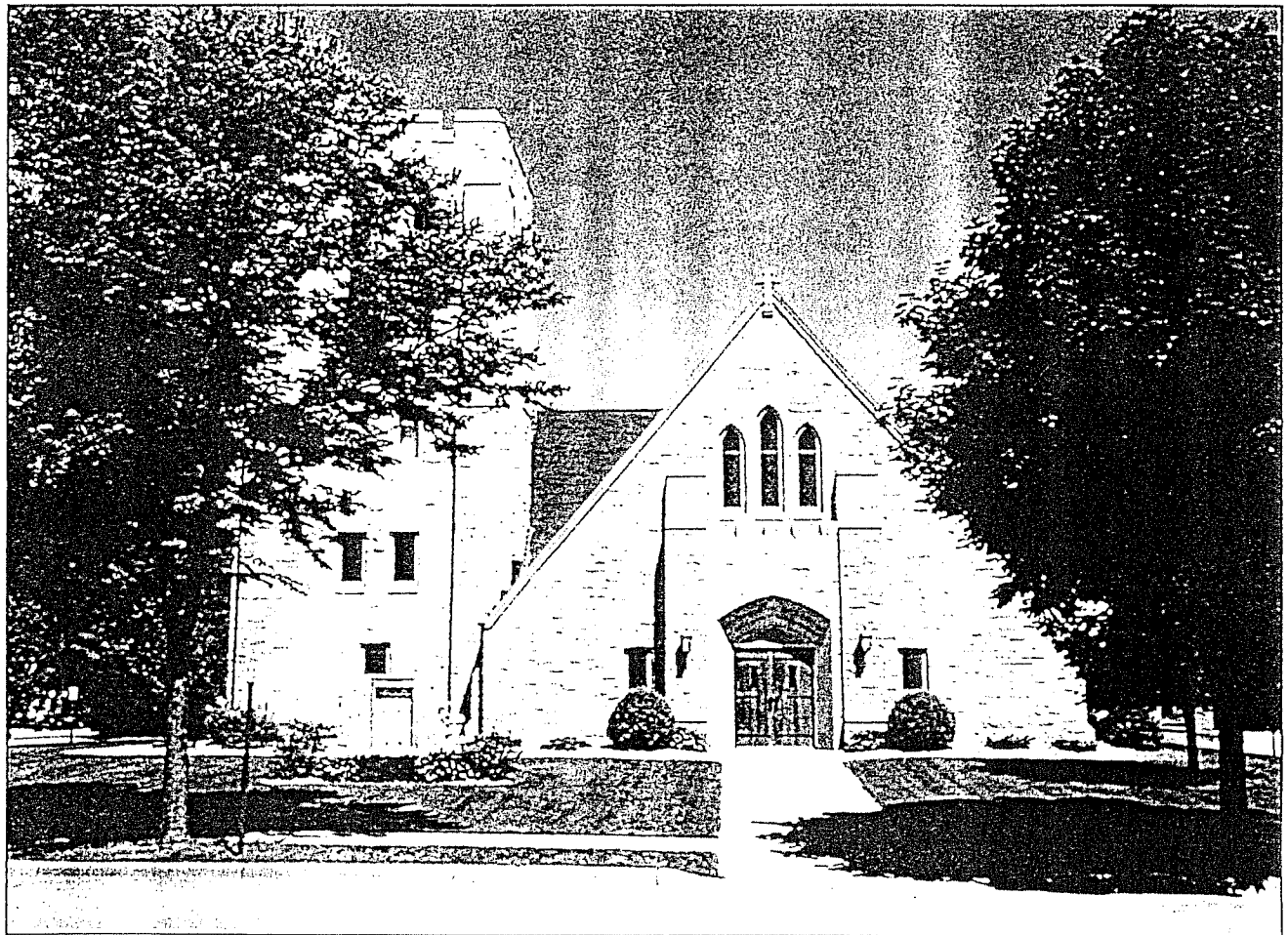


*115 YEARS OF
GOD'S GRACE AT
ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH
LITCHFIELD, MINNESOTA*



Church History 3031
Joel Neumann
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By God's grace, St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Litchfield, Minnesota will be permitted to celebrate 115 years of service to the Lord in the year 2004. From its humble beginnings in 1889, through varied pastors and their varied gifts, in financial struggles and building projects, one thing has remained constant, the unending mercies of our Heavenly Father. His immeasurable faithfulness and undeserved love has been with St. Paul's unceasingly. It is by his grace that this church has grown spiritually and physically, continuing to preach God's Word in its truth and purity. Whatever has been done, in whatever way the Lord has used each member, to God be the glory. The history of God's marvelous work at St. Paul's reminds one of the manifold blessings shown to the founders and builders of St. Paul's. It is an encouragement to all to build firmly upon God's Word for the salvation of many souls and to the glory of our Heavenly Father and Savior Jesus Christ.

The first German settlers to Meeker County, the county in which Litchfield, Minnesota is located, arrived in 1857. They, as did many of those who left their homes in Germany, left due to the rampant wars, low wages, lack of religious freedom, difficulty in making a living, and with the prospect of a new, free, and more prosperous life. However, it wasn't until 1864 that the forefathers of St. Paul's made their journey to the townships of Harvey, Forest City, Greenleaf, and Litchfield, all located in Meeker County. As the years passed and their families grew, it became apparent to these men that there was a great need to hear God's Word. Therefore, in December of 1864, Pastor Heinrich Braun, a "Reiseprediger," was called to serve a group of Christians in the township of Acoma, approximately sixteen miles south of Litchfield. From here, Pastor Braun served Hutchinson, Lynn, Ellsworth, Cedar Mills, and Litchfield. From 1864-1889, Pastor Braun served the Christians in Litchfield at the homes of Michael Lenhardt and Fritz Schultz.

Pastor Braun, however, was not the only Pastor to minister to the young organization of believers in Litchfield. In 1875, Pastor C. Kollmorgen from a congregation recently formed in Atwater, Minnesota, began making trips sixteen miles east to Litchfield in order to bring them God's Word. Pastor Kollmorgen would eventually help organize a small 18 ft. by 30 ft. church named St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Manannah, a township nearly fifteen miles north of Litchfield. In later years, the pastors of St. Paul's in Litchfield would serve the Manannah congregation until it closed its doors in 1910.

It is easy to see that the history of St. Paul's Lutheran Church owes much thanks to the surrounding congregations, as well as to the pastors who made many trips with horse and buggy over the poor roads of the day. One member of St. Paul's skillfully wrote, "The history of these neighboring congregations is intimately connected with ours and we owe fervent thanks, first of course to our Lord, and then also to the pastors and members who helped to guide our formative years before and after St. Paul's was organized."¹ So also, in order to understand the full story of St. Paul's, one must consider the various synods which either directly or indirectly affected St. Paul's.

The first pastors to come to the area of Minnesota were from the same German background as that of the members. Unfortunately, a common characteristic of these pastors at the time was the tendency to mix Lutheran and Reformed doctrine and practices. Later, pastors from the very liberal General Synod arrived and served the people in Minnesota. Then, in 1860, the Minnesota Synod was formed, but even some of these pastors were tainted with liberal and unionistic practices. However, with the help and guidance of the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod, the Minnesota Synod began to come closer and closer to the pure teachings of God's Word. It is interesting to note how history teaches us that there is nothing new under the

sun, for the problems of those early years are still the same problems we face today; the questions of the inspiration of the Bible, the lodge, and that of church fellowship.

In 1867, the General Council, consisting of many different Synods, was formed. The Minnesota and Wisconsin Synods became members, but only for a short while because the General Council, too, had a very liberal attitude toward lodges and church fellowship. It wasn't until 1872 that the Minnesota, along with the Wisconsin, Missouri, Norwegian, Ohio, and other synods formed the confessional body known as the Lutheran Synodical Conference. Ties were strengthened even more when in 1892, the Minnesota, along with Wisconsin, Michigan, and other states joined together to form the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and other states, while at the same time remaining a member of the Lutheran Synodical Conference. During this time, God, by his grace, was watching over the gathered believers in Litchfield, and in 1915, St. Paul's Lutheran Church under the leadership of Pastor Theodore Thurow, joined the Minnesota Synod. The truly awesome grace of God is echoed in these words, "In those early years our forefathers could easily have become members of other churches, also Lutheran, which already were in existence. They preferred however to form their own church, not only because of the language, for all services were first held in German, but also because by the grace of God they sought the pure doctrines of their Lord."²

Now, understanding the history surrounding the organization of St. Paul's, we turn to view God's grace in its foundation and continued existence. On February 5, 1889, Pastor Heinrich Franz of Montrose, Minnesota, made the twenty-eight mile journey to the village of Litchfield in order to visit the homes of John Krueger, Joseph Barth, Frank Maetzold, William Roehl, and Erhardt Lenhardt. As Pastor Franz visited these men, he suggested that they look for

¹ Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

² Seventy-Fifth Anniversary: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

a place to regularly hold worship services. These men welcomed Franz's suggestion and received permission from the First Swedish Lutheran Church to rent their church for Sunday afternoon services. On March 3, 1889, the first service was held. Many German Lutherans from Litchfield and the surrounding townships attended and heard Pastor Franz's sermon on Luke 18:31-43. Immediately after service, Pastor Franz held a meeting to ask if those attending would like to have an organized German Lutheran congregation. The suggestion was met with wholehearted approval. After this resounding yes, Pastor Franz proceeded to read a Lutheran Church constitution to them. This constitution was then approved and signed by the following charter members: John W. Krueger, John Werder, Erhardt Lenhardt, Adolph Maas, Joergen Lohse, William Rick, Sr., Joseph Barth, August Kunze, August Wagner, Fritz Koerner, William Koerner, and Herman H. Krueger.

With the newly signed constitution in place, these men began the task of choosing a name for their new church. After some discussion, the name St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran German Congregation was chosen. The first officers were Erhardt Lenhardt, John Werder, and John W. Kruger. Pastor Franz was subsequently called to be their first pastor. In October, 1890, a delegation from St. Peter's congregation in the township of Ellsworth attended a St. Paul's quarterly meeting to ask if Pastor Franz would be willing to serve them as well. It was decided at this meeting that Pastor Franz should serve both St. Paul's and St. Peter's, while making his home at a rented house in Litchfield.

Already in the beginning, God's grace upon this German congregation was evident with rapid growth. In April of 1889, one month after the official organization of the church, nine more men and women were received as members, and in June, God blessed St. Paul's with twelve additional members. Some of the 'firsts' recorded in the books of St. Paul's were as

follows: the first baptism was Rosalie Dorothy Hauser, born August 9, 1886; the first confirmands were Friedrich and William Werder on March 5, 1890; the first wedding joined Fred Grono and Clara B. Schultz on May 14, 1889.

Pastor Franz continued to serve the St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran German Congregation until 1898. During the years he served, many new things continued to happen. Noting the invitation of the Lord to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, already in the early days of Pastor Franz a Christian Day School had begun. Classes were held regularly during the months of July and August with Pastor Franz conducting the classes. Unfortunately, most of the children Pastor Franz had as students were from farms, and with July and August being busy months, the daily summer school was given up and Saturday afternoon confirmation classes were begun. However, in October, 1903, the congregation decided to have regular school again, but held four days a weeks from November 1 to February 1, with the pastor once again as instructor. During these months, the pupils lived with relatives in town so they would not have to be brought in to school every morning. This school too, however, would not last very long.

One year after the congregation was organized, seven ladies formed what was called the "Nachverein," a sewing society. Today, this organization is called the Ladies Aid. This group met once a month in the homes of the members to study God's Word and to serve the Lord and his Kingdom to the glory of his Holy name. At these meetings, they would collect the yearly dues of ten cents, sew aprons, and decide to which mission they should send their money. The Ladies Aid has been and continues to be a wonderful opportunity for the ladies of the congregation to get together in Christian fellowship, to learn more about God's Word and will for our lives, and to have an added opportunity to do the Lord's work through missions,

donations within the church, and the like. By God's grace this group continued to grow and became more active as the membership of the congregation grew.

For the first seven years of Pastor Franz's ministry, he and the members of St. Paul's continued to have their regular Sunday services in the afternoon at the First Swedish Lutheran Church. Finally, in 1895, it was decided that it was time for them to have their own church. So the congregation decided to buy the Norwegian Lutheran Church for the amount of \$795.00; and on February 20, 1896 St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran German Congregation held their first service in their own church building.

In 1898, Pastor Franz resigned as pastor, and on January 15, 1899, Pastor Heinrich Albrecht was called to serve St. Paul's and St. Peter's of Ellsworth. Since there was no parsonage in Litchfield at first, Pastor Albrecht lived in Ellsworth until 1900; after which, a parsonage in Litchfield was purchased at 226 South Ramsey Avenue for \$450.00. This is the location of the present church site. Unfortunately, Pastor Albrecht's health was failing, and in 1905 he resigned as pastor of St. Paul's.

Pastor G.E. Fritzke of Hutchinson served the vacancy until February 11, 1906, when Pastor Theodore Thurow was installed. During the first four years of Pastor Theodore Thurow's ministry he served St. Paul's in Litchfield, St. Paul's in Manannah, and St. Peter's in Ellsworth. Then, in 1910, St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Manannah resolved to disband and moved to Forest City, a town six miles closer to Litchfield, organizing a new congregation with the name St. Martin. However, with the arrival of the automobile in the second decade of the 1900's and the easier travel it provided, St. Martin's no longer considered it necessary to keep its doors open. So, on December 1, 1915, it disbanded, with many of the members joining the congregation in Litchfield. So also, with the increasing number of members at St. Paul's, and the need for Pastor

Thurow to be near Litchfield, the members of St. Paul's asked Pastor Thurow to spend all his time serving them in Litchfield. Therefore, in October of 1912, ties were broken pleasantly between St. Paul's and St. Peter's, leaving St. Peter's at that time to call their own pastor.

Not forgetting about the need for children to be instructed in God's Word, early on in his ministry, Pastor Thurow continued a Sunday School program started by Pastor Franz in 1903. Because of the growing number of students, on January 3, 1907, it was voted to build a schoolroom addition to the east end of the church. This would be the first of four building projects undertaken by St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The plans were to use this schoolroom addition for confirmation instructions, Sunday School, various meetings, and later on for overflow. As well as continuing this Sunday School program, Pastor Thurow was busy teaching at the parochial school. Next, in 1910, Pastor Thurow organized a Young People's Society. This organization would last for seventy-nine years. As time passed, they changed their name to the Luther League and gave as their motto, "God's Word and Luther's doctrine will never pass away." The purpose of this organization was to continue studying God's Holy Word, to work for the Lord in various ways at their disposal, and to provide Christian fellowship among the young people of the church. Open to all members of the congregation who had been confirmed, this organization was able to do much for the congregation and the synod. For example, they gave gifts to missions, bought new communion vessels, sponsored group outings, and simply provided a Christian setting for the youth to meet and work together.

The time during Pastor Thurow's ministry also brought other changes to the people of St. Paul's. As the times in America continued to change, it became apparent that St. Paul's too would eventually need to change, and this change came in the form of English services. Naturally, any time one is asked to 'give up' their native tongue, there is a sense of loss and

sadness that goes along with it. However, in 1913, the inevitable happened and English services were introduced. Yet, there wasn't much time to reflect on this transition because the following year already brought to the members of St. Paul's the 25th anniversary of God's continued grace since their organization. Therefore, on May 24, 1914, St. Paul's celebrated their silver anniversary with President J.H. Naumann, the President of the Minnesota Synod, Pastor Martin Schuetze of Ellsworth, and Pastor Kolbe delivering the sermons for this most thankful of days. It is interesting to note, that although President Naumann preached at this silver anniversary, St. Paul's had not yet joined the Minnesota Synod. Whether Pastor Naumann's visit at this time had any influence or not this author was not able to discern, however, just over a year later on June 9, 1915, St. Paul's became a member of the Minnesota Synod.

It wasn't long after St. Paul's joined the Minnesota Synod that Pastor Thurow received a call to serve the flock of believers in Sun Prairie, Minnesota, and on November 14, 1915, Pastor Thurow moved from Litchfield. Pastor Schuetze of St. Peter's served as vacancy pastor. By God's grace, only one month later, on December 12, Pastor John Guse accepted the call extended to him to become pastor of St. Paul's. During Pastor Guse's pastorate, which continued by the Lord's mercy for fourteen years, numerous improvements took place. The mission envelope system was installed in 1923 in order to encourage monthly gifts for mission work. In 1926, a choir of six people began with Pastor Guse as accompanist. During this same year, Pastor Guse began the Sunday School system that is still in place today, with children being instructed in English. In addition, on October 24, 1924, a bell was purchased and dedicated. Previous to this there had been no church bell to ring Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings as an invitation to attend service. In fact, this very same bell still calls members and visitors to St. Paul's today. Pastor John Guse's ministry ended on May 21, 1929, when he died due to failing health. The

day before he had been privileged to proclaim his last sermon to the members of St. Paul's on Pentecost Sunday.

Only two months after the death of Pastor Guse, Karl Plocher was installed as the new pastor on July 21, 1929. Pastor Plocher served St. Paul's until 1950, his twenty-one years of service were the second longest of any pastor of St. Paul's. Under the direction of Pastor Plocher many changes took place, some on account of the need for more English, and others on account of the grace God had shown St. Paul's by way of continual growth. In 1929, when Pastor Plocher was installed, there were a little over 200 listed communicant members; near the end of his ministry in 1948, St. Paul's listed 400 communicant members. Thanks be to God.

Among some of the changes that were taking place was the translation of the church constitution into the English language. This complete translation was finished in 1931. In fact, in 1932, it was decided upon by the congregation to have English services every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., together with German services every other Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Due to the increasing number of members, it was decided in 1938 that on Sundays when there were no German services, two English services should be conducted. On account of this transition to more English services, another transition concerning the way people were to go to the Lord's Table for communion was also made. On January 6, 1931, a discussion on how people should go to the table of the Lord's Supper brought the following opinion, "In German services it was requested to keep up the old fashion, and to leave it to the individuals in English services as to men and women going to the Lord's Table together."³ Things certainly were changing.

With the increasing number of souls being brought by God to St. Paul's every Sunday, questions arose about enlarging the church or erecting a new church. So, in 1935 it was decided to start a building fund for a future church, with the thought that the cost should not exceed

\$18,000. In order to give all the members the opportunity to support the building fund, a weekly envelope system was installed. The need for a large church building was especially evident when on June 11, 1939, the golden anniversary of the church was held. Attendance was so large that it was necessary for it to be held at the Litchfield community building and not at the church. The pastors present for this celebrated day were former Pastor Theodore Thurow, Professor Carl Scheweppe of New Ulm, and Pastor W. Schulze of Hutchinson. By God's grace, at the time of this 50th anniversary, the building fund started in 1935 had accumulated \$26,341.43. However, this building project begun during the service of Pastor Plocher would not be finished when he, in 1950, accepted a call to Town Helen, Glencoe, Minnesota.

The members of St. Paul's did not have to wait long for another man to accept the call to be their shepherd. On October 22, 1950, Pastor John Raabe, who had served in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, was installed. It was only three short months after his installation that the members of St. Paul's decided it was time to build. A building committee was formed, an architect from Minneapolis engaged, and on July 20, 1952, groundbreaking ceremonies were held. Then, in August, excavation began. At the time of groundbreaking and excavation, St. Paul's membership consisted of 761 baptized souls and 552 communicants, with a Sunday School that had 171 students enrolled. What grace and blessings God had bestowed upon St. Paul's during its first sixty-three years! Amazingly, it was only two months and nine days after excavation began that the cornerstone of the new church was laid. Along with the cornerstone the members of St. Paul's also placed these items: a list of members over eighty; a Bible, Catechism, and the Augsburg Confession; The Northwestern Lutheran, Gemeindeblatt, Annual, and Proceedings; constitution of St. Paul's; history of the Congregation written in the 50th Anniversary booklet of 1939; 1951 Yearbook; a Sunday Bulletin; a list of voting members; Ladies Aid, Men's Club,

³ St. Paul's Church Council Records, January 6, 1931, pg. 9.

