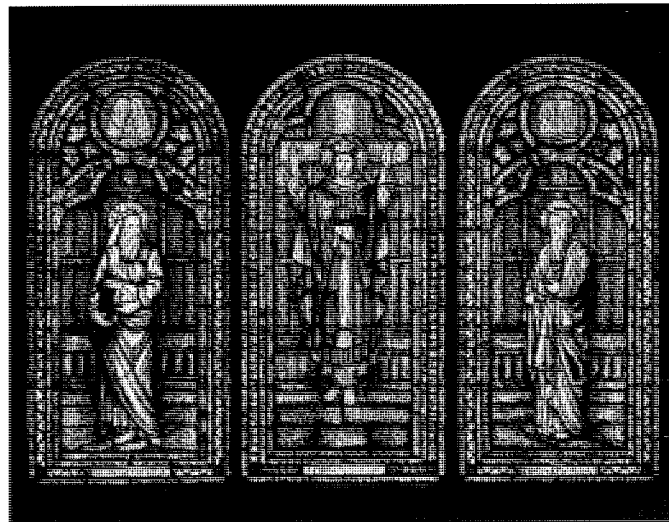


The History of the
Wisconsin
Lutheran Seminary
Chapel



**-Where the carers of souls receive care for
their souls.**

Adam Zimpelmann
Church History 3031
Professor Korthals
December 17, 2004

It can be confidently said that for WELS Lutherans, the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is a place of high importance and reverence; it's the place where young men are trained to go out and serve souls with the true gospel message. But in order to adequately serve souls with the gospel message, a pastor needs to be well fed and trained in the gospel himself. Throughout the seminarian's years of training on the Seminary campus, the Seminary chapel has served as the primary place of daily worship for the pastors in training. -One of the primary spiritual food sources to keep their souls well fed as well as a means by which young men are able to train in the preaching of the gospel. Because the purpose of the Seminary chapel embodies and carries out the very purpose of the Seminary training, - the preaching of the gospel, the seminary chapel plays a prominent role in the life of a seminarian. This paper will show the metamorphosis of the seminary chapel throughout its years on the Thiensville campus. -How it came into being. -How it grew. -How it was decorated throughout the years. -How it was remodeled. -And some of the functions of the chapel aside from daily services. The years of the chapel covered in this paper will span from the beginning of the school on the Thiensville campus to prior the current chapel renovation (Fall of 2004).

Although the seminary chapel has always been in the same location on the campus, originally the intent was to place it near the administration building. However, after further design analysis, the location of the chapel was decided upon the location where it presently stands. The reasons were these: "...the chapel has been taken out of the administration building and added to the library. By doing this, a savings of thousands of

dollars was effected, and it was made possible to use the chapel also as a lecture room for combined classes. Incidentally it adds greatly to the architectural beauty of that unit.”¹

When the architectural layout of the buildings was established, the cornerstone for the buildings was laid on July 22, 1928. On August 18th, 1929, the new Seminary on the Thiensville campus was dedicated in a service that was attended by over 4,000 people.²

When the chapel was originally finished in 1929, it was plain looking by comparison to the chapel as we now know it (Fall of 2004). The current linoleum floors were bland concrete. The windows on the east end were plain glass windows as opposed to the stained glass windows that arrived later. All of the artistic drawings and paintings found on the ceilings and walls of the chapel came a decade and a half after the original building of the structure. Also, the chapel was somewhat smaller than the current structure that exists today.

For the first twelve years, the chapel as it was originally built was sufficient for the needs of the seminarians. However, in 1941, an apparent need arose for greater seating capacity in the tiny chapel. It seems as though the seating capacity for special services wasn't quite adequate for the crowds that attended. And so during the summer recess, the south wall was pushed back to the location at which it now stands today. One essayist writes,

The usual large attendance at the opening of the new school year at our Theological seminary was not in evidence on Tuesday morning, September 9. Or did it only appear so? The seating capacity of the little chapel was greatly enlarged by removing the south wall and replacing it with folding doors. This innovation may have created the impression that there were fewer worshipers than at other times. Be that as it may, the change is a good one and

¹ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 15, No. 1, pg 3.

² The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 16, No. 16, pg 250.

certainly will encourage many more to participate in these services in the future, once the news has spread that all who wish to attend will find seating comfort.³

After the enlargement of the chapel, the next project became the decorating of its somewhat drab interior. However in 1941, the funds to beautify the chapel were not immediately ready. For this reason the “Chapel Fund” was started. The idea for the chapel fund originally started out several years prior to 1941 at which time it was known as the “Linoleum Fund” for the cafeteria. But when the “Linoleum Fund” met its goal and was able to put a linoleum floor down in the cafeteria, the “Linoleum Fund” converted into the new “Chapel Fund.” Professor Meyer says about the start of the new fund: “After the new floor had been laid in our dining hall, we began to save the money that was given us on the side for decoration the Seminary chapel. Last year we received 364.10 for this purpose, this year so far 328.25. Besides this there were some monies left over from the Linoleum fund, so that our Chapel Fund now stands at 1,041.”⁴

With the newly initiated Chapel Fund in place, the project of highest importance to those on the seminary campus was the decorating of the walls and the ceiling. Finally in 1943, two years after the Chapel Fund was initiated, enough money was saved to begin adding artistic beauty to the ceiling and the walls. Some of these painting can been seen in the addenda. Because the painting of the walls and ceiling was a rather large undertaking, it was also decided at this time to lay down the linoleum on the chapel floor. Professor Meyer writes, “The accumulated monies of several years were sufficient to have the ceiling and the walls of the chapel decorated in an appropriate churchly style.

³ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 28, No. 19, pg. 298.

⁴ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 30, No. 8, pg. 125.

While things are torn up in the chapel for the painters, the floor should also be taken care of.”⁵

Because the renovations and decorations to the chapel were being supported by the chapel fund, the decorations and renovations were added sporadically as the money became available. The next step however in the beautification of the Seminary Chapel was to add stained glass windows. By the spring of 1945, enough money was collected and during the Easter break, stained glass windows were installed. Pictures of these can be seen as well in the addenda. Professor Meyer writes on this fact: “During the short Easter recess art glass windows were installed in our chapel. They greatly add to the church-like dignity of the chapel hall.”⁶

With the installation of the stained glass windows, the next purchase from the money in the Chapel Fund was a mural of the Wartburg chapel painted in the space above the opening to the annex. This large and famous mural was donated as a gift by Mrs. Goe. F. Mayer.⁷ This painting has special sentimental significance since the entire campus was erected with the Wartburg castle in mind.

Now that the chapel had been artistically beautified, the dream of those living on campus was to now beautify the chapel musically. The chapel fund now took on the title of organ fund for the purchase of a small pipe organ. The idea of this item it seems, above all other additions to the chapel brought about the most excitement. Professor Meyer writes:

The friend of our Seminary, who wished to remain anonymous, had contributed sizeable gifts to our Organ Fund before. But by this last gift, as in one stroke, the

⁵ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 30, No. 2, pg. 347.

⁶ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 34, No. 2. pg. 102.

⁷ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 33, No. 8, pg. 125.

purchase of an appropriate organ was to be made possible. It was particularly the fine Christian spirit in which this contribution was made that cause our hearts to leap for joy and to give thanks to God. We are sure that our readers will want to join us in praising the Lord, and will therefore welcome the news of this extraordinary gift.⁸

In 1949, a pipe organ was purchased and added to the Seminary chapel. On June 1, the day before graduation, a special dedication service was held in thankfulness for the newly purchased and installed organ. Along with the organ a new altar and lectern were purchased to enhance the beauty of the chapel. In an article by Professor Meyer, he exuberantly praises God for the generous offerings of faithful Christians who contributed selflessly to the Chapel Fund throughout the years in order to beautify the chapel. – Especially for the organ. Meyer delights in the fact that the organ will not only beautify their services, but that it will also enable students to learn to become familiar with music and use it in their own ministries.

He concludes his article by marveling at the great changes that have taken place in the chapel throughout the years simply by virtue of the simple chapel fund. He says, “But look what great things were achieved in this way. Twenty years ago our Chapel was entirely bare: concrete floor, unpainted, even unwhitewashed walls, plain glass windows. Now we have tile floor, decorated walls, a beautiful mural of Wartburg, art glass windows; and now also an organ, and altar and a new lectern to match.”⁹ This was to be the final noteworthy change in the seminary chapel for over a decade.

In 1963, -the centennial celebration of the Seminary, those living on the Seminary hill felt that a chapel redecoration would be appropriate as well as needed for the

⁸ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 35, No. 7, pg. 107.

⁹ The Northwestern Lutheran. Vol. 36, No. 13, pg. 204.

centennial celebration. In the convention proceedings, it mentions that, "Bids are also being received to have the chapel redecorated for this occasion."¹⁰

The renovations that took place in 1962 to 1963 were the final touches put on the Seminary Chapel until present day. Paul Heyn writes,

In preparation for the centennial celebration, our Seminary chapel and chapel annex were redecorated during June through the use of unallocated bequest funds. The new uniformly light finish of all the woodwork and the simpler treatment of the walls give the chapel a more spacious appearance. The installation of a soundproof folding door has made the chapel annex more serviceable for use as an added classroom.

The projects listed above sum up all the major work done to the chapel throughout the years on the Thiensville Seminary Campus.

Although the chapel is no doubt cherished by all the Seminarians who have studied on this campus, perhaps the chapel was a little more significant in the lives seminarians in past years. Not only did they conduct daily services in the chapel, the "more prominent" services such as call services, graduation services and both the opening and closing services were held in the chapel as well. One pastor lamented that there was something special and more reverent when calls were read to a small group gathered in the small house of worship as opposed to the gymnasium. Conventions and other classes for pastors were held there as well.

There were also a fair number of weddings held in the small chapel. Pastor Charles Learman and Christine nee Schutze were one such couple. When asked about why the choice of the seminary chapel for their wedding, Pastor Learman explained that not only was it convenient for everyone, but that there was a sentimental draw to the chapel as well for both him and his wife to be. He had attended school for 3 years there

¹⁰ Convention Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. 36th Convention. Pg. 63

and she being the daughter of Professor Schutze had become fond of the little chapel as well.¹¹

Even though the little chapel at the seminary doesn't have any church members or a head pastor, the seminarians themselves are it's members when they attend services there, and it's pastor when they preach from it's pulpit. I believe that there is a sentimental tie to this small chapel as is evidenced by the care that has gone into this place of worship throughout the years. May God grant many more years of His gospel message faithfully preached from its pulpit!

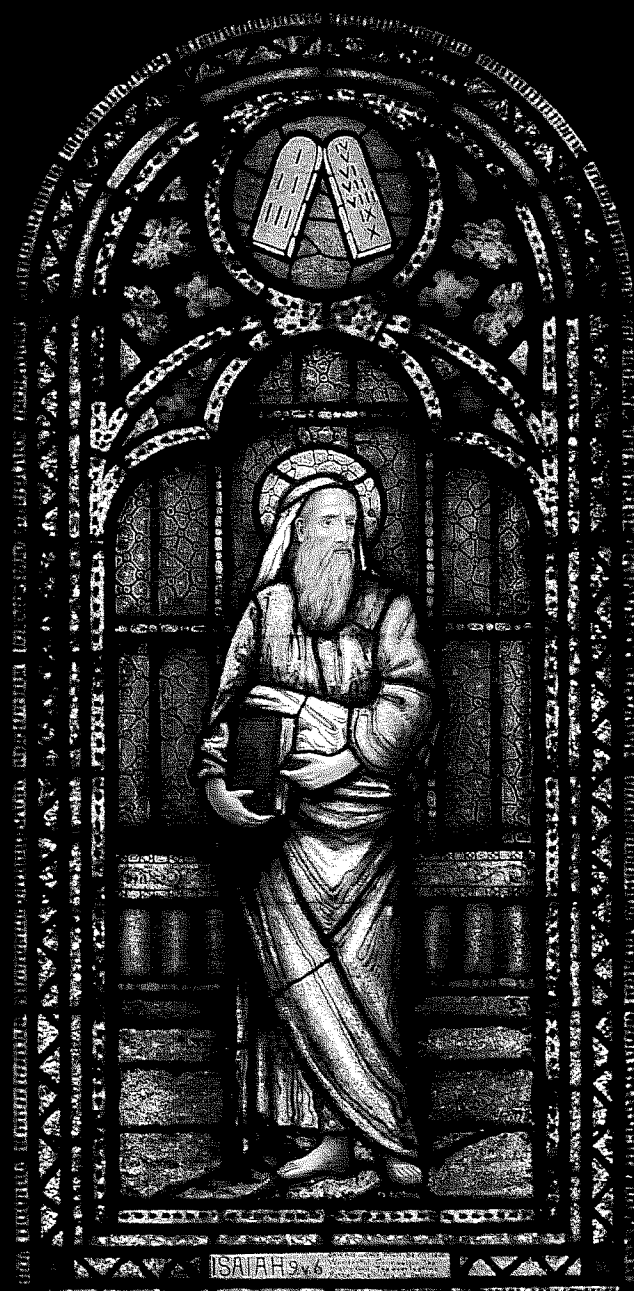
¹¹ Pastor Charles Learman of Peshtigo, WI, interviewed by author, 14 December 2004 Mequon, WI, phone call.

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Pastor Charles Learman of Peshtigo, WI, interviewed by author, 14 December 2004
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ISAIAH 63/23



ST JOHN 14/23



ROMANS 8/23

