

LOLA PARK EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

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A history of

LOLA PARK EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

prepared: Ed Zell
Senior Church History
4/14/80

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Housing, rental and material shortages have been annoying. Restrictions of all kinds have been baffling. Cost of labor and material have skyrocketed; and our faint hearts have often said: "This is not the time to expand. Let us wait." But we have seen proof, too, that none of these things were intended to, or can stop the urgent work of, spreading the Word. If anything, such obstacles are intended to urge us on to greater effort.

Indeed, 1980 seems hardly the time financially to expand the kingdom of our Lord. We are hard hit with material shortages and inflation. However there is proof that such things can be accomplished with the blessing of our Savior. Lola Park Ev. Lutheran Church stands as evidence. The above quotation is not a contemporary work, though it does apply to the church of all time. It is an excerpt from the Report of the Michigan District Mission Board for the Biennium of July 1, 1944 - June 30, 1946. The report goes on to record that five new stations were opened, one of them became the church of Lola Park in May of 1945.

With a world war drawing to a close, economy recovering from depression and morals breaking down after global disaster, the Michigan District struggled to expand their missions. In the fall of 1944, Reverend T. Sauer of Livonia Twp. and a group of Pastors canvassed the Lola Park area, a growing community in Redford Twp. on the western limits of Detroit. The results showed promise in the growing community and steps were taken to establish a mission.

Reverend R.W. Scheele, the missionary for the area based in Ann Arbor, was assigned to erect a chapel. Due to war time building restrictions, no new buildings could be constructed. The top half of an old

home was moved out of the city of Detroit and remodelled to serve as a chapel. The cost for establishing the chapel at 15534 Beech Road was \$7,500.00.

The next step taken to found the mission was the calling of a candidate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in March of 1945. Candidate Edward George Zell accepted the Call. Born on the 20th of September in 1920, he grew to manhood in the rural community of Mishicot, Wisconsin. He attended the synodical training schools. Graduated from Northwestern Preparatory in 1938; from Northwestern College in 1942 and received the Call to Lola Park in March of 1945.

The young man of 25 boarded the bus to travel to his new station with no prior experience and having never been outside of the state of Wisconsin. At journey's end he was greeted by Rev. Art Wacker, chairman of the Michigan District Mission Board, and given a tour of his fresh mission. In his own words Rev. Zell describes the site as "piles of clay, ditches, and not much else. I spent the night at Art Wacker's place and recall a lump in my throat when I went to bed in a stranger's home, in a strange new place."

After three weeks of preliminary work the first service was held in Lola Park and marks its new beginning on May 6, 1945. The service consisted of a dedication, installation and ordination. The Reverend E. Zell Sr. preached the first sermon and installed his son. Participants in the installation were K. Vertz, C. Frey, A. Sommer, P. Martin, T. Sauer and G. Press. The Reverend Scheele served as liturgist. Attendance for the first service numbered 147 souls, but average attendance thereafter was 38.

On May 20, 1945 a Sunday School was organized with 32 pupils. The

next year consisted of knocking of stranger's doors and pushing to organize.

March of 1946 marks the formal organization of the congregation. Original signatures to the constitution list the following as charter members: August E. Hilscher, William J. Haas, Robert Pachal, Rev. E. Zell, Gerhardt E. Hilscher, Edward J. Elsila. The latter named alone remains as an active member at the time of this writing.

The growth of the new mission proved to be slower than what was expected. Youthful exuberance gave place to the slow and steady work of the Lord. Rev. Zell writes in the church annals of those early years, "We have also undergone the 'growing pains' experienced by every new congregation, having lost souls over such matters as: Christian Burial, refusal to enter in on 'money making' projects, and even such things as concerned the color of the curtains purchased for basement windows."

At the time of this entry in 1950 the congregation had grown from 120 souls to 250 souls; from 23 communicant members to 101; from 6 voting members to 31. The growth did prove slow, but it also proved fruitful with the blessing of the King of the Kingdom. The following are some of the highlites of that growth:

Oct 1945 - Rev. Zell marries Jayne Lou Nack, Sheyboygan, Wisconsin. Their union was blessed with three children (James Edward, Mary Katherine and Edward Gregory).