Sunday School, Teachers, and Luther League reports; Litchfield, Minneapolis, and St. Paul's newspapers; Architects, Contractors, and Committee's names; modern currency and current stamp; names of the United States President, Governor of Minnesota, Mayor of Litchfield, President of the WELS, and President of the Minnesota District; and the flag of the United States of America.

The last services to be held in the old church were on Easter Sunday, 1953. After this Sunday, services were held in the new church basement until the new building was dedicated on August 23, 1953. On this most joyful day two dedication services were held, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In the morning service, former Pastor Karl Plocher was privileged to observe this new building and preach, while in the afternoon, the service was conducted by O.J. Naumann, the pastor at the church in St. Paul and also President of the Wisconsin Synod. In the evening another dedication service was held. This time, however, it was for the newly purchased organ that had been installed. At this service, Professor Martin Albrecht of Dr. Martin Luther College was the guest organist and Pastor Lloyd Hanke, a son of the congregation, preached.

The new church, by which God's grace had allowed the members of St. Paul's to dedicate, cost \$176,000. However, this price seemed small compared to the enormous blessings God had showered upon them and also in view of the reason for the need of a new building, the need for more room. In their dedication service folder of August 23, this description of the church was given, along with the great thanks and praise owed to God for his marvelous gifts:

The church is of English Parish Gothic design. The dimensions are 120x45 feet. This is increased to 68 feet at the narthex and tower, and 60 feet at the chancel end. The exterior is faced with Kasota stone and is trimmed with Bedford stone. A stone cross accents the front above the main entrance...The wall dividing the narthex from the nave is set with windows of cathedral glass which can be opened to permit the use of the narthex for overflow seating...The plastered walls of the nave and chancel are surmounted by a roof of exposed fir planking supported by purlins and laminated trusses. The woodwork throughout is of blond finish. The balcony houses the new, two-manual, eight-rank, Wicks pipe

organ, in divided organ chambers. The stained glass windows in the chancel portray symbols of the Holy Trinity, in the balcony the symbols of St. Paul, after whom our church is named, and the nine groups of three windows each in the Nave, will, when all installed, bring to mind the nine chief Church festivals and seasons of the year. The basement has an assembly hall, a stage, two Sunday School rooms, an altar guild room, a furnace room, a fully-equipped kitchen, and rest rooms...The massive tower rising 52 feet into the air, contains the west entrance, stairs, Sunday School rooms on the second and third floor, and the bell taken from our old church. The completion and dedication of our new church is the culmination of the consecrated efforts on the part of the members of the congregation, the fulfillment of our dreams, the answer to many a fervent prayer. We thank and praise God, who has graciously answered our prayers, put to shame our doubts and fears, and permitted us to erect this house of worship to His glory. May it be 'the gate of heaven' to many souls!⁴

With a new church in which to worship, the members of St. Paul's now shifted their building attention to the matter of Pastor Raabe's living quarters. In 1960, the First Lutheran Church building and property, where the members of St. Paul's had worshiped from 1889 to 1896, was purchased for the site of a new parsonage. It wasn't until 1963 that they realized to continue putting money into fixing the old parsonage was unwise. It was then they decided to build. Therefore, on May 15, 1964, it was voted to accept a bid to build a house on the old First Lutheran Church property, and on June 17th, excavation began. Seven months later, Pastor Raabe and his family moved into the new parsonage, and on February 28, 1965, the new parsonage was dedicated. Pastor and his family however, did not have much chance to get used to their new surroundings, for later in the year he accepted a call to the Southeast Wisconsin District. During St. Paul's vacancy, Pastor Rueben Reimers of Acoma served as their pastor.

It is true, if you were to ask most people what they remember most about the sixteen years Pastor Raabe spent at St. Paul's, many would say the building projects. However, besides the building projects, Pastor Raabe's ministry at St. Paul's was filled with many other blessings reflected in the church and among the members of St. Paul's. For example, in Pastor Raabe's first year, the men of St. Paul's organized a Men's Club in order to promote Christian fellowship

⁴ Dedication: St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Minnesota, August 23, 1953, pgs. 12,13.

and Christian discussion. The Men's Club over the years has been active in activities such as an oyster-chili supper, white elephant sale, and the collection of newspapers and aluminum cans for recycling. They also have been active in making donations to the church for building projects, buying catechisms for the confirmation students, and helping the children's groups fund their extra activities.

It was also during Pastor Raabe's ministry, in 1951, when St. Paul's began to print an annual yearbook. These yearbooks included the Pastoral report, financial report, as well as reports from the various committees, organizations, and Sunday School. The yearbooks also gave the opportunity to inform the members of activities going on at church, as well as added areas of interest. Some of these activities and areas of interest were: the donations of food to the DMLC cafeteria; the names and addresses of men and women of the congregation in military service; the names of young men and women attending the Lutheran schools; those who in the past year had been baptized, confirmed, married, or passed away; and, even updates on things going on in the synod. Since 1951, the members of St. Paul's have eagerly waited to read the events of the past year in these yearbooks. It has been a valuable tool to remind St. Paul's members of the many opportunities and abundant grace God had provided for them in the past year. Whether it was simply the Sunday services conducted by their pastors, the Sunday School or confirmation classes, or the many differing organizations within the church, it was evident, God had richly blessed St. Paul's with his grace. It is with confidence that this writer concludes that the desired effect and purpose of the yearbooks, which was stated in the preface of 1951, has been met. It read,

We issue this YEARBOOK in the hope that every member of St. Paul's will read it carefully. It presents a comprehensive picture of all the varied activities of the congregation, of everything that is done to promote the cause of Christ and of His Church in our midst. On the following pages you will find reports

from your Pastor, your Church Council, your Sunday School, and your committees and organizations. All have been active in promoting the spread of the Gospel, for that is the sole business of the Church of Christ. May this booklet serve you St. Paul's Congregation, and the Kingdom of the Lord.
SOLI DEO GLORIA!⁵

Another important introduction during Pastor Raabe's ministry at St. Paul's was that of a Vacation Bible School. In 1955, St. Paul's brought the opportunity for 138 children from ages three to thirteen to be taught God's truth by fifteen different teachers. However, these young children weren't the only ones who now had an extra opportunity to learn of God's amazing grace, for in 1956 a Young Married Couple's organization was arranged. The purpose of this organization was to foster Christian knowledge by bringing married couples together to study God's Word, to welcome new married couples to the congregation, and to bring opportunities for Christian service and fellowship among the younger married couples of the church. At its first meeting on April 15, thirty-one couples attended. Unfortunately as the years passed, this organization dwindled in size and today is no longer active.

As St. Paul's continued to grow in size and in age, it was evident that it would be beneficial if the services of St. Paul's could be brought into the homes of its sick and shut-in members. Therefore, in 1958, St. Paul's began broadcasting devotions and services over the local radio station KLFD. As time went on, these radio broadcasts turned into TV telecasts, and today, three times a week, the Sunday services of St. Paul's can be watched on Litchfield's local television station.

Another blessed 'problem' caused by the increase of members and activities going on at St. Paul's was the need to take on secretarial help for pastor. It was decided that all the extra duties being asked of Pastor were getting to be too much, and so, in January of 1958, the church council selected Doris Tipka to help Pastor with typing, mimeographing, addressing and the

doing of other church work. An additional benefit of this secretarial help was the printing of the St. Paul's News. The St. Paul's News was the new monthly paper of the church being sent out to the homes of every member in 1958. Its purpose was very similar to that of the annual yearbooks; to inform members of what had taken place and was going to take place in St. Paul's, as well as reporting to them other important issues. One such example of this new opportunity to reach every member with beneficial information was a letter Pastor Radloff printed in the September issue of the News in 1969 concerning the doctrinal difficulties in the Missouri Synod, with whom the Wisconsin Synod had broken fellowship in 1961. The letter read,

A WORD OF WARNING FOR US TO BE ALERT

Following is a report which a pastor of the Missouri Synod (Rev. Harley of Fairmont, Minn.) gave to his people following their convention at Denver. Let us be alert lest we too be in danger of losing the pure and saving Word of God. Indifference is also a problem in our midst. We dare not let it continue. I hope you will take time to read all of the rather lengthy report. Remember to thank God for His Word and use it by hearing it at church and reading it at home.

WHAT NOW?

"What now?" This is the big question for thousands, possibly for several millions, within our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod since the Denver Convention.

"If the vote in Denver favors fellowship, will you be able to accept the decision?" Almost all of our members who answered the questionnaire answered "No." This means that our congregation must now do something in view of the vote taken at Denver in favor of fellowship. Our congregation had two memorials before the Synod. One was to reject the fellowship proposal, the other to withdraw from the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. Both of these requests were rejected.

Many in our church do not seem to be aware of the fact that they are part of the Church militant. There is such indifference that they do not know what is at stake, nor that a great battle is being waged within our Synod against the historic position of our church, and worse yet, against the very foundation of our faith, the Word of God.

Your pastor can only wish that each member of our congregation could have been present at the Denver Convention. All illusions about what is happening in our Synod would have been laid to rest. Those who love their church would have been jolted out of any dream that they can still take it easy in Zion.

The opening communion service was crashed by a renegade Episcopalian priest, Malcolm Boyd, who had served notice that he intended to

⁵ St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Yearbook, 1951, pg. 2.

receive Holy Communion at the Convention to break down the position our Synod has on giving Lord's Supper to only those who are in doctrinal fellowship with us. He appeared at the altar with other non-Lutherans, and loudly declared his purpose. He was not turned away. Later during the days of the Convention he and others celebrated a joint communion service in a Greek theater in downtown Denver.

In the lobby at the entrance of the convention hall several dozen supposedly "Lutheran hippies" garbed in their regalia stretched themselves out on the floor, sang, shouted and at times made it difficult for the delegates inside the hall to know what was going on. Where did these "Lutheran hippies" come from? Who paid their expenses to the convention and paid their bill at the Hilton Hotel?

The big issue to be voted upon at this Convention, of course, was the matter of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. Debate on the matter was limited to three minutes, later two minutes. Those in favor of fellowship were however permitted to take as much time as they desired. The minority group not in favor were given no opportunity to speak or defend their position. The presidents of the ALC, LCA and Slovak synods were each given about 20 minutes to address the Convention and used most of the time advocating fellowship.

A Lutheran Action group made up mostly of militant blacks, used every opportunity to agitate for fellowship. This group later tried to disrupt the Convention completely by calling upon the delegates to follow them outside to kneel in the streets and listen to the sounds of the city. An undetermined amount did so, many joined in the Communist marching song "We Shall Overcome."

Another group which was "used" for the furthering of the fellowship proposal were the young people, who for the first time were brought in as visitors to the Convention. The majority of these did not seem to be truly representative of our thousands of Lutheran youth. Neither did they come to see how a Christian and Lutheran Convention was conducted. They came and were "used" by the Youth Committee to pressure the Convention into voting for fellowship. They were given appearances on the stage while duly elected delegates were cut down in speaking time or not given the opportunity at all.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in spite of the election of Dr. Preus as president and a group of vice-presidents who are mostly opposed to fellowship with the ALC, the Convention in confusion voted to approve the proposal.

Here briefly are the reasons for opposition to fellowship with the American Lutheran Church:

- 1) The ALC permits members of Christ-denying lodges to be full communicant members.
- 2) The ALC, already in full fellowship with the LCA, plans to join the National Council of Churches in 1970 and is even now a member of the World Council of churches and the Lutheran World Federation, both of which include non-Lutheran groups.
- 3) The ALC openly teaches the theory of Evolution in some of its Sunday School literature.
- 4) The ALC teaches in its Sunday Schools, colleges, and seminaries that the Bible is not verbally inspired but that it was written by men who often made mistakes and put words in the mouth of Jesus that are not necessarily true.
- 5) A recent survey showed that the majority of Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church pastors are poles apart on almost all major doctrines of the Christian faith.

The question is "What now?" These matters will be discussed in our Boards, Voters' Meetings, societies, and Bible classes. Many Christians have been sleeping too long while their church was sold "down the stream." Unless

we awaken and rise in protest and positive action our Synod will go down the path of liberal modernism which is ruining Biblical Christianity.⁶

For the next seven years either Doris Tipka, Mrs. Lawrence Welker, or Mrs. Roy Hed continued to help pastor as his secretary. In 1965 Bertha Holtz became secretary, and for the next nineteen years she faithfully served her Lord. In 1985, Mrs. Holtz decided it was time for her to retire as secretary, and in 1986 Darlene Smith took over this important job. She continues to serve her Lord and the members of St. Paul's faithfully to this day.

It is interesting to note that shortly before Pastor Raabe took his call in 1966, four different ladies Circle Groups were organized to go along with the Ladies Aid. These four Circles' were the Bethesda Circle, Calvary Circle, Bethany Circle, and Gethsemane Circle. These organizations had the same purposes as that of the Ladies Aid, that is, to give the opportunity for the ladies of the congregation to get together in Christian fellowship, to learn more about God's Word and will for their lives, and to have an added opportunity to do the Lord's work. These four Circles' gave every lady of the congregation the opportunity to belong to one or the other or to a couple at the same time. Among some of the early projects that they were involved with included the making of afgans, lap robes, quilts, and bibs for the nursing homes. Today, there are only three ladies group still active, the Ladies Aid, Calvary Circle, and Vesper Guild. The Vesper Guild was organized in 1971 with the purpose of helping members to grow in Christian knowledge through the study of the Bible. Unfortunately, with its organization, the Bethany and Gethsemane Circles' disbanded. It wasn't until January 2002 that the Bethesda Circle voted to disband because of declining membership.

It wasn't long after Pastor Raabe left St. Paul's that Pastor Radloff accepted the call to serve, and in May of 1967 he was installed. Pastor Radloff's ministry was much shorter than

⁶ St. Paul's News, Litchfield, Minnesota, September 1969, pgs. 1-3.

that of Pastor Raabe's; three years to be exact. During these three years, God's grace was still evident at St. Paul's in their changes and organizations. In 1967, St. Paul's organized their Boys and Girls Lutheran Pioneers programs, which to a large extent was a reaction against the Boy and Girl Scout movements across America. This Lutheran Pioneers program was an organization started within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in order to offer the young people of the congregations the same outdoor activity and skills offered in the scouts, yet with the added benefit of true spiritual guidance and training. A year later in 1968, it was decided to have two worship services, one at 8:00 and the other at 10:30, with Sunday School in-between at 9:30. This was done in an attempt to increase and promote more regular church attendance. Also during this time, a Sunday School building fund was set up in order to encourage the members to think about improving their Sunday School facilities. For at this time, Sunday School was still being held in the basement with partitions dividing each classroom. However, God had graciously blessed the St. Paul's Sunday School with an average enrollment of 195 children the previous three years, more than could comfortably be taught in the basement. Therefore, it was becoming more and more apparent that more room was needed.

In 1969, the year before Pastor Radloff accepted a call to Texas, the Stewardship committee presented a report on the need and purpose of a Vicar or Minister of Education in the congregation. The Stewardship Committee was asked to submit its report for publication in the St. Paul's News. This is a brief report of their findings:

A Vicar would be able to help and to relieve the pastor in the following areas:

1. Teach Saturday School and Release Time Classes
2. Conduct a Sunday Bible Class for the 9th and 10th Grades
3. Preach once a month and help with Communion services
4. Conduct meetings such as Ladies Aid, Men's Club, Luther League, and Pioneer Programs
5. Make sick calls at the hospital and shut-in calls at homes
6. Call on delinquent members and every home visitation

This would give the pastor more time for:

1. Personal calls and counseling (delinquent calls and others)
2. Begin Bible classes for adults
3. Begin new and more detailed programs for the youth of the church
4. More time for sermon preparation and personal study
5. To organize and train effective stewardship and evangelism committees

A Minister of Education would be more permanent than the Vicar since his call would not be limited to one year. In this case we would call an experienced teacher from the field for the purpose of heading up the educational program of our church. In many ways this could be more successful than a vicar program.

His work would be:

1. Sunday School and Bible Class
2. Saturday School and Released Time Classes
3. Sunday School Teachers' Meetings and Training Courses
4. Visit absentee S.S. students and their parents
5. Conduct some meetings such as Pioneers and Luther League
6. Help with visiting of shut-ins
7. Help with distribution of Communion
8. Plan Vacation Bible School (produce our own materials)
9. Choir director (Jr. and Sr.)
10. Organist (part-time)
11. Develop Audio-Visual Aids for our Congregation⁷

Following this printing in the August St. Paul's News, a discussion was held at the October quarterly meeting as to whether a Vicar or Minister of Education should be called to assist the pastor. The vote was twenty-two to twenty against the plan. However, more discussion followed and a motion was passed to discuss the matter again at the annual meeting in January. At the annual meeting held on January 18, 1970, the issue of calling a Vicar or Minister of Education was once again discussed. This time though, it was decided by ballot to call a vicar for St. Paul's. Unfortunately, it was also in 1970 that Pastor Radloff received and took a call to serve in Austin, Texas, and as a result, the voters of St. Paul's decided at the quarterly meeting in April that St. Paul's would withdraw their request for a vicar. This decision was made so the new pastor could review the Stewardship Committee guidelines for a vicar and evaluate the need for a vicar after he had become better acquainted with the congregation.

⁷ St. Paul's News, August 1969, pgs. 5,6.

After Pastor Radloff's move to Texas on February 15, Pastor Rueben Reimers again served as vacancy pastor for two months until Pastor Gerhard Birkholtz was installed as the eighth pastor to serve St. Paul's on April 19, 1970. During the first five years of Pastor Birkholtz's ministry many upkeep items were taken care of such as the buying of the property north of the church, the installation of carpet in the church, blacktopping the parking lot, and the appointing of a Sunday School Building Study Committee. With the diligent work of this committee a special congregational meeting was held on June 8, 1975 in order to discuss the finding of this Study Committee. After some discussion, the congregation decided to build a Sunday School Building on the lots north of the church. The building was to have sixteen Sunday School rooms, offices, a fellowship room, and an open courtyard, all connected to the church by two separate hallways.

The Lord blessed the members of St. Paul's with a beautiful sunny day for the groundbreaking ceremony held on October 12, 1975. The St. Paul's news recorded, "The ceremony was begun with prayer by Pastor Birkoltz who then shoveled the first dirt with the same shovel which had been used for the groundbreaking for our church back in 1952."⁸ On May 23 of the following year the cornerstone was laid, and with it a box containing various items was also placed. These items were: a Constitution and St. Paul's yearbook; a Bible; a Catechism; a Sunday School lesson; a roster of Sunday School pupils and the teachers; a copy of the cornerstone laying service, a copy of the 1976 program book of the Ladies Aid and Vesper Guild, a copy of the latest *Independent Review*, and a 1976 Bicentennial \$2.00 bill. Three months after the laying of the cornerstone, God blessed St. Paul's with a beautiful, completed Sunday School addition. On August 29, 1976, dedication services were held. Former Pastor John Raabe was the guest speaker at the 10:45 dedication service, and in the afternoon, Pastor

Rueben Reimers, who for so many years had served St. Paul's during their vacancies, preached the sermon on the theme 'Building for Life.'

For the next dozen years St. Paul's was able to make monthly, bi-monthly, and even tri-monthly payments on the loan they had taken for the building of the Sunday School addition. In 1981, it was reported that already 136 of 240 payments had been made, or in other words, eleven and a half years of payments made in five years. Twelve years later on February 21, 1988, a very important occasion in the congregation was observed. At 10:00 a.m. a special service of gratitude was held to observe the completion of payments on the Sunday School Building. At the burning of the mortgage there were representatives present from the council and building committees of 1976, when the mortgage took effect, and from 1988, when the mortgage was paid. By God's grace and his grace alone, this twenty year loan of \$150,000 was paid off in twelve years.

While Gerhard Birkholtz was Pastor at St. Paul's he was elected to serve as the President of the Minnesota District. During his first eight years in Litchfield, Pastor Mark Lenz and Pastor G. Horn had faithfully served in this capacity. Now however, Pastor Horn's term had expired and Pastor Birkholtz took over in 1978. Because of these new duties as District President, the congregation once again came back to the matter of calling a vicar in order to assist the pastor. At a voter's meeting on July 30, 1978, it was decided to call a vicar when they were assigned the following spring. In that call service at the Seminary in May of 1979, David Putz was assigned to St. Paul's Lutheran Church as their first vicar. Vicar Putz was the first of nine consecutive vicars who would come to St. Paul's. Those who followed were John Ruege, David Kolander, Norman Burger, Kurt Ebert, Mark Wessel, Jonathan Balge, Joel Thomford, and Ross Stelljes. Each of these vicars made their home with Genevieve Lenhardt, a member of the congregation.

⁸ St. Paul's News, November 1975, pg. 10.

Each vicar that served at St. Paul's had, of course, their own unique gifts. The members of St. Paul's received each vicar with open arms and appreciated each one. To this day they still are interested in their former vicars' respective continued ministries. However, in 1988, due to a special gift given to the Synod Convention in order to provide each District President with a graduate assistant pastor instead of vicars, Pastor Birkholz and the members of St. Paul's were provided with a graduate assistant at the beginning of August, 1988. The man assigned to St. Paul's was Pastor Roger Rockhoff. These graduate assistants remained for two years instead of one as the vicars had done. So, after Pastor Rockhoff's two years were finished, he was reassigned to Honolulu, Hawaii in 1990, and Pastor William Worth was assigned as the next assistant.

During the years that St. Paul's was aided by the service of vicars and graduate assistants, many blessings, changes, and interesting things continued to happen. For instance, in 1981 a dishwasher and new counter tops, stainless steel sinks and floor coverings were installed in the church kitchen. Also, four years after the first vicar, new talks began to arise concerning a Christian Elementary School. With the number of children enrolled in Sunday School, and the wonderful blessings offered through a Christian education, this proposal had many good points. Therefore, in 1983, a Christian Day School Fund was started. In the following year, a committee on the Feasibility Study for a Christian Elementary School was set up, and in 1984 they began visiting other WELS Christian Day Schools in the area. After a little less than a year, a report by the Feasibility Study Committee was printed in the St. Paul's News. It said,

The Feasibility Study Committee for a Christian Elementary School in our congregation has continued its work during the past year...Our planned schedule was delayed as we awaited the completion of 3 books by the Synod's Board for Parish Education. These books were prepared to aid congregations interested in beginning a school and were entitled "A Plan; Beginning a Lutheran Elementary School." These books have arrived in December. They are: Phase One: Exploration; Phase Two: Study; Phase Three: Implementation. The committee

has completed reviewing Phase One and found we had followed the guidelines suggested. We are beginning Phase Two in preparation for a survey to be conducted in the congregation concerning student enrollment in a Christian Elementary School.⁹

This survey was then sent out to the members of the congregation in order to gauge the interest there might be in a school and enrollment prospects. This was the reply that they received:

The study Committee sent out a survey form to 62 families who would have children of Kindergarten through 8th grade age for the 1988-89 school year. This would involve 96 children. Of this number, there were 12 yes, that would attend a Lutheran School, 18 maybe and 59 no replies. The committee had originally considered that if there was a minimum of 20 students as possible enrollees, then there should be a decision made by the congregation whether or not to begin a Lutheran School.¹⁰

Unfortunately, it seems that due to the lack of interest for a Christian Day School, the pursuit of such a possibility came to a close.

The year 1989 marked a very special time in the hearts and minds of the members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. For it was in April, 100 years earlier, that St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran German Congregation was established, and therefore, in April of 1989, St. Paul's celebrated its Centennial Anniversary under the theme, 'Grace, Growth, and Gratitude.' The anniversary began on April 16 with a mission emphasis. Former Pastor James Radloff was the speaker. The following Sunday, April 23, was designated as the main anniversary Sunday. At this service, Wisconsin Synod President Carl Mischke was the speaker. Finally, the anniversary concluded on April 30th with an education emphasis. Pastor David Kolander, a former vicar, was the guest speaker. Looking back on the 100 years of God's grace, the theme chosen for this month was truly fitting. For at the time of the anniversary, St. Paul's congregation consisted of 594 communicant members and 749 baptized souls. What amazing grace and growth God had permitted St. Paul's to witness over these years!

⁹ St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church Year Book 1985, pg. 33.

¹⁰ St. Paul's News, November 1986, pg. 15.

The following year of 1990 also brought in changes for the St. Paul's congregation. In April, Pastor Birkholtz celebrated twenty years of service at St. Paul's. Later that year in July, Pastor William Worth was installed. He however, would be the last of the graduate assistants at St. Paul's because in 1991, Pastor Birkholtz's terms as District President had expired. Perhaps one of the biggest highlights of 1990 though, was the talks beginning to surface concerning the need for a bathroom in the narthex of the church. It was apparent that as the church continued to age, so did its members. Not everyone was as young as they used to be. Therefore, in 1991, it was decided to establish a Projects Priority list for the use of the Improvement Fund. At the 1992 July quarterly meeting, the proposals for a narthex bathroom and a possible elevator to the fellowship hall in the basement were presented. Unfortunately, due to all the building talks, at the October quarterly meeting of 1991 it was decided to table the decision on once again calling another vicar, or perhaps an associate pastor, until the annual meeting in January when they could give full attention to this matter.

At the annual meeting of January 1992, it was brought to the attention of the voters that a deposit of \$2,702.63 had been willed to the congregation and designated for the installation of a bathroom in the narthex. However, in September of the following year, it was decided to postpone all elevator and restroom building improvements. As time went on, the plan of such a building project lost support and in 1999 a special Open Forum Voters' Meeting was held to discuss this very issue. A motion was made and seconded to vote on an approval or disapproval of a \$440,000 bid. There were thirty-six registered voters and a two-thirds majority of votes were necessary for it to pass. A ballot was handed out, and of the thirty-four ballots returned twenty-one voted yes and thirteen voted no. Unfortunately, that meant only sixty-one percent said yes and the vote failed to get the necessary two-thirds majority vote. As a result, the

congregation was stuck with an architectural fee of about \$22,000 for the work done thus far on the project.

In the same January annual meeting of 1992 the matter of calling either an associate pastor or vicar was also discussed, and it was decided that once again they would call a vicar for the year of September 1, 1992 through August 31, 1993. The vicar they were assigned was Brian Hennig. In November of this same year, a letter written by Pastor Birkholtz to the members of St. Paul's was received. This letter read,

Dear Members of St. Paul's Congregation: The Lord has been good to me by enabling me to serve you the members of St. Paul's Congregation these 22 1/2 years and 40 years in the ministry. The time has come for my retirement and therefore I request that you would accept my resignation effective Jan. 1, 1993, so that you may call a new pastor. Thank you for your cooperation and consideration shown to me and my wife during our years here at St. Paul's. May the Holy Spirit soon grant a new shepherd for our congregation.¹¹

With the announcement of Pastor Birkholtz's retirement, it was necessary for St. Paul's to call another pastor. After receiving one decline letter from one pastor, in January of 1993, St. Paul's received an acceptance letter from Pastor Phillip Hoyer. Pastor Hoyer arrived in Litchfield in late April and was installed on March 7. One might think that with a new pastor the vicar program would once again be discontinued. However, it was again decided to continue with the vicar program, and so in August of 1993, Jim Fleming joined St. Paul's as their vicar, with Seminary student Ben Golisch being assigned as the new vicar for the following year.

It was after Vicar Golisch however, that the voters of St. Paul's discussed and decided to call an experienced associate pastor to replace the vicar program. The desired effect of this decision was to establish more continuity and to enable St. Paul's to expand its ministry. After three pastors returned the calls given them by St. Paul's, it was decided in April of 1996 to withdraw the original motion to call a second pastor with three to five years of experience, and a

new motion was made and seconded to call a Seminary graduate. Consequently, at call day that spring, Gregg Bitter was assigned to St. Paul's and was installed on June 30. Pastor Bitter made his home in the second parsonage purchased earlier that year located on 101 South Austin Avenue.

Pastor Bitter and Pastor Hoyer did not work together very long before the Lord led Pastor Hoyer to accept a call to Florida in 1998. Once again it came back to the council to decide what should be done next. The council suggested calling a pastor with at least ten to fifteen years of experience. After three pastors had returned the call, Pastor Curtiss Seefeldt accepted the call in 1999, and was installed on February 7. However, Pastor Seefeldt and Pastor Bitter too did not work together long before Pastor Bitter took a call. After Pastor Bitter's farewell, a survey was done to see if the congregation felt that there was a need for two pastors. After much consideration, it was decided to call another pastor. Once again, three pastors were called, and the three pastors were led by the Holy Spirit to decline the call. After this, it was brought before the council again and this time they decided to call a vicar with the intent of reevaluating the situation after one year. So in July of 2001, David Ernest was installed as the thirteenth vicar of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. After Vicar Ernest's year, the congregation felt that the vicar program was an asset to St. Paul's and therefore continued to call vicars. Joel Neumann was assigned to serve during the 2002-2003 year, and Aaron Winklemann was assigned May 2003 and is currently serving as vicar under the guidance of Pastor Seefeldt.

Despite all that was going on, and all that had happened during 1998 and 1999 concerning the narthex bathroom and elevator plan, it was still clearly evident that something needed to be done in order to make bathrooms and a fellowship hall accessible to all. During one meeting, it was suggested to look into the possibility of building some type of ground level

¹¹ St. Paul's News, December 1992, pg. 5.

fellowship hall. Therefore, in 2001 an Accessibility Planning Committee was organized for the purpose of gathering member's opinions on the accessibility issue. The questions being asked were; what should we provide to make all areas of St. Paul's accessible for the handicapped and elderly, and what areas do we need to make accessible? During the next several months the Committee members met to review options, discuss focus group's requests, and explore other ideas. In April of 2002, the voters passed a motion at the quarterly meeting to "approve building on the west side of the church for an estimated cost of \$525,000.00 and to have on hand and/or commitments for \$200,000 before construction documents are initiated."¹²

With this motion in place the committee members visited seven recently built churches in May of 2002 in order to gather ideas for the west side addition. In October, offerings from the congregation continued to be given and by God's grace St. Paul's was inching closer to their goal of \$200,000. A special voter's meeting was held on November 3rd for the purpose of deciding the course of the building project. A motion was passed to "approve the schematic plans and cost estimate analysis as presented by Miller Architects and Builders on September 29, 2002, and upon receipt of \$200,000.00 in cash and commitments the project will proceed to design development and bidding documents for preparation of building."¹³ By the end of the 2002, St. Paul's was blessed by God's grace to have approximately \$183,000 in their Building Fund.

The time, talents, and decisions from members of St. Paul's in 2002 were not only used to discuss the new building project. In fact, in October of 2002, the St. Peter's congregation of Ellsworth approached St. Paul's to consider a shared time ministry plan. During the next few months the councils of both St. Paul's and St. Peter's continued to meet on a regular basis,

¹² St. Paul's Newsletter, February 2003, pg. 14.

¹³ St. Paul's Newsletter, February 2003, pgs. 14,15.

discussing advantages and disadvantages of sharing two pastors or continuing the vicar program, program costs, duties, secretarial work, vacation time, and where the second pastor would live. At a special Open Forum/Voter's meeting held February 23, 2003, a motion was made, seconded, and passed that St. Paul's not enter into a shared ministry with St. Peter's at the time. Although no shared time ministry plan was pursued, the council members of St. Paul's and St. Peter's shook hands peaceably and departed under good terms.

Only four short months after the decision to not enter a shared time ministry with St. Peter's, St. Paul's focus once again turned to the building project. June 22, 2003 brought to the members of St. Paul's another marvelous and memorable day. It was on this day that the Building Fund Raising Committee joined the Building Committee, along with Pastor Seefeldt and Vicar Neumann, to break ground for the start of this the fourth building project of St. Paul's history. Roughly two weeks later, work was underway. At present and by God's continued grace, the new fellowship hall is scheduled to be finished and dedicated sometime during the month of January, 2004.

Throughout the many years of St. Paul's existence, the mission of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church has remained the same, that is: to proclaim Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Though changes in leadership continued to bring new challenges as each pastor, vicar, and associate got to know one another, what made for a smooth transition is the wonderful fact that one thing never changes: God's ongoing love for his dear children, through faith in Jesus Christ. Each worship service over the years has had the message of salvation for sinners through the blood of Christ. In addition to the Sunday services, the members have also been privileged to gather for Bible study and fellowship in the various organization of the congregation. In April 2004, God in his mercy will allow approximately 650 souls to celebrate 115 years of service to

him. In these 115 years the God of free and faithful grace has fed the members with his Word and Sacraments, guided them by his holy will, and cared for them in his powerful mercy. What undeserved riches He has given through Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God! How fitting it is to recount the many blessing that flow from his lavish love.

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