

The History of North Trinity Ev. Luth. Church
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The topic I have chosen for my Church History paper is the history of North Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church. The church is presently located at 37th and Custer streets on Milwaukee's Northwest side as it has been for almost its whole organized life. The reason for the choice is that I am a member of this church and have been for almost 20 years. Since the church is going to be celebrating its 100th anniversary next year I figured this would be a good time to review its rich history.

On May 18, 1893, Reverend August Bendler of St. Matthew's Church and Reverend Adolph Baebenroth of Salem Church visited North Milwaukee for the purpose of arranging church services in this area. They met with a group of Christians from the area and decided to meet in an old church on Hopkins Rd, formerly known as St. Peter's. I was unable to pinpoint exactly the location of this old church. The services were conducted by Rev. Bendler, Rev. Baebenroth and students of the Theological Seminary of Wauwatosa. The church was organized on Trinity Sunday, May 28, 1893. The church was named after its location - Die Erste Evangelische Lutherische Dreieinigkeits Gemeinde zu North Milwaukee. Peter Eggert, William Schwartzburg, Herman Piepkorn, John Bergholz, Henry Eggert, Adam Kinzer, August Spuhl and John Feilbach took part in the organization meeting. Articles of incorporation were drawn up and dated May 27, 1893 making North Trinity an official church.

Shortly after its organization the congregation began to think of building its own church. William Schwartzburg and Peter Eggert secured a gift of three lots from the North Milwaukee

Investment Company as a site for the new church. These lots are where the church is presently located at 37th and Custer Streets. The church raised \$992.25 as a building fund and decided in a September meeting to go ahead with the construction. Work on the building began on October 20, 1893 and was completed by the end of the year. The interior was furnished at a cost of \$500.00.

Rev. Bendler and Rev. Baebendroth conducted the dedication on January 7, 1894. On Trinity Sunday, May 20, 1894 the congregation decided to call its own pastor after receiving a promise of financial support from the Wisconsin Synod. The congregation joined the Wisconsin Synod in June, 1894. The congregation sent a call to Rev. Otto Hoenecke of Iron Ridge. He declined the call but the congregation persisted in their efforts and called Rev. Hoenecke a second time. This time he accepted the call and was installed on August 5, 1894, by Prof. Adolph Hoenecke. The congregation celebrated its first Mission Festival on October 14, 1894. Prof. J. Gamm of Watertown and Rev. F. Graeber of Milwaukee were the guest speakers.

In the congregational meeting of March 3, 1895, a committee was organized to study the issue of building a parsonage. A week later the decision was reached to build a parsonage to be located next to the church. The building was started on April 5th and completed on July 9th at a cost of \$1,020.00.

Rev. Hoenecke started teaching school in the church in April of 1897. At the opening of school on September 1, 1897 the attendance was quite large so it was decided on September 5, 1897 to build a school provided funds could be raised. Two weeks

later \$275.00 was pledged and plans were undertaken to construct a school. The building was begun in late September and completed on November 4th, 1897 at a cost of \$300.00. A dedication service was held on November 7th in the school and the following day school began in the new building. Twenty-one children were in attendance that day. The school was built behind the church at the rear of the property.

In 1898, Rev. Hoenecke took a call to Bethel Church in Milwaukee. The congregation then called Rev. R. Jeske of Siloah to be their pastor. He was installed on July 17, 1898. In September 1900, he took a call to Minnesota. Rev. C. Auerswald of Ludington, MI was called. He was installed on November 11, 1900.

The tenth anniversary of the church dedication was celebrated on January 10, 1904. Later that year Rev. Auerswald took a call to Wrightstown, WI. After this, the congregation decided to call a pastor who would devote his time to North Trinity. They sent a call to Rev. Henry Zapf and he was installed on December 18, 1904.

The congregation decided to enlarge the balcony in 1905 to increase seating capacity. In 1906 electric lights were installed at a cost of \$70.00.

1908 presented more problems in North Trinity's search for a more permanent pastor. Rev. Zapf received a call to Monroe, MI. He decided to go but the congregation would not release him. After much discussion the congregation reconsidered and released him to Monroe. On November 8, 1908 a call was extended to Rev.

Arnold Schultz of Alma, WI. He accepted the call and was installed on December 13, 1908. Rev. Scultz proved to be a faithful leader and served the congregation until 1950. Also in 1908, a Sunday School was started and English services were conducted on the last Sunday evening of every month.

In 1910 the Ladies' Aid had the church redecorated at a cost of \$100.00. At this time cement sidewalks were laid and a combination reed and pipe organ was purchased at a cost of \$250.00.

The congregation celebrated its twentieth anniversary on May 18, 1913 and the twentieth anniversary of the dedication of the church was celebrated on the first Sunday in January, 1914. A pipe organ was donated by George Spuhl in 1917. It was dedicated on July 8, 1917, with Rev. Schultz officiating at the ceremony.