Christmas 1948 - choir started under direction of Rev. Zell and continued to this day.

1955 - Lola Park becomes self-supporting and purchases land at 14750 Kinloch for the site of a new building.

May 13, 1956 - groundbreaking for new church

Sept 9, 1956 - cornerstone layed

Feb 24, 1957 - Church dedication

At 10 A.M. on February 24, 1957 Rev. E. Zell Jr. conducted a farewell service and preached the last sermon in the original building. At 11 A.M. Rev. E. Zell Sr., the first man to preach at the original mission, was the guest speaker and first man to preach in the existing building of Lola Park.

Letters of congratulations and blessings are still on file for that festive day. On the subsequent page you will find a good example of such letters, this particular one submitted by a young and promising professor.

The congregation at this point had grown to 448 souls and 78 voting members.

Christmas 1956 - mid-week Advent services begun and continued to this day.

Sept 6, 1957 - Boy Pioneers organized (Train #36)

Feb 6, 1958 - Girl pioneers organized

Sept 1958 - Day School started with Carol Alten as first teacher.

Oct 30, 1966 - First Radio Broadcast for an association of neighboring WELS churches which has run for 14 years from the pulpit of Lola Park.

MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

(EV. LUTH. JOINT SYNOD OF WISCONSIN A. O. STATES)

2128 COURT STREET

SAGINAW, MICHIGAN

THE FACULTY

Feb. 21, 1957

Lola Park Ev. Luth. Church
Redford Township, Mich.
Pastor E. Zell

Dear Members of Lola Park:

Michigan Lutheran Seminary extends to you its sincere congratulations on the occasion of the dedication of your new church and school building.

The ties that exist between the churches of the Michigan District and our Synod's preparatory school at Saginaw are close, and we cannot but experience some of the joy and gratitude that is yours on dedication day.

Sincerely,

E. C. Friedrich

E. C. Friedrich,
Faculty Secretary,
Michigan Lutheran Seminary

1967 - largest point of church growth (702 souls, 414 communicant, 139 voting members).

May 7, 1968 - Church mortgage burned

Feb 23, 1969 - Paul Seiltz installed for Jackson Mission

June 1969 - larger parsonage purchased

May 10, 1970 - 25th Anniversary

July 18, 1971 - purchase first mobile chapel in the Wisconsin Synod to serve St. Lukes; Jackson, Michigan.

June 17, 1973 - Two new classrooms added at Lola Park

May 4, 1975 - 30th anniversary and assisted in purchase of a second mobile chapel for the mission of Amazing Grace in Taylor, Michigan with a special gift.

Spring 1975 - 1st mobile chapel moved from Jackson to assist Christ Ev. Lutheran Church in Holland, Michigan.

April 10, 1977 - first son of congregation preaches first sermon

May 4, 1980 - Lola Park celebrates 35 years of grace under the guidance of a single shepherd, Rev. E. Zell.

THIRTY FIVE YEARS OF UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE. This is the single most significant factor in the history of this congregation. After 35 years in the public ministry and some 13 calls to serve Christ's kingdom abroad, Rev. E. Zell has faithfully served Lola Park from its inception. In this respect he is not unlike his own father who accepted a call as a candidate to St. Peter's in Mishicot, Wisconsin and served that congregation until his death, forty seven years later.

Such a unique feature cannot help but have an influence upon a congregation. "What kind of effect" merits our attention. For Lola Park the influence appears to have been fruitful. The role-relationship between a congregation and its Pastor is often missed in short term pastorates. A layman is not concerned only about the church and what the minister does, but also about who the minister is. A growing congregation is enthusiastic about its faith, its church, and its minister. This enthusiasm is hard to sustain when the congregation is subjected to frequent pastoral changes.

Such is the feeling of several urban Pastors in the Detroit community. A long term pastorate adds an aura of stability in an already transient community. There is a solidity to the congregation in a world of flux and change.

Another result of such a long term pastorate in Lola Park has been a firm synodical loyalty. We grant that such a loyalty could largely depend upon the individual minister, but in Lola Park their history would bear this out.

One of the earmarks of Lola Park has been their cheerful willingness to aid the kingdom of God unselfishly. The following examples provide good insight to the character of the congregation.

In 1950 Pastor Zell established a preaching station in Rosedale Gardens, a nearby suburb. Later with the assistance of Lionel Viau, a Lola Park member, they were solely responsible for the purchase and erection of what now stands as Peace Lutheran Church, with funds provided by the Wisconsin Synod.

Lola Park has long been a leader in giving to the Synod. In February 1969 they decided to extend their commitment by adopting a daughter mission over and above their generous commitment to Synod. On Feb 23, 1969 Paul Seiltz was installed at Lola Park to serve the Jackson Mission.

For 1969 \$33,803.00 were raised for home use. \$12,300.00 were given to Synod. In addition to that \$3,500.00 were donated as special offering to Synod and \$2,607.00 for other charities. Almost 1/3 of their talents and blessings were given away apart from their own home use.

The year 1970 brought even greater blessings from the Lord. \$33,043 were offered for home use. In contrast \$30,198 were given away outside of the congregation's personal consumption. Almost 1/2 - that is a good example of a congregation that has been rich in the grace of giving to Christ's kingdom. Cause for the increase is traced to the celebration of the congregation's 25th anniversary in which they purchased a mobile chapel to aid their young daughter mission in Jackson. Lola Park established the chapel in Jackson, helped to canvass the area and afterwards the chapel was moved to Holland, Michigan to assist another mission, where it still serves at this time.

While the mobile chapel served its function in Jackson it should be noted that the support given did not diminish Lola Park's continued support for the Synod as a whole. In fact Lola Park progressed to aid

another mission - Amazing Grace, Taylor, Michigan. Again this manifestation of their love for Christ was achieved over and above their generous budgeted allotment for Synod.

Continuing their mission minded efforts in 1978, they assumed the responsibility of providing rented worship facilities for a founding mission in Bedford, Michigan. This preaching station proved unfruitful and was subsequently closed.

The Lord indeed richly blessed Lola Park in the grace of giving and in addition to this has blessed the congregation with the joy of giving. A characterization of Lola Park has always been their zest for working in the kingdom and doing so with a joy-filled flair.

In May of 1967 a bulletin insert calls attention to the task of rededication. The mission-minded members of Lola Park undertake the task of finishing their church debt and freeing themselves more for work in the kingdom. Or as the bulletin stated: "To bring our constant dissipation of financial energy for bricks and wood (this building) to and end in May of 1968... Since we have always maintained that true Christian faith and fellowship brings (as Jesus said) 'life more abundantly' this including also enjoyment and even exuberance, we shall gather on the afternoon of May 21 at 1:30 P.M. for food, fun and fellowship."

The announcement goes on to discreetly inform the members, "Your Stewardship Committee reports that efforts have been made to secure a lion for our feast."

The task of working was begun, but in typical Lola Park fashion such work brought fun. Soon a letter arrived from Cairo, Egypt bearing the letter head of the "Nile Hilton." Contents of the letter reads as follows:



Soldiers draw a blank on lion hunt

By Times Reporter

THICK MISTS and even thicker bush spoiled "Operation Lion," the great lion hunt in the Chisamba area on Saturday.

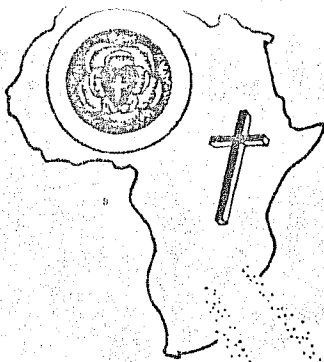
Even the staked-out fresh kills, two heifers and a calf (left), failed to produce any of the large pride of cattle-killers being hunted by game officers and nearly two hundred men of the Second Battalion, Zambia Regiment.

The mists prevented the helicopter, in which game officer Peter Morris was to ride armed with a heavy game rifle, from taking off at first light.

Later, as the soldiers marched in a mile-and-a-half long line abreast across the paddocks and bush, they found huge thorn thickets in which the lions could have stayed hidden.

Although thunderflashes and occasional shots were fired into the bigger thickets, not a single lion was tempted to break out into the open.

Six game department hunters are staying in the area to attempt ambushes near some of the killed cattle.



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH of Central Africa

3 April, 1967

The Rev. Edward Zell
14750 Kinloch Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48230

Dear Ed:

We are currently pursuing the matter of acquiring a lion suitable for roasting with great zeal. Unfortunately, however, no such edible felines have been seen in the neighborhood of our compound recently.

Rest assured, dear brothers, we shall go wider afield to help you out with your "Lion Roast." Sorry that we could not help you immediately.

Sincerely yours,

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA

E. Wendland

Superintendent

EHWendland/bw

P.S. As you can see, we have gone to great lengths to secure a lion for you. Even the local militia is co-operating fully, as you can see from the enclosed newspaper clipping.



The festive day arrived and who could believe that they were actually going to roast a lion. In the parking lot stood an erected hut with shields, as the councilmen guarded the pit with spears. The center of attention was a large concrete kettle, complete with border trim flames and a spicket rotiseiry running through its center. Was that the lion? Finally your eyes fell on the large banner strung across the hut, "L00N ROAST," and your curiosity was justified because of someone's prior grammatical ignorance. Significantly, the mortgage was burned.

Yes, Lola Park has a flair for doing such things, but have always kept the goal firmly in the sight of its members. The goal is to serve the Lord of the Kingdom, the Savior Jesus Christ and this they have faithfully done to this day. The result of this endeavor was a burning of the church mortgage and the push to work harder in the mission fields which they subsequently undertook in the following years. Not once in the history of the congregation has a "money-making" project been undertaken. The stress has always been "let us work in the Lord's vineyard" and while we work side by side "Let us enjoy the task he has given us," always remembering that "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required."

One certainly must ask, "What does the future hold for this congregation as the community slowly deteriorates?" Certainly the Holy Spirit alone knows. But Lola Park is still endeavoring under God to maintain her mission thrust and at the same time carry out her commission to preach and teach among her own.

Lola Park now stands as a second generation church and is celebrating her 35th anniversary on May 4, 1980. She has chosen the theme recorded in 1 Corinthians 3:9 in which Paul states that, "we are laborers together with God."

The main thrust of the celebration centers on a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having produced fruit in the Kingdom of Christ through the dedication of the lives of young men and women who have entered the preaching and teaching ministry. At this writing eight young women have graduated into the teaching ministry and one young man has finished his seminary training and awaits his Call in the field. Another young man is currently preparing for the ministry in his first year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

In keeping with the general theme of this paper, it should be stated that the second generation of members still find joy and laughter in doing the Savior's bidding. Following a special Communion Service on Anniversary Sunday, in which one son of the congregation will preach the sermon and another conduct the liturgy, the congregation will gather out of doors for fellowship, food and fun.

A special offering will again be raised at the Anniversary to further the work of secondary education in high schools and also for some extra mission effort.

As to the future of Lola Park, the people and the pastor of this congregation feel that if the Holy Spirit will continue his motivation in their hearts, there will always be further work that can joyously be accomplished. When asked about the future of Lola Park, Pastor Zell stated, "There is a saying that goes 'Cobbler stick to your last.' I

think that saying must apply to our church also. If we are enabled to continue preaching, teaching and practicing a clean, unencumbered Gospel of a crucified and risen Savior, we have God's threefold promise in Isaiah that His Word will not return to Him void. That promise is good enough for me and for Lola Park."

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- assorted memorabilia

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS