

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
BRILLION, WISCONSIN

CHURCH HISTORY  
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Choosing a topic for my Senior Church History paper was very easy. I wanted to write on a topic which would be of interest not only for me but also for all those who would someday read this paper. There was really only one topic about which to write. That topic is Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church located in Brillion, Wisconsin. A history of Trinity - another example of how God has poured out His abundant Grace on a congregation of His children. The purpose of this paper is to tell you everything you ever wanted to know about Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church - Brillion, Wisconsin, but were afraid to ask.

#### ORGANIZATION

The first church service in Brillion was on April 16, 1882. Rev. Adolph Toepel of Reedsville conducted the service in the home of one of the future members. On May 7, 1882 sixteen men met to discuss the possibility of organizing a Lutheran congregation in Brillion. Trinity congregation was formally organized at a meeting on October 29, 1882. Because there was no church building in which to hold services, one of the organizers offered the use of a room in his house for worship services. This newly formed congregation became a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod on December 23, 1883. By the Grace of God, this small handful of Lutheran Christians has grown into a congregation of close to 1100 souls.

## SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

Throughout the history of Trinity, God has richly blessed the congregation with faithful pastors who have been faithful to in preaching God's Word in its truth and purity and have made proper use of the Sacraments. There have been eight pastors at Trinity. Rev. Adolph Toepel of St. John - St. James Lutheran Church, Reedsville served Trinity until July 11, 1886. At this time Rev. G. Albrecht of St. John's, Woodville was called to serve Trinity as well as his own congregation. On January 4, 1887 the congregation decided to call its own full-time pastor. Pastor Gustave Denninger accepted the call and remained at Trinity until October, 1893. Rev. John Radtke was installed as the next pastor in November of 1893. He served the congregatiion until July, 1900 at which time he resigned. Pastor Martin Sauer was installed as Trinity's fifth pastor in October, 1900. Pastor Sauer served Trinity for 42 years, the longest of any of the pastors. The Rev. Victor Siegler was installed on October 18, 1942. Pastor Siegler stayed until August, 1960. Up until this time services had been conducted in both German and English. In September, 1960 it was decided that, because of poor attendance, the German services would be discontinued. After Pastor Siegler left, Trinity was without a pastor for nine months. Pastor Wendland of St. John - St. James, Reedsville was the vacancy pastor. On June 18, 1961 Rev. Arden Stuebs was installed

as Trinity's seventh pastor. Pastor Stuebs, by whom I was confirmed, served until July, 1976. Once again there was a vacancy. This vacancy was served by Rev. Harlan Kuschel of Reedsville. He was assisted by Rev. Kenneth Edenhauser of St. Peter's, Collins. After a fourteen month vacancy, Pastor Terry Deters accepted the call and was installed on September 11, 1977. He is Trinity's present pastor.

During the last five years Trinity has provided Pastor Deters with some assistance. This assistance has come in the form of Seminary Seniors. The 'part-time vicar' preaches once a month and helps with the distribution of the Lord's Supper. Those who have served as 'part-time vicars' are: Adam Horneber, the late Paul Kupke, Clair Hollerup, Michael Biedenbender, and Thomas Biedenbender. It is hoped that this year, 1986, Trinity will be assigned a full-time vicar.

#### PLACE OF WORSHIP

As was noted previously, the first services were conducted at the home of one of the members. At the organizational meeting on October 29, 1882 the small group decided to build their own place of worship. On November 18, 1883 the newly built church was dedicated.

When Pastor Sauer arrived in 1900, this building of 26 feet by 42 feet was already too small. In July, 1901 the congregation voted to build a new church, which was dedicated to God on October 12, 1902. It is interesting

to note that the original building was moved to a vacant lot next to the church property. The building is still there and was remodeled into a residence. It was the home of a great uncle and aunt of mine for more than 60 years.

The church building dedicated in 1902 still serves the congregation, but with a few revisions. In 1953 the steps in front of the building were enclosed and the nave and basement were enlarged. New lights were also added. In 1971 a new side entrance was constructed. At the present time an enclosed ramp is being added for those members who are in wheel chairs or have problems with steps. Memorial funds have been used for all of these renovation projects.

#### PARSONAGE

When Pastor Denninger arrived, the first parsonage was built west of the church. This parsonage was enlarged and remodeled several times and was used by Trinity's pastors until 1961. When Pastor Stuebs accepted the call to serve Trinity, the present four bedroom parsonage was built.

#### OTHER CHURCH PROPERTIES

On March 28, 1908 the congregation decided to purchase land to be used as a church cemetery. In July of 1908 they bought land at the south end of the city limits. In 1929

they purchased more land which is now known as the 'new cemetery'.

When the need arose for a bigger school, land across the street from the church was purchased in 1922. The house at 238 W. Water Street was bought in 1938 to be used as a teacherage. Additional land for playground use was purchased in 1960.

As property adjacent to the church has become available, Trinity has not hesitated to purchase it. Therefore, there has always been adequate space available for members to park during times of worship.

#### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Throughout its history, Trinity has had a deep concern for the education of its children. The congregation has always felt that an education should be Christ-centered.

In the early years Christian education was supplied through the Sunday School and a twelve week Summer School. These classes were only for those children of confirmation age.

As more Lutherans, who had come from congregations with Christian Day Schools, moved to Brillion, there was an interest for Trinity to start its own Christian Day School. On July 6, 1913 the congregation voted to start its own school. Plans were made to start classes in September of 1914. Mr. Martin Dommer was installed as the

first teacher in August, 1914.

Until 1935, classes were conducted for the upper grades only. Because of the desire of parents to have their children receive a Christ-centered education, the school was opened for all eight grades in 1935. From 1935-1941 the lower grades were taught by graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The graduates assigned to teach were: Rev. Wilmer Vallesky, Rev. Marcus Leisener, and Rev. Hogie Bergholz. They also helped Pastor Sauer with pastoral duties.

In 1941 a second teacher was added to the staff. With an increased enrollment, the faculty numbered four teachers by 1953. When the number of students reached 154 in 1964, a fifth teacher was added. The current enrollment is 142 students. The students are instructed by six full-time teachers and one part-time remedial teacher.

In 1968 Trinity joined the Manitowoc Lutheran High School Federation. About 5 students from each class continue their Christian education at Manitowoc Lutheran High School. Throughout the years several sons and daughters of the congregation have entered the preaching and teaching ministry.

#### TRINITY LUTHERAN SCHOOL

The first classes of Trinity Lutheran School were held in an old wooden building southeast of the church. With the

increase in enrollment, it was necessary to build a new two-room school across the street from the church in 1924. One of the classrooms was used for confirmation instruction. A Dedication Service was held on November 28, 1943 for the additional two classrooms which were added. In 1961 it was again necessary to expand. A three room addition was dedicated on June 24, 1962. In 1973 the 1924 and 1943 school building was torn down to make room for another addition to the school. The new addition consisted of: four classrooms, multi-purpose gymnasium, library, and an office. God has richly blessed Christian Education at Trinity.

#### ORGANIZATIONS

Like any congregation, Trinity has many organizations in which its members may participate. Through these organizations members can share God's blessings with fellow Christians, enjoy Christian fellowship, and go about doing God's work.

#### CHOIR

The first meeting of the Trinity Lutheran Concordia Choir was held in 1903. There were 15 members present. Membership is open to all those who are high school age or older. The only requirement is that each member have a de-



sire to praise God in song. Throughout the years the choir has numbered about 40 voices. Since 1978 the choir has combined with the St. John - St. James choir of Reedsville in order to present a sacred Christmas Concert. In 1978 the choir celebrated its 75th anniversary with a special service and dinner for the present and past members.

When Mr. James Sonnemann arrived in 1978, a Junior Choir was started. This choir consists of children in grades 5 to 8. They sing for regular and special church services and also participate in the Christmas Concert.

#### LADIES AID

Under the leadership of Pastor Radtke the first meeting of the Ladies Aid was held on January 7, 1897 with 31 ladies present. It was voted that meetings be held on the first Thursday of the month at 2:00pm. This tradition still continues today. The purpose of the Ladies Aid is to serve the church in whatever way possible. Some of their service includes: serving for funerals and church dinners, singing for the Wednesday morning devotions at Chilton Village Nursing Home, annual cleaning of the church, sending donations to the various missions of the Wisconsin Synod, and purchasing such things as hymnals, altar clothes, tables, chairs, and other furnishings for use in the congregation.

## SEWING CIRCLE

The Sewing Circle was organized around 1920. Since they don't keep any formal minutes, it is difficult to determine just when they began to meet. Their custom is still to meet once a month. At their monthly gatherings they make all the Baptismal napkins and cloth napkins used for communion. At each meeting they take a free-will offering. These offerings are used to purchase items which the church might need. They recently purchased a white preaching gown for Pastor Deters.

## SCHOOL CLUB

The Trinity Lutheran School Club came into existence February 17, 1943. This club is composed mainly of those ladies in the congregation who have children in school. Their main purpose is to do whatever they can in the interest of Trinity Lutheran School. Some of the things they do include: an annual Mother-Daughter and Father-Son Banquet, a canteen for athletic events, purchasing uniforms for the basketball teams and cheerleaders, helping teachers with bulletin boards, maintaining playground equipment, purchasing library books for the school library, and providing volunteer librarians for the school library. They also set up a display of confirmation articles from which members of the congregation can order gifts.

## LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society was organized in 1976. The purpose of this group is to increase interest in and support for the various mission endeavors of the Wisconsin Synod. Articles which can be used by missionaries are purchased with donations from free-will offerings taken at each meeting. The national secretary of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society is Mrs. Betty Wolf, a member of Trinity. The national spiritual advisor is Pastor Deters.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETY

In 1961 the Young People's Society was begun to help promote Christian fellowship among Trinity's high school students. One of the male teachers is in charge of this organization. Each meeting includes a devotion, discussion on a topic chosen by the group, and an activity. During the summer months they are in a softball league composed of youth groups from area congregations. They also have paper drives and enjoy caroling to the shut-ins at Christmas time.

## LUTHERAN PIONEERS

In 1981 the Lutheran Pioneers groups were organized. These groups are for children in grades one through eight.

The members of these groups enjoy arts and crafts and other youth activities. Each year they have a campout at one of the local campgrounds. They also provide the members of Trinity with their annual chili and spaghetti dinners.

#### CONCLUSION

Gathering information for this paper really brought back memories for me. Memories of events and people which I had forgotten. I hope that this paper was as enjoyable for you to read as it was for me to write. I also hope it answers all the questions you had about Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brillion, Wisconsin but were afraid to ask. I hope that you can agree with me when I say: God has indeed richly blessed Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church - Brillion, Wisconsin.