son Kurt saw his father as being extremely blessed in the area of homiletics. Kurt said, "I believe preaching was my father's greatest talent. In spite of the fact that he was known for his work in evangelism, preaching was a tremendous strength of his."

Pastor Mahnke wasn't known as being a speaker who had total command of the English language. He spoke in a simple way using simple and common language. Pastor Schewe remembers that his classmate "was a common, down to earth preacher. He didn't use big words in the pulpit. He used examples and illustrations from everyday life and so they were meaningful to his people. He wouldn't be classified as being an orator. But who needs an orator? I don't think the evangelists and disciples of the Lord were orators, either. They were most likely down to earth preachers who spoke in everyday language to their listeners. That was the kind of preacher Jon Mahnke was." Pastor Otterstatter added, "Pastor Mahnke held the attention of the congregation. He wasn't in any way outstanding in that he had command of the English language. He didn't preach in a dramatic way. But the thing I noticed right away was that the people listened to him." Carol Crema is a member at Mount Lebanon. She appreciated how

Pastor Mahnke was able to keep the listener's attention when he preached. She recalled, "Pastor Mahnke had you at his fingertips. A person didn't doze off in his sermons!"

I was able to read a number of Pastor Mahnke's sermon manuscripts. I also had access to some of his sermons that were recorded on cassette tapes. After reading the manuscripts and listening to the tapes, I would certainly agree with the comments of people who heard Pastor Mahnke preach. His sermons were interesting. He did preach the Word in a simple way that all could understand.

I have typed below some excerpts from sermons written by Pastor Mahnke. You will quickly see how gifted a preacher he was. The first excerpt is from a sermon Pastor Mahnke wrote based on Matthew 10: 28 - 31. The manuscript was dated September 5, 1971. Read, enjoy and note how simply, directly and beautifully Pastor Mahnke spoke to his listeners:

The Almighty God, our heavenly Father, also provides for us. We have nothing to fear. We read in our text: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." At the time Jesus spoke these words, two sparrows were sold for a farthing, that is for 1.6 of a cent. But Jesus tells us that even though these sparrows had little value, not one of them fell to the ground because it was struck by a stone or an arrow, or because it succumbed due to exposure or lack of food unless our heavenly Father permitted it. Oh, how wonderful is God's care and protection; He is even concerned with sparrows who have little earthly value. But still more, God's protective care is concerned even with those things which have no appreciable value. The hair upon our heads are merely ornamental. We may lose all of them without harm to our life or health. But our Lord knows how many hair each and everyone of us has. And he will not let one single strand fall to the ground unless he wills it. Hence, if our heavenly Father is so concerned about us that he even knows the number of hair we have, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that is of greater importance to him than our well-being. No part of our physical and spiritual life can be destroyed without his knowledge or consent.

Hence, our Lord Jesus draws this conclusion: "Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." If one hair is worth so much to our Father, then certainly the head that bears the hair, yes, the whole body is worth much more to him. If one sparrow, which has no soul, means so much to him, then certainly a

soul that has been bought with the precious blood of Jesus, means much more to him.

"Don't be afraid." Your life is in the hands of the almighty God and he is your loving heavenly Father. Since he has made the greatest of sacrifices for you, since he had his Son shed his blood for you, he will let no harm come near you. He will guard and protect you. Just place yourself and your beloved ones into his hands and stop worrying. The sparrows do not worry, for they know that God will take care of them. How much less should we worry for we are of more value than many sparrows. May we then overcome all fear that grips us in these distressing days by casting all of our cares upon him, and we shall find he will give us peace and comfort and security.

Those were not words of a gifted and polished orator. Those were the words of loving shepherd comforting the flock entrusted to his care in words they could all understand. So are the following words. They are a portion of a sermon Pastor Mahnke preached on June 13, 1976. The sermon text was Romans 11: 33 - 36. The theme for his sermon was "Our God is Unsearchable."

Unsearchable are also God's ways in bringing this sweet Gospel message to mankind. He could have written the plan of salvation in the heavens with letters of fire, so that all people could have had it constantly before them. Or he could have had angels preach it from pulpits. But, no, that is not God's way. He had poor sinful men write his message with a pen and had these writings collected in a book we call the Bible. And now he has sinfully weak human beings preach this Word. And when people hear this Word, faith is created in them and they accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they are saved! If we would ask someone, "Who shall go to heaven?" we would receive the answer "He who does many good works, who labors with might and main to show himself worthy." But that isn't what God says! He says, "No, a person is saved without works, but rather by grace alone through faith." If we had been asked to institute sacraments, we would not have taken such common things as water, bread and wine. Truly, God's ways are unsearchable. We cannot understand God's ways of doing things, yet we must confess that only through his way can we be saved."

Such unsearchable and mysterious ways of God have also made themselves felt in nearly everyone of our lives. Has it not happened that we planned something long and carefully, and when we were about to realize our hopes, God said: "No, my ways are not your ways." He perhaps let us suffer a financial set-back, placed us or a loved one on a severe sickbed, or even took one of our loved ones to himself, and all our hopes were dashed to the ground. When God's ways interfere with our ways, we find it difficult to bow to his superior wisdom. We then cannot understand how the change in plans is good for us. Our reason asks, "Why?" But at such times it is absolutely necessary that we cling

blindly to the fact, that God loved us so much that he redeemed us, and that he has but one purpose: to lead us to our home in heaven. It may well be necessary for him to lead us through darkness in order for us to enter light. It may well be necessary for him to lead us through the cross in order for us to receive the crown. These are God's unsearchable ways, and therefore he bids us to keep our reason captive and trustingly commit ourselves to his love in the conviction that he does all things well.

When God's purpose has been accomplished and we are in heaven, God will permit us to search his judgments and find out his ways. Then he will give us the answers to our questions; why he did this and why he did that. And we will adoringly fall on our knees before his throne and will exclaim: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! To him be glory forever!"

Perhaps Pastor Mahnke's son Jon best summarizes his father as a preacher. Jon's words without any question summarize the parts of his father's sermons that I duplicated above. "My father's sermons were not very artistic. He certainly was not a great orator. And there wasn't a great deal of theological or academic depth in his sermons. But his sermons came straight from his heart and they were preached with a tremendous amount of sincerity. I think his people recognized that."

There are many parts of Jonathan Mahnke's life and ministry that I have not touched on. I haven't mentioned that he was a man who had a tremendous amount of love for our Wisconsin Synod. I haven't stated that he was a chairman of the Southeastern Wisconsin District Mission Board for eight years. Nor have I mentioned that he served as a member on the Board of Control of Northwestern College for many years. There were still other boards and committees that Pastor Mahnke served his Lord and his brothers and sisters in our synod, all of which I failed to speak of. Nor did I write about all the physical ailments that troubled Pastor Mahnke until the day he died; the back afflicted with arthritis or the fact that he was a diabetic. I failed to say that many a Seminary student was drawn to the Mahnke parsonage to "talk shop" with Pastor Mahnke about the ministry.

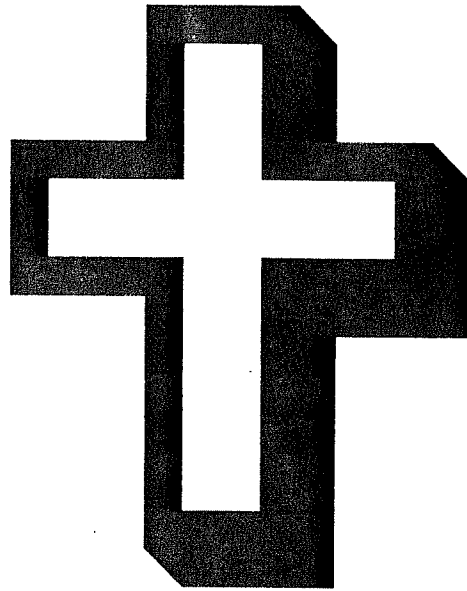
What have I learned from the ministry of my relative, Jonathan Mahnke? Many things. I have learned the importance of reaching out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A pastor can't just think about doing evangelism -- he has to "just do it." I have seen how Jonathan Mahnke let nothing prevent him from proclaiming the message of the cross to the unchurched. I hope and pray that I may do the same in my ministry. I have learned how valuable it is for a pastor to be a "people person", a pastor who truly loves his people and therefore truly wants to serve them. I asked Mrs. Mahnke if there was one thing I should learn from her husband and carry into my ministry. She told me, "Love your people. Remember that everyone of them has a soul bought by the blood of Jesus. Love their souls."

I would like to end this paper with words from former synod president Oscar Naumann. He had the privilege of preaching at the funeral of Jonathan Mahnke. Before I end with his words, I want to thank God for blessing the church with a faithful shepherd like Jonathan Mahnke. He resolved to know nothing while he was on this earth except Jesus Christ and him crucified. The Lord of the church rewarded his faithful servant Jonathan Mahnke. He is now standing around the throne of the Lamb, wearing the crown of victory for all eternity. To God be the glory!

So I close with words of Pastor Naumann. These are words from the sermon which he preached on January 4, 1978 four days after Pastor Mahnke's death on December 31, 1977.

Pastor Mahnke was so grateful to have and to know a Savior that he wanted by all means to proclaim the Gospel of that Savior. The Lord sustained him and carried him throughout a fruitful ministry for over forty years. There isn't a family, either formerly members of Mount Lebanon or members today, that hasn't been touched by the faithful ministry of Pastor Jonathan Mahnke. He gave us an example of someone who was zealous for the Gospel. There was nothing in the world so important as the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. There was nothing so important to Jonathan Mahnke as reaching out for souls and bringing them the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is for such a

ministry, and for such a shepherd under Christ, that we praise and thank our God today."



**"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with  
you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."  
(1 Corinthians 2:2)**

## Sources

I am grateful to the following people for providing me with information regarding Jonathan Mahnke through a variety of different ways: personal interviews, phone conversations, written letters, etc.

1. Mr. & Mrs. Curtis Buerger
2. Mrs. Carol Crema
3. Pastor Norman Engel
4. Pastor Vilas Glaeske
5. Pastor Elton Huebner
6. Pastor Jon Mahnke
7. Mrs. Lydia Mahnke
8. Mr. Kurt Mahnke
9. Pastor Robert Michel
10. Pastor Marvin Otterstatter
11. Pastor Erwin Schewe
12. Professor James Tiefel
13. Professor David Valleskey

### Other Sources of Information

- ♦ Minuets from Church Council Meetings at Mount Lebanon Ev. Lutheran Church
- ♦ Synodic Report -- *Proceedings of the Eleventh Biennial Convention of the South-East Wisconsin District, 1938*. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI.
- ♦ Statistics used in this paper are from publications of *The Statistical Report of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod* for the years 1936 - 1977.



## IN NOMINE JESU

REPOSING FULL CONFIDENCE in your faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ and your zeal for winning souls, we, the Board of Home Missions of the.....

.....South East..... District of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other states, by authority vested in us by the General Board of Home and Foreign Missions of said synod, herewith, in the name of the Triune God

call you, Mr. J. O. N. A. T. H. A. N. M. A. H. N. K. E. Stud. Theol., into our service as missionary at M. T. L. E. B. A. N. O. N. and such other place or places as we in the future may designate.

We charge you to preach the gospel of our Lord in its truth and purity and to administer the Sacraments, unadulterated, in accordance with the inspired Word of God and the Confessions of the Ev. Luth. Church as laid down in the Book of Concord of 1580; to establish and maintain always sound Lutheran practice; ~~to be ever zealous for the winning of souls for Christ's Kingdom;~~ to make special efforts to gather the children committed to your care about their Savior by establishing Christian Day Schools; if insurmountable difficulties should prevent the establishing of Christian Day Schools you are to establish summer schools, Saturday schools, Sunday schools, or the like, so as to provide as much as possible adequate instruction for the young; to provide Bible Classes for the confirmed youth for further growth in knowledge wherever practicable.

We charge you further to walk and conduct yourself at all times as it becometh a minister of Christ—1 Tim. 3:2-7; Tit. 1:7-9, so that by your godly Christian life your people may also be provoked to love and good works, and those that are without may haply also be won by it.

We charge you, furthermore, to devote your entire time and strength and ability to the work that lies before you and prayerfully and conscientiously to gather in the harvest of our Lord.

On the last day of every month, or quarter, you are to submit on blanks especially provided for this purpose to the chairman of your district Board a complete report of your activities in your field, calling his attention to particular needs or circumstances that may have arisen. The instructions of your Board as they may be transmitted to you from time to time are faithfully to be followed.

If the exigencies of our mission work should require your transfer to some other field due notice will be given you so that the transfer may be effected with a minimum of harm to your field and inconvenience to yourself.

Immediately on receipt of a call from another source you will inform the chairman of your Board and consult with him as to the advisability of accepting it.

Information concerning traveling expenses, freight, housing, etc., may be had upon inquiry from the chairman of your Board.

Due notice of acceptance of this call is to be given the chairman of your district Board.

Being mindful of our Lord's injunction that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel we herewith fix your salary at \$ 86. 92 Paid monthly

~~payable~~ payable in monthly instalments. As the above amount

includes a fair and just sum for itinerary expenses no additional allowances for travel will be made. Adequate quarters will also be provided for you.

Furthermore, we shall at all times consider you, together with ourselves, as a co-worker of our Lord and shall treat you with that respect and brotherly consideration which the members of Jesus Christ owe each other, and shall stand ready always to aid and assist you in your difficult work according to the ability which God giveth.

We trust that you will recognize in this call the voice of your Lord Jesus Christ Himself and we pray that He, the Head of the church, will give you willingness and strength cheerfully to follow it and faithfully to labor in the field, to the glory of His name and the salvation of immortal souls.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

The Board of Home Missions for the South East Wisconsin  
District of the Ev. Luth. Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States.

*Arthur A. Halboel* Chairman,  
*J. G. Truog* Secretary.

Given and signed this 1st day of Sept., 1938, at Milwaukee,  
Wis.

Should there be an organized congregation in the missionary's territory the following call may be subscribed to by members of the church council:

We, the Church Council of M. T. L. E. B. A. N. O. N. Ev. Luth. Church at  
M I L W A U K E E having been duly authorized by our congregation concur in this call to Mr. J. O. N. A. T. H. A. N. M. A. H. N. K. E. Stud. Theol., and promise to respect, honor, and love him as our Pastor and agree herewith to assume the annual sum of \_\_\_\_\_ towards the pastor's support, thus relieving the mission treasury to that extent, and promise to increase this amount from time to time as we may be able to do so.

Signed in behalf and by authority of M. T. L. E. B. A. N. O. N.  
Ev. Luth. Church.

*Arthur R. Kleinfeld* President,  
*William C. Baumann* Secretary.

Given and dated this 1st day of Sept., 1938, at Milwaukee, Wis.

Mr. Mahrke:-

This solemn call has been extended to you by unanimous vote of the members of Mt. Lebanon Church. We trust that the Lord will cause you to see the importance of it and lead you to accept it.

~~In addition to the specified statements~~ contained in the call, we should like to add the following:

1. Our young people are in need of concentrated work in Christian education, therefore we expect you to bend every effort toward their spiritual care.

2. The adult members of our church desire to study the Word for furtherance in Christian faith and life, therefore we expect you to conduct Bible classes for them.

3. We expect you to supervise the work and training in both the Ladies' Aid and the Men's Club.

4. As we have had sad experiences in the past in regard to "money-making affairs", we expect you to lead and guide us along the lines of true Lutheran, Christian, spiritual principals.

5. You have at your disposal our ample parsonage in which we expect you to reside as

soon as you should decide to accept our call, arrangements will be made by us to move your household equipment from your present home to ours.

6. Our present pastor will present his farewell sermon on Sunday, Sept. 18th, so we wish you to take charge as soon as possible after this date.

7. According to tentative plans we shall expect you to expend your efforts entirely in caring for the welfare of the members of the church, and to that end we shall petition the Board of Missions to relieve you of any work in the school room.

Should there be any further questions that you would like to ask of us in regard to this call, we shall be at your service in clearing up any issues.

Yours,  
The Board of Mt. Lebanon.  
Wm. C. Baumann Sec.

Alfred Holmann  
Augustus A. Doxtator  
Arthur R. Ahlenfeld  
A. Schaefer  
Chas. Wendorf  
The Kruback  
George F. Trautmann  
Henry Schmid

September 13, 1935

Mt. Lebanon Ev. Lutheran Church  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Brethren in Christ Jesus:

Having prayerfully considered the solemn call that you together with the Mission Board have extended to me, I accept the same in the name of Jesus.

I fully realize the great responsibilities as well as the many difficulties confronting a pastor in your field. I also realize my own weakness and inability to cope with the same. Nevertheless, I am convinced, that your call is the Lord's voice calling me and therefore I trust His promise, that He will be my help and stay. Since it is the Lord's work and not mine I know that he will build His kingdom through His Word and Sacrament in your congregation under my pastorate to his glory and the eternal welfare of immortal souls. To this end I ask you diligently to pray for me your new pastor, that the Lord may give me grace, wisdom, and health to faithfully perform my solemn calling among you.

Your humble servant in Christ Jesus,

*Jonathan Mahnke*

received payment on delivery. The fate of the school was in the balance. Two men especially did not want the school to close. They, therefore, distributed to every member small, wooden banks, shaped like barrels, which they called the Joash Chest. Monthly they collected what was in the chests and with the money paid the fuel bill and kept the school open.

The parents of our school children were so poor that they could not buy the necessary clothing for their children. Pastor Karrer begged for clothing and shoes from members of sister congregations. They responded very well. Weekly, children came to the church basement and found clothing and shoes they could wear and were able to attend school regularly.

There is one physical blessing, which we are enjoying to this day, that came out of this depression. In order to have unemployed men work, the PWA (Public Works Administration) was established. Men were employed by the government, and they built the beautiful Lincoln Creek Parkway which today really sets off our present property.

#### A CHANGE OF PASTORS

In the early summer of 1937 Pastor Karrer resigned. A lady teacher also resigned at the same time. Since the Congregation was in need of a teacher and a pastor, the Mission Board asked Mr. Jonathan Mahnke, a candidate of the ministry, to be the vacancy pastor and also to teach the lower grades.

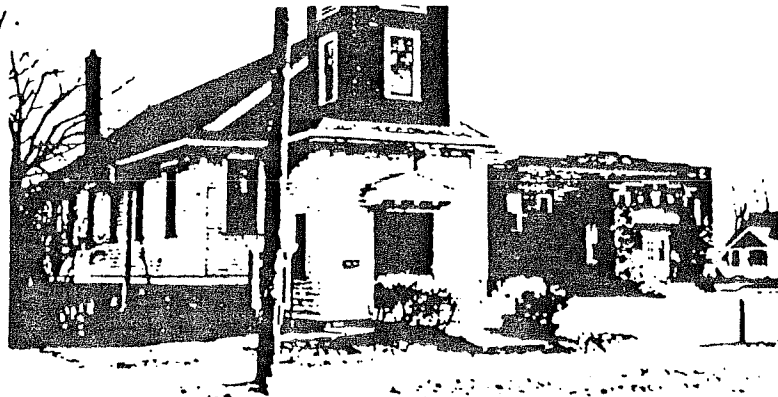
On November 28, 1937 the Reverend Arnold Schroeder was installed as pastor. Since he was a bachelor at that time, the principal moved into the large parsonage and Synod saved the cost of renting a teacherage. Pastor Schroeder also served St. Paul's Congregation at North 73rd and West Burleigh. When in August of 1938 Pastor Schroeder received the call to be an institutional missionary, he asked for his release and received it.

Candidate Mahnke was then called as pastor. He was ordained and installed on September 26, 1938. Since no lady teacher accepted the call to replace Pastor Mahnke as teacher, another candidate of the ministry was engaged.

#### A CHANGE IN THE ECONOMY

Slowly our country came out of the throes of the depression. The men went back to work. New homes were built. The congregation began to grow in membership. In 1940 the church attendance increased to 238 per Sunday and two services were needed each Sunday. The Congregation made its last payment on the bank note and also reduced its Church Extension Fund debt from \$30,000 to \$26,275. The Board of Trustees of our Synod in 1943 gave us the promise that they would write off \$11,000 of our indebtedness, if we would make regular payments of \$63.00 a month. The Congregation of 300 communicant members was not only determined to meet these payments but to liquidate the entire debt as soon as possible. Therefore, the membership decided to give U.S. Savings Bonds to the church.

Our 20th anniversary was observed on February 9, 1947. It was a day of rejoicing, because we had collected enough bonds to cover our indebtedness. After an appropriate thanksgiving service in the church, we had an all-congregational dinner at Hampton Road School. The Congregation at this time had 379 communicants and an average attendance of 290 per Sunday.



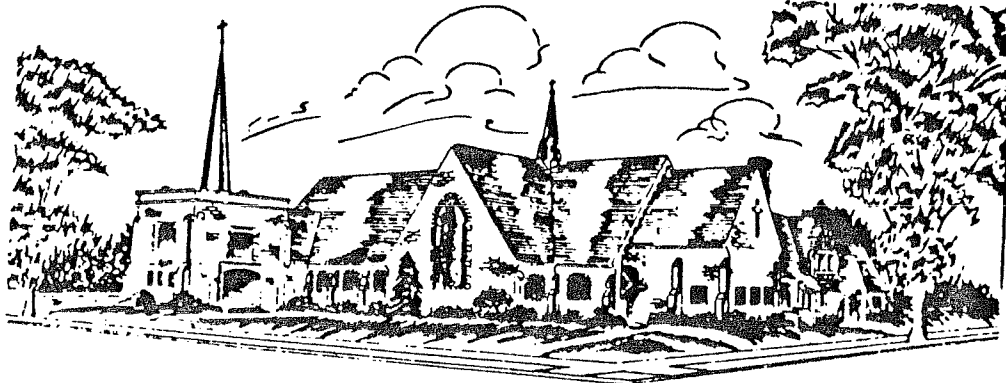
Not only did the Congregation give sufficient bonds to cover our indebtedness in 1947, it also bought five and one-half acres of unimproved land on the corner of North 60th and West Hampton Avenue for \$7,500. This certainly was a very wise investment, because today we have one of the most beautiful sites of any church in Milwaukee. Its worth cannot even be estimated in dollars and cents.

#### BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING

When Mt. Lebanon was 21 years old, it became of age. On June 6, 1948 it burned its mortgage, the ashes of which are now in the cornerstone of our present church. It also became self-supporting. Even though the communicant membership was only 400, it decided that it no longer needed Synod's help to support a pastor and three teachers. This Sunday the Congregation thanked the Lord that He in His grace made it possible for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to give Mt. Lebanon about \$50,000 in subsidy over 21 years, in addition to a \$20,000 Church Extension Fund loans which were written off. If it would not have been for the financial help the Lord gave us through our Synod, we certainly would not be in existence today. May we always be grateful for what our Synod has done for us!

#### ERECTION OF NEW FACILITIES

When the towns of Granville and Wauwatosa were annexed to the city of Milwaukee, Mt. Lebanon began to



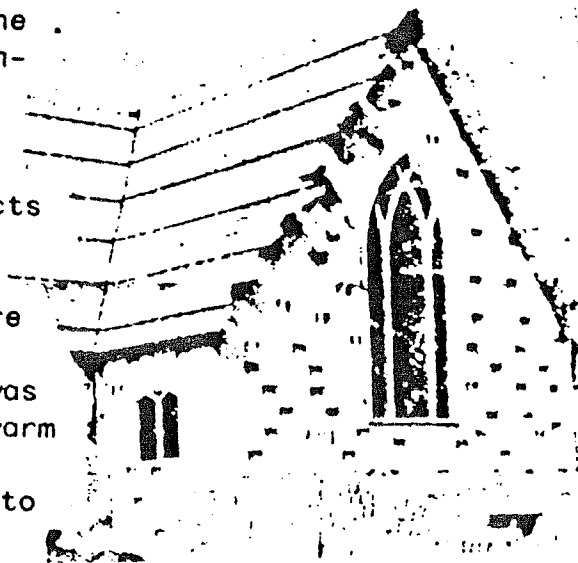


grow very rapidly. By 1955 its buildings were inadequate. The Congregation began a building fund drive and engaged an architectural firm.

Since our principal had difficulty finding a home and since there was money in the building fund, \$14,882 was borrowed from it and a teacherage was erected at 4863 North 61st Street. Most of the labor was donated.

At the end of 1954 Mt. Lebanon had grown to 700 communicants and had an average church attendance of 421 in a building that could only seat 200. Many Sundays people would leave because they could not find room in the basement or standing room in the small narthex. Therefore, the Congregation at its annual meeting in 1955 decided to build a church and parsonage and to construct a school as soon as possible afterward.

On March 2, 1956 the bids of the various contractors were accepted and it was decided to begin construction immediately. The contracts at this time totaled \$303,821.00. Ground-breaking ceremonies were conducted on March 11, 1956. Even though it was cold, our hearts were warm with gratitude that the Lord gave us the grace to begin building our much needed church.



The cornerstone was laid on September 16th. These are some of the articles placed into the cornerstone: a roster of the membership, a current copy of the Northwestern Lutheran, a copy of a newspaper, the ashes of the mortgage of the old property, Luther's Small Catechism, a polaroid picture of the group

present. Since floors had been laid and some of the walls were erected, the service was conducted inside the unfinished church.

#### DEDICATION

On June 9, 1957 the parsonage was dedicated even though it was not completed. The building inspector had forced the contractor to remove the fire door between the parsonage and the church office and replace it with a more substantial one. Pastor Mahrke and his family moved in five weeks after the dedication.

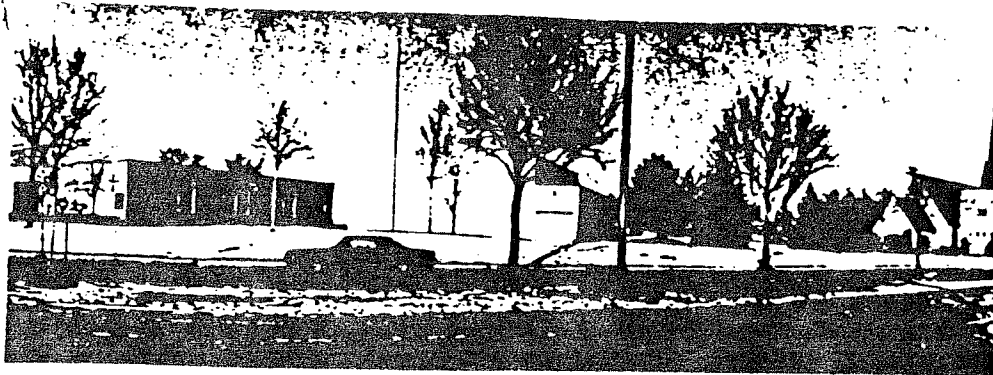


Sunday, July 21, 1957, was a day of real rejoicing. Many a tear of joy was shed. Many a prayer of thanks was spoken to our Lord who gave us the grace to dedicate our present house of worship to His glory.

#### THE NEW SCHOOL

Having a new beautiful church, the Congregation began to grow very rapidly. In 1958 we had 884 communicants and an average attendance of 599. Our school enrollment was 205. The need for a new school was obvious. We could no longer house the children in a school built for 80 pupils. At a special congregational meeting on April 12, 1959 the sketches of our present school were unanimously accepted and on January 3rd contractor bids of \$185,858.00 were approved.

On January 10, 1960 ground-breaking services were conducted between the regular church services. Even though there was joy in the hearts of the members at the ground-breaking ceremony for the school, there was also a tinge of sadness, because it was during the month of January, 1960, that our little white church was torn down. This little white chapel that had served faithfully for thirty years meant so much to the members. Here many had been baptized, confirmed and married. Here they had been comforted and strengthened.



On April 10, 1960 the cornerstone of our school was laid in an afternoon service and on October 20th our school was dedicated to the glory of God with a service in the morning and in the afternoon. In the evening we had an open house for the community. It was also at this time that the membership went over the one thousand mark and the church attendance increased to 791 per Sunday. Two hundred and fifty-six children were enrolled in our school.

#### THE CALLING OF THE SECOND PASTOR

Mt. Lebanon continued to grow numerically. By 1963 it had 1,909 souls and 1,207 communicants and the average church attendance was 866 per Sunday. Various part-time vicars assisted Pastor Mahnke in serving such a large congregation. Since the vicars were restricted as to time they could give to the Congregation and since even a full-time vicar could remain for only one year, the Congregation decided to call an assistant pastor.

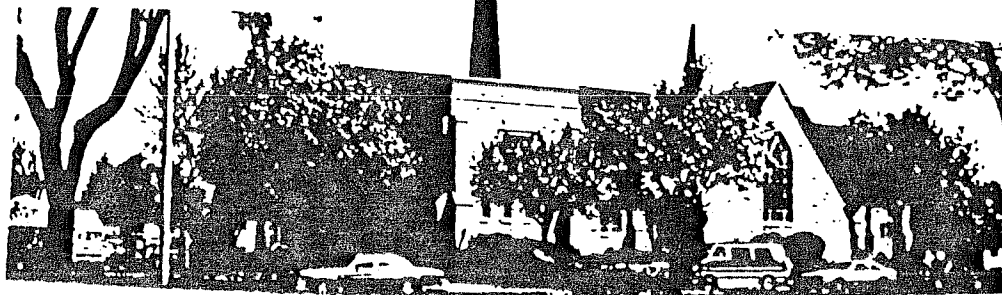
The Lord directed our call to Pastor Marvin Otterstatter. He accepted this call and was installed on November 29, 1964.

### THE SECOND PARSONAGE

With two pastors it was necessary to have two parsonages. Various possibilities were investigated. Could we build another parsonage on our present site at North 60th and West Stark? Our architect spoke strongly against it. Such a parsonage would take away from the beauty of our site. The cost would be over \$40,000, because it would have to blend in with the other buildings. It also could not be sold, because it would be part of the complex. We would have had to refinance our church property and lose a very low interest rate, 4-1/2%. This refinancing over a period of twenty years would have been costly.

The Congregation could have purchased a home. This too would have been expensive and, since the church did not have the necessary down payment, it would have had to refinance. This also would have been expensive. The Congregation could have rented a home, but a home suitable for a parsonage in the neighborhood was very difficult if not impossible to find and the cost would have been over \$200 a month.

At the recommendation of our attorney, the Congregation made an arrangement with Pastor and Mrs. Mahnke. They could pick a home of their choice and, if they would make a down-payment of \$5,100 on the home, the Congregation would make the monthly payments and give to Pastor and Mrs.



Mahnke an option to buy the home at any time for the amount of the debt remaining on the property. A home was found at 4877 North 62nd Street. It cost \$25,600. The arrangement was mutually beneficial. The congregational monthly payment was only \$138.82, much less than any rental payment.

#### THE SECOND TEACHERAGE

When our second male teacher was married, the Congregation provided housing for him. First he was given a housing allowance and he rented a place. Then in 1962 we bought a home from one of our members at 5225 North 54th Street. The financial agreement was such that the Congregation could meet the payments. Over the years this building needed many repairs and was difficult to live in. It was not adequate for a teacherage. Therefore, a home at 5054 North 61st Street was purchased in 1967. The money came from the sale of the old property, from an estate which a member willed to the Congregation and from gifts and offerings for our fortieth anniversary.

#### ORGAN REDEDICATION AND STAINED GLASS WINDOW DEDICATION



In 1957 when our church was built, we could only afford a basic organ. It contained only seven ranks of pipes, 401 pipes in number. In 1961 Mr. Marowsky, our teacher and organist, asked the Congregation to purchase an old pipe organ which was for sale in New Prague, Minnesota. He reconditioned and electrified this organ and added it to our

basic organ. We then had a 14 rank organ.

When the old St. Matthew organ was for sale, we purchased a substantial portion of it for \$400.00. Again we doubled the size of the organ and had 28 ranks of pipes. However, certain stops were still lacking for a complete organ. Therefore, six new stops were purchased. The installation of these stops enlarged the organ to 34 ranks of 2,005 pipes. Since all the available space in the organ loft had been utilized, the organ was limited. The Congregation expressed its thanks to Mr. Marowsky for the tremendous task he accomplished.

Since we were limited financially, stained glass windows were taken out of the original architectural plans. A Stained Glass Window Fund was immediately established. By 1972 so many memorials and donations were received that it was possible for us to have our present beautiful windows installed. The cost of the windows plus some new frame work was \$16,540.00.

Dedication of these stained glass windows together with the rededication of the organ took place in the regular service on January 21, 1973.



#### CHURCH MORTGAGE ELIMINATION PROJECT

Since the dedicated of our church building, we had

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financial difficulties. Our mortgage payments kept us from meeting our regular budgetary needs. Mortgage payments of the school and the second parsonage made the situation worse. The Congregation, therefore, decided in November of 1973 to have a drive to eliminate the mortgage on our church building. The members responded so well that the paying of the church mortgage did not have to come out of the general fund. In September of 1976 the mortgage on our church was liquidated and on November 28, 1976 we had a special service, praising God that He made it possible for us to burn our mortgage.

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Since Pastor Otterstatter had served the Congregation conscientiously and faithfully for nearly twelve years, the Congregation called him as an associate pastor on May 10, 1976.

#### A TURNING POINT

The fifty-first year of Mt. Lebanon's history brought about significant changes. A revised constitution was adopted. The Congregation celebrated Pastor Mahnke's fortieth anniversary in the preaching ministry and lost its pastor of forty years, when the good Lord through death took him to the church triumphant on the last day of 1977. Pastor Mahnke's funeral service was conducted on January 2, 1978.

#### VICARS

For twelve years from 1978 to 1990 Mt. Lebanon was served by twelve vicars and one part-time vicar. The Rev. Charles Iles served in the Congregation from January to May of 1987. In June of that year Mt. Lebanon began to be served by full time vicars. They are:

Rev. Kenneth Ewerdt - 1978-79  
Rev. Jan Eggert - 1979-80