

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
ASCENSION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA

Senior Church History
Professor E. Friedrich

April 1980
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Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF
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ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA

By the grace of God, Ascension Ev. Lutheran Church will observe its twelfth year of service to the community of Escondido, California on April 21, 1980. From its humble beginning of conducting services in the Escondido Woman's Club, 240 S. Broadway, to its present day facilities which include a church edifice and an education/fellowship unit, Ascension Lutheran Church has grown from approximately twelve souls to over 160. Its purpose has been to serve the people of Escondido with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its truth and purity and to provide a Christian education for its children.

Ascension had its beginning in the Fall of 1967 when Mr. Harry E. Pasch and Mr. Kurt E. Rolland together with Rev. Lowell Smith of Reformation Lutheran Church in San Diego discussed the possibilities of starting a mission congregation in the Escondido area. The quickly growing 150 mile span between San Diego and Los Angeles was at this time almost void of WELS activity. The opportunity and potential for growth was astounding. Escondido, located 30 miles north of San Diego seemed a likely area to begin the continuation of WELS expansion into Southern California especially with the interest shown by residents in the area.

On April 11, 1968, a special meeting of the Executive

Board of Reformation Lutheran Church, San Diego, was held to discuss the matter of opening a branch congregation in Escondido. The Minutes of that meeting are recorded below:

Minutes of special meeting of the Executive Board of Reformation Ev. Lutheran Church, San Diego. April 11, 1968. 8:45 pm.

Reformation Ev. Lutheran Church accepted to establish a branch congregation in Escondido, to be called Reformation Ev. Lutheran, Escondido Branch, with services to be held at the Escondido Woman's Club, 240 S. Broadway in Escondido with first services at 9:00 am. Sunday April 21, 1968.

Rev. Lowell Smith will be vacancy pastor. Synodical affiliation will be with Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod.

Motion made and seconded that Kurt Rolland be appointed assistant Vice President and Harry Pasch be appointed assistant Treasurer of Reformation in care of offices in Escondido branch. Motion carried unanimously. Offices accepted by same respectively.

Reformation Ev. Lutheran of San Diego offered loan of \$75.00 to Escondido branch to be used to pay current bills and repay the same from donations received.

\$75.00 to be deposited in checking account at Security First National Bank - Escondido Branch in name of Reformation Ev. Lutheran Church, San Diego, Escondido Branch.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

(Signed) Harry E. Pasch

April 21, 1968 marked the beginning of exploratory services in Escondido. In its early stages, Rev. Lowell Smith together with Rev. Edgar Hoenecke, Rev. Paul Heyn (then chairman of the California District Mission Board), and Vicar Carl Otto alternated in serving the congregation each Sunday. The first

seven weeks showed an average attendance of 25 per service. The following was recorded in personal notes about the first few Sundays of Ascension's existence:

Sunday, April 21, 1968. First service of Reformation Ev. Lutheran Church, Escondido Branch held at 9 o'clock at Escondido Woman's Club. Total of 41 persons in attendance with donations of \$66.31. Pastor Paul Heyn of San Diego gave first sermon with guests from Escondido, Vista, Oceanside, Fallbrook, and San Diego in attendance.

Sunday, April 28, 1968. Pastor Hoenecke preached the sermon today. Had 22 in attendance. Thought low attendance may be due to time change. Guests from San Diego and Escondido.

Sunday May 5, 1968. Third service, Pastor Smith spoke. Had guests John Brenninger and Mrs. Peterson. 15 in attendance.

Sunday May 19, 1968. 4th service, Vicar Carl Otto from Alpine spoke. 16 in attendance.

Sunday, May 26, 1968. Pastor Hoenecke spoke, 31 in attendance. Had church's first baptism - Heidle Kristine Caauwe.

Sunday, June 2, 1968. Pastor Hoenecke spoke again today. Held Communion service after regular service - 33 in attendance at service - 13 communed after regular service.

On August 1, 1968, Rev. Gilbert B. Seager, the California District Missionary, became the first resident pastor of the congregation. On January 26, 1969, the mission congregation was formally organized as Ascension Ev. Lutheran Church, and two weeks later, on February 9, 1969, the church was incorporated. On March 7, 1969, a group of interested people in Oceanside, (20 miles west of Escondido), met with Pastor Seager to

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discuss the possibilities of starting a mission congregation there. After a number of inquiry classes and meetings with the California District Mission Board chairman, it was recommended to the General Mission Board that a mission be started in this community. Thus, on March 30, 1969, Palm Sunday, 27 believers from Oceanside joined the WELS by reaffirming the true Lutheran faith at Ascension Lutheran Church in Escondido. Five others of the Oceanside group were already members of Ascension at this time.

On July 30, 1969, Candidate Lyle W. Lange was ordained and installed as the first pastor of Ascension. Pastor Seager moved to Oceanside at this time to serve our new congregation there.

At the Fortieth Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod, conducted on August 6-13, 1969, Pastor I. G. Frey, President of the Arizona-California District, recommended Pastor Lyle Lange and Ascension Ev. Lutheran Church for membership in the Wisconsin Synod. The church's constitution had been examined and approved by the District Committee on Constitutions and Legislation. From this point, the congregation began looking into possible sites for permanent location.

In October of 1969, 3.73 acres of land on North Midway Drive were purchased as the site of a future church, parsonage and day school. Pastor and Mrs. Lange had been living in a rented apartment up to this time. In July of 1970, ground was broken for the new 1600 sq. ft. parsonage, and on September 20, 1970,

it was dedicated.

Since the installation of Pastor Lange, the congregation had grown to over 40 communicants. The members of Ascension were aiming at an early self-support status. Funding for the chapel building had been delayed at this time. With the parsonage built and a church building to be built in the near future, an active canvass and evangelism program was undertaken in the neighborhood of the church site.

Ascension did not have to wait long for funding for its church building. In April of 1971, funding was granted from the Church Extension Fund for the erection of a church and fellowship unit on the property. Bids were received in August and on November 7, 1971, ground was broken for the construction of the new edifice. Duane Anderson, architectural consultant to the WELS, submitted the design which was one of five GBHM chapel schemes for mission congregations. Originally, the 3,300 sq. ft. building was to cost \$97,000. However, as is usually the case, hidden costs and unforeseen problems arose which hiked the cost of construction. Mainly due to tight city regulations governing land development, the ultimate cost of the structure would be \$120,000. The final cost would have been higher yet had not the congregation done a great deal of finish work and landscaping themselves. After a lot of hard work and eager anticipation, the day finally arrived when Ascension Lutheran Church was ready to hold its first services. On June 11, 1972, at the 10:15 am. service, the door was opened, the congregation entered, the liturgical

books and sacred vessels of the church were presented and the rite of dedication was begun. In the afternoon, a special 4:00 o'clock service of thanksgiving was conducted with Rev. Lowell Smith of Reformation Lutheran Church in San Diego as guest speaker for the occasion. The congregation of Escondido numbered 61 communicate members and 90 souls at this time.

The year 1973 marked another milestone in the history of Ascension. The congregation reached self-support status, receiving no operating subsidy from synod. About this same time, a growing concern was being expressed by the members of the congregation to seriously consider the start of a Christian day school in Escondido. Various members of the congregation had for some time been transporting their children to the Christian day school at Reformation in San Diego each day which meant a round trip distance of 50 or more miles. The congregation had planned to start a day school in the Fall of 1975, but the energy crisis played a major role in starting the school a year earlier than planned. Approval was granted the congregation to open a school in the Fall of 1974 with one teacher for grades 1 - 8. During the first year, the fellowship area of the church was used as the classroom for the 21 students enrolled. The school is supported by the congregation with no tuition fee for its members.

The first teacher of the school was Miss Marcia Lindemann, a graduate of DMLC. She served the school until her resignation in 1979. The present teacher is Mr. Keith Bowe.

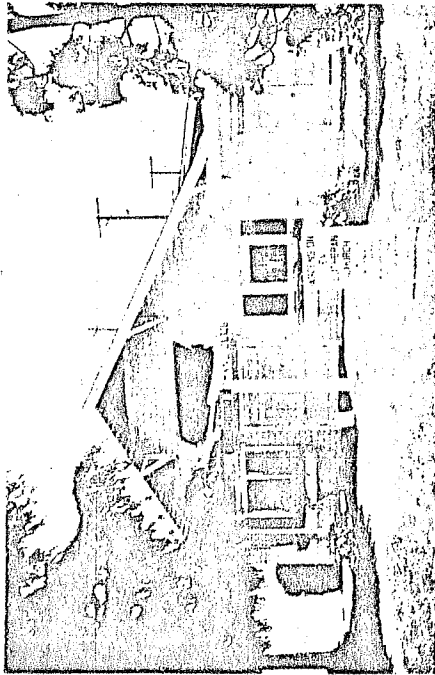
With the aid of a CEF loan, Ascension broke ground for a new school building on Sunday, July 20, 1975. The 1456 sq. ft. unit was to serve as a classroom for grades 1 - 8, Sunday School rooms, and a fellowship hall. Mr. Gerald Vanselow, the consulting architect for the WELS, submitted the plans for the new structure. On Sunday, November 6, 1975, in the 10:15 am. service the building was dedicated to the glory of God and the service of His children. Rev. Lowell Smith was the guest speaker at a special 4:00 o'clock afternoon service.

In August 1978, Pastor Lange received and accepted a call to DMLC as Professor of Religion. Pastor Samuel Kugler of Falbrook served the members of Ascension as vacancy pastor until the installation of Rev. Hugo Warnke on January 7, 1979. Pastor Warnke is the second and present pastor of the congregation.

Ascension Lutheran Church has been active in recruiting its young people for full time work in the church. To date it has sent three men who are presently students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and one woman who is presently a student at DMLC. Since 1974 the congregation has helped its ministerial students each year with a \$100.00 scholarship from the Robert Lange Memorial Fund established in memory of the infant son of Pastor Lyle Lange who died that same year.

On the attached sheet is recorded the statistical reports to the Synod for Ascension Lutheran Church. The reports for the years 1968 - 1978 show the trends of the congregation in all aspects of its existence.

PREVIOUS HOUSE OF WORSHIP

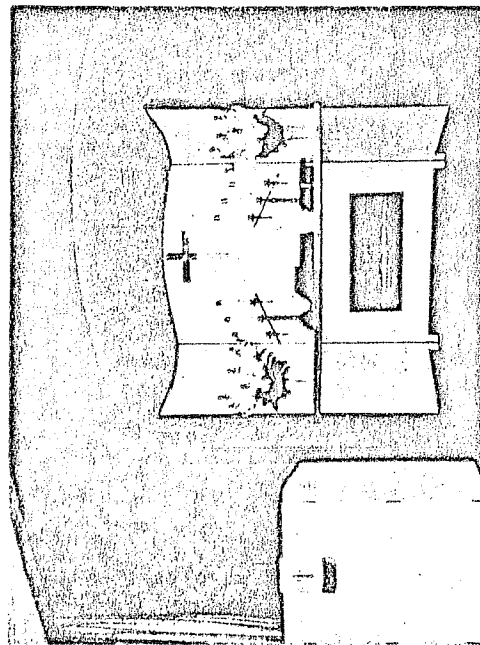


**ASCENSION EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH** Wisconsin Synod
 Worshipping at
ESCONDIDO WOMAN'S CLUB
 249 South Broadway
 Sunday School 9 a.m. Morning Worship 10 a.m.
 A Conservative, Evangelical Lutheran Church

- Preaching Christ the Savior of the World
- Confessing the Inspiration of Scripture
- Rejecting the Unbelieving Bible Criticism
- Supporting World Mission on 4 Continents

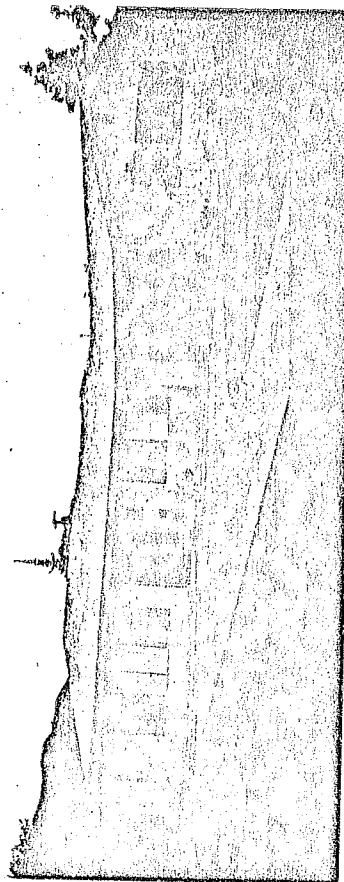
Not Affiliated with the WCC, NCC, or LCUSA
 A Cordial Welcome to All Gilbert B. Seager, Pastor 746-9753

ESCONDIDO WOMAN'S CLUB, EXTERIOR

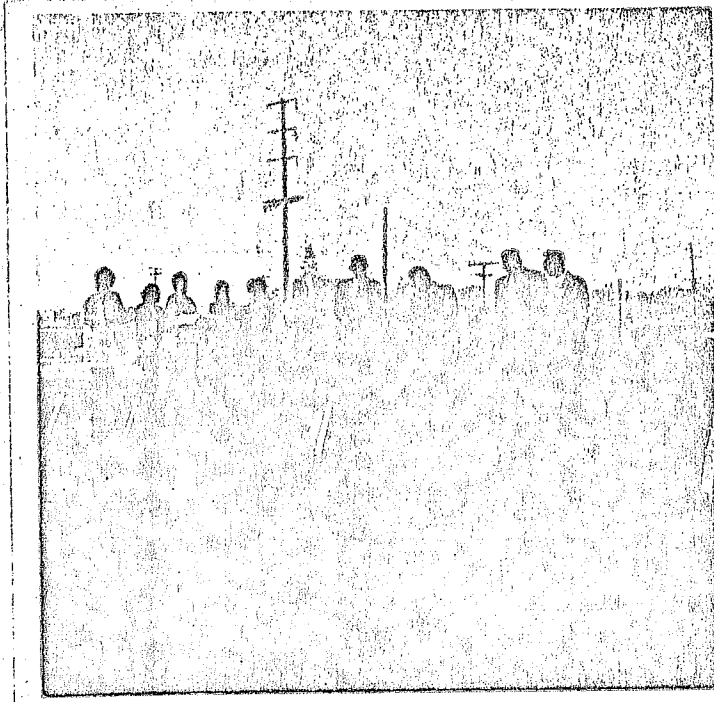


ESCONDIDO WOMAN'S CLUB, INTERIOR

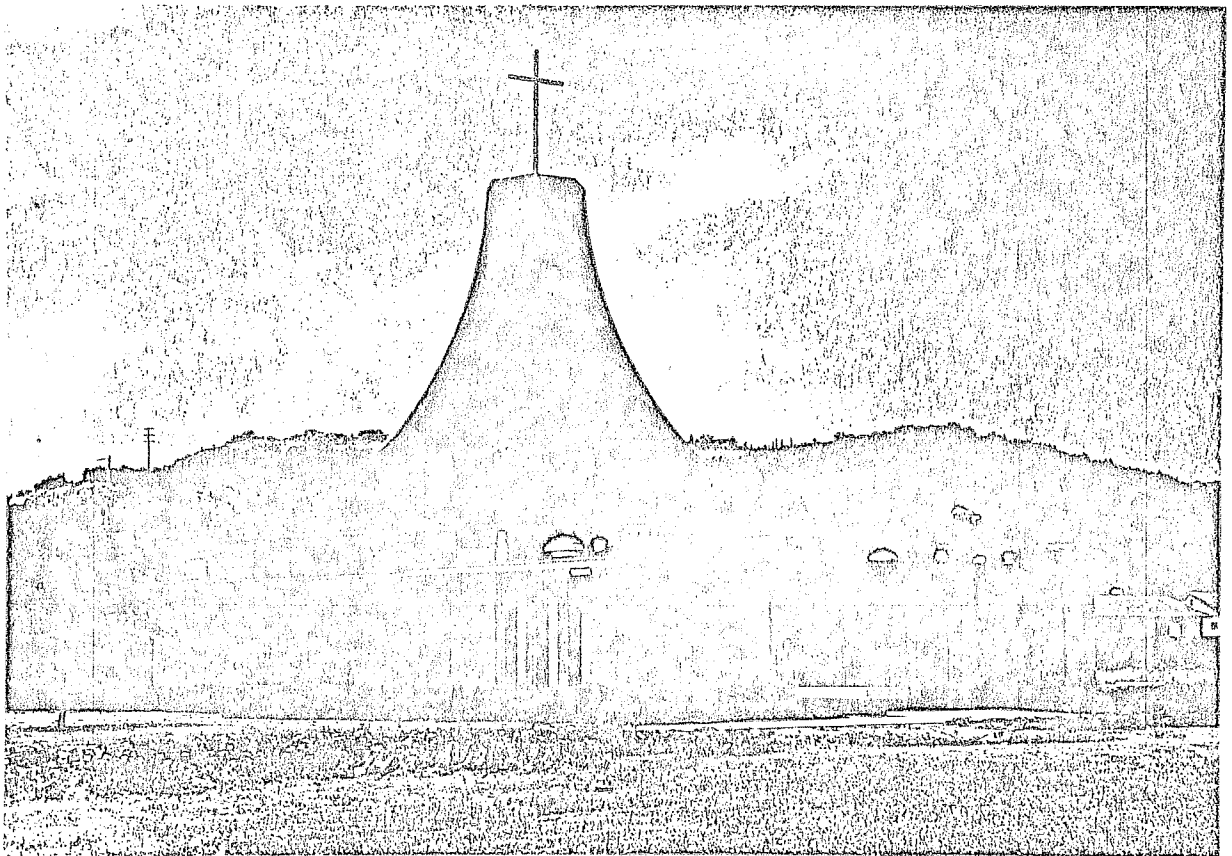
PARSONAGE



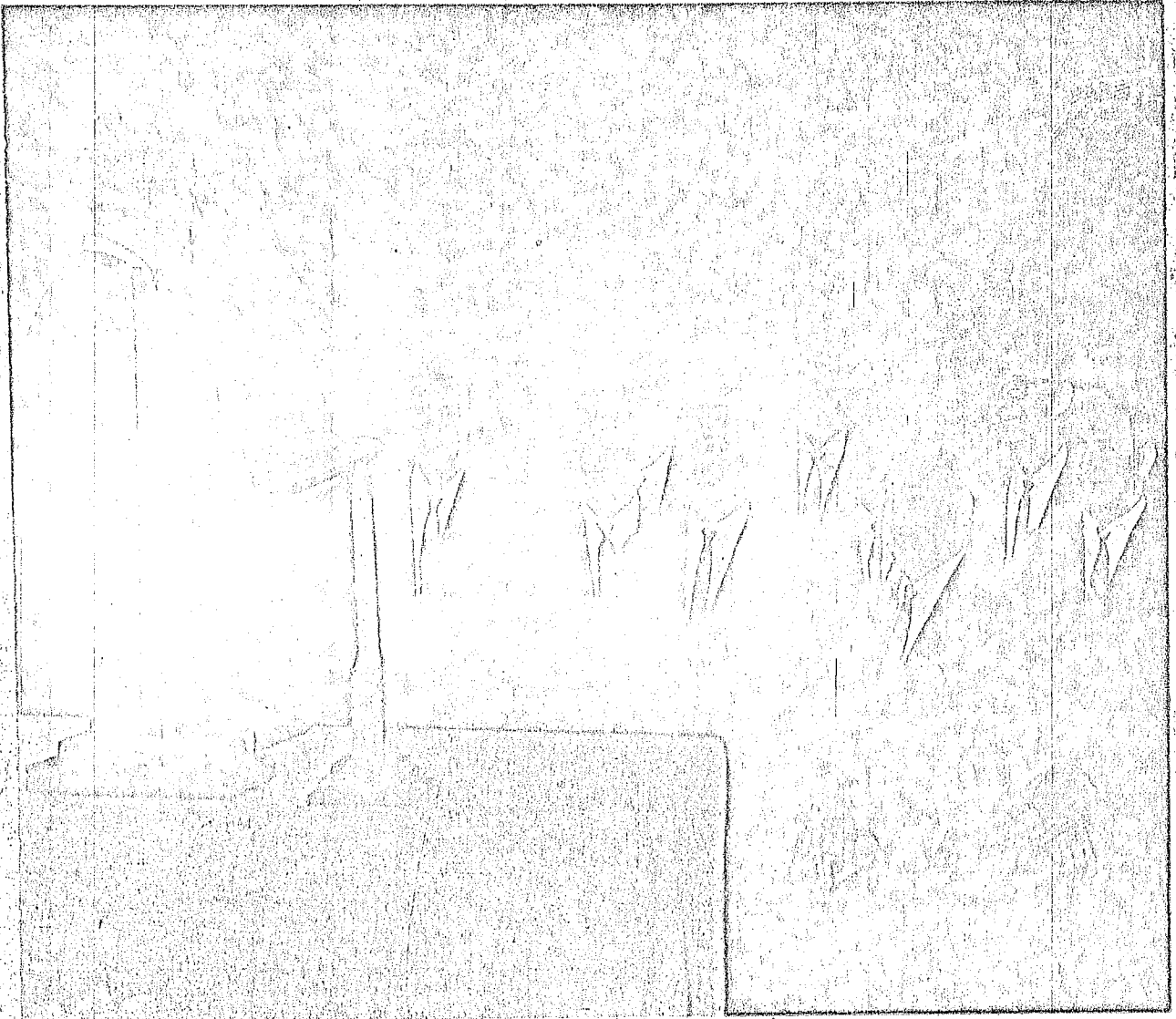
GROUNDBREAKING FOR CHURCH 11-7-71



ASCENSION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH



FIRST OFFICERS



Lutheran church names officers

New officers of the Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Escondido are (from left in front) Raymond Conrad, Willard Polzin, Raymond Jacques, Henry Paseh and Donald Rebar; (from left in back) Gaylor Scott, John Paris, Edward Lochmoeller and Kurt Rolland. Rev. Gilbert B. Seager, first resident pastor of the church, is at

the far left. The church was incorporated Feb. 9, and services are held at 10 a.m. Sunday at the Escondido Woman's Clubhouse, 240 S. Broadway. It is affiliated with Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Plans are being made to purchase a church site with three acres for church, parsonage and future school.

1968 - 1978 Statistical Reports for Ascension Ev Lutheran Church

District: Arizona - California Conference: Southern California

Year	Pastor	Members	Worshipers	Children	Adults	Men	Women	Children	Worshipers	Members
1968	Gilbert B. Seager	57	128	10	1	1	1	1	1	1
1969	Lyle W. Lange	58	131	10	1	1	1	1	1	1
1970	Lyle W. Lange	89	154	12	7	2	2	1	1	1
1971	Lyle W. Lange	79	150	16	3	1	1	1	1	1

STATISTICAL REPORT, 1968 - 1971

WISCONSIN SYNOD CONTRIBUTIONS (Dollars Only) FOR

Year	Regular	Special	Other Outside Purposes	Total
1968	5.77	42	1.24	106.22
1969	27.62	42	1.24	264.92
1970	20.52	23	.46	209.98
1971	24.10	23	.46	231.30

STATISTICAL REPORT, 1972 - 1978

WISCONSIN SYNOD CONTRIBUTIONS (Dollars Only) FOR

Year	Regular	Special	Other Outside Purposes	Total
1972	14.50	19.33	1.45	20.64
1973	2,105	21.05	1.45	227.55
1974	3,884	34.99	3.14	311.83
1975	3,900	33.05	5.47	334.53
1976	4,320	35.70	1.42	327.54
1977	5,480	41.83	8.81	368.90
1978	4,500	40.00	1,154	406.00

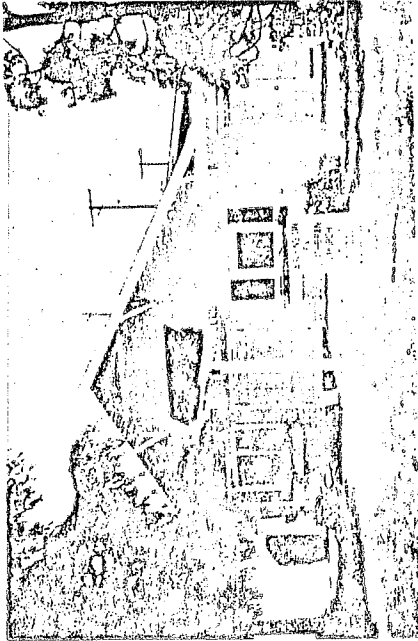
STATISTICAL REPORT, 1972 - 1978

WISCONSIN SYNOD CONTRIBUTIONS (Dollars Only) FOR

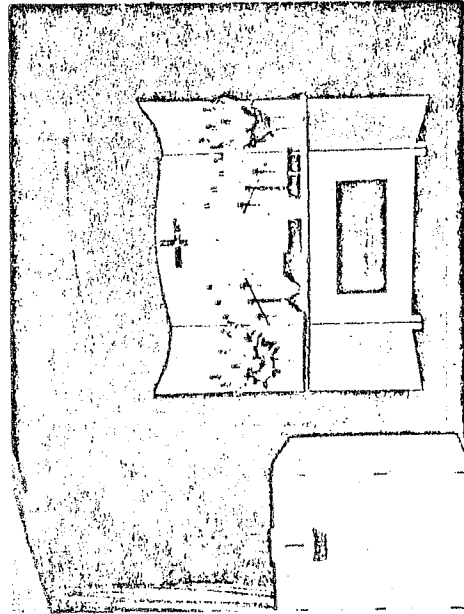
Year	Regular	Special	Other Outside Purposes	Total
1972	14,348	191.31	14.348	2,812
1973	20,650	206.50	20.650	8,026
1974	30,381	273.70	30.381	10,231
1975	34,929	296.01	34.929	10,337
1976	35,022	289.44	35.022	10,337
1977	41,372	315.82	41.372	10,337
1978	40,000	363.00	40,000	10,337

Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church

PREVIOUS HOUSE OF WORSHIP



ESCONDIDO WOMAN'S CLUB, EXTERIOR



ESCONDIDO WOMAN'S CLUB, INTERIOR

ASCENSION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH Ministry of the Word

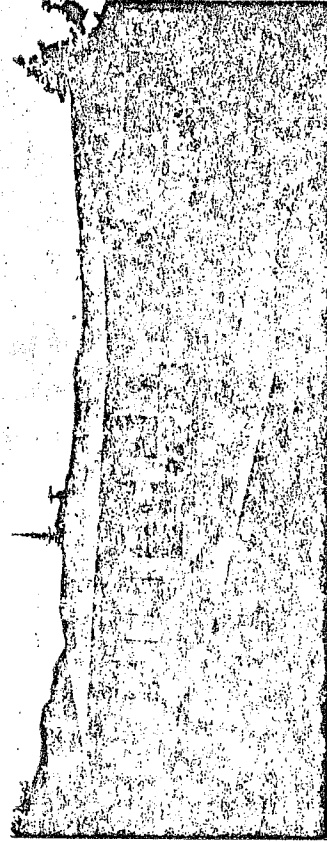
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PARSONAGE



Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church - Escondido California