In January, 1918, the congregation decided to have English services in the morning on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. However, on the Sundays that English services were held in the morning, German services were held in the evening. It seems that English services were not well liked. On May 26, 1918, the congregation celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with two German services; one in the morning, and one in the evening.

The year 1919 presented the members of North Trinity with a special problem. While making a periodic inspection of the grounds the Trustees found that the posts supporting the church were in very bad condition. On October 5, 1919 they reported this fact to the congregation and recommended that the church be

closed to the public. The congregation took their advice and voted to have church in the school. A committee was set up to find out the cost of building a new church. They presented their findings but the congregation thought all the bids were too high so they put off a new building project. Rev. Scultz and a member were appointed to secure a bid for a basement. They made their report on April 25, 1920 and the congregation decided to go ahead and build a basement for \$16,040.00. The basement was to have a temporary roof so that it could be used for services. A motion to complete the church was again placed before the congregation on May 20, 1920 but it was defeated 32 to 29. In connection with regular Sunday morning services, Pastor Schultz laid the cornerstone on August 29, 1920. In September 1920 the congregation decided to complete the walls and roof of the church but to cover the windows and doors until such time as the church could be completed. This was decided on November 14, 1920. Services were held in the basement. The total cost of the church was \$50,806.64. Part of the money was raised by contributions and pledges and the remaining part was obtained by selling bonds, a rather rare practice in those days. The dedication of the church took place on April 17, 1921. Three services were held on that day, two in German and one in English. This building is the building presently in use.

In 1927, the constitution was revised and translated into English. In 1929 a new organ was purchased for the church and installed at the cost of \$5,661.20. In April of 1931 the congregation celebrated the tenth anniversary of the dedication

of the present building. In July of the same year a new schedule of services was put into effect. It was as follows: Sunday School every Sunday at 8:30 AM , English service every Sunday at 9:30 AM, German service on the first and third Sunday at 10:45 AM, Christmas\New Year\Easter and Pentecost both in German and English. The practice of having Sunrise service on Easter Sunday was instituted in 1932. Mid-week Advent services in English were approved by the congregation on January 2, 1933.

In December 1933 the congregation celebrated the 25th anniversary of Rev. Schultz. Also in 1933, due to the Depression, all salaries paid by the congregation were cut by 10%.

On May 4, 1936, the congregation voted to have Lenten services in English on Wednesday evening and in German on Sunday morning. Also in 1936, the practice of having the men commune first and then the women was changed to permitting men and women to commune at the same time if they desired. In December it was decided to have the Thanksgiving service in English.

January of 1937 was good in that all salaries formerly cut were again restored to pre-Depression levels. But the year also brought dissension. Many long and often bitter discussions were held whether to place a sign outside the church or not. Finally in February the congregation decided to place a sign outside the church even though some were still against the idea.

After lengthy discussions on the hymnals that were being published by the ^{Synodical Conference} (Joint Synod) the congregation decided to use them and used them in worship for the first time on October, 11, 1942.

The congregation celebrated its Golden Jubilee on May 30, 1943. They invited Prof. Otto Hoenecke, the first pastor of the church, to preach the sermon in German.

A committee was appointed in October of 1944 to examine the expansion needs of the congregation. During the next five years a building committee was engaged and bonds were sold to finance the addition of a gymnasium and bowling alleys at the rear of the church. This was completed in 1950 at a cost of \$107,093.00. To keep up with the language transition, the name of the congregation was changed with approval on January 5, 1948 to North Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Milwaukee, WI. In October of 1949 another change of services was put into effect. It was as follows: English services every Sunday at 8AM and 10:30AM, Sunday School at 9:15AM and German services twice a month at 9:15AM.

On December 4, 1950 the congregation decided to call another pastor in view of Pastor Schultz' deteriorating health. Rev. Marcus Liesner accepted the call and was installed on April 8, 1951. Renovation of the church was authorized on February 5, 1951. Rev. A. Schultz, who had served North Trinity since 1908, died on November 1, 1951. The congregation had lost a faithful leader.

The year 1952 was a ground-breaking year for North Trinity. In September a questionnaire concerning Christian education at North Trinity was circulated. In November a committee was set up to make plans for a future North Trinity school. On May 16, 1955 the congregation purchased 3 acres of land in the 6000 block of

N35th St. as a site for the new school. In January of 1957 the congregation decided to have a school in place by September of the same year. On March 4, 1957, two calls were extended to obtain teachers for the new school. The congregation was assigned a male graduate named Richard Schlavensky to be principal^a and a call was extended to a Miss Marylin Miller to teach the lower grades. (By way of update, Mr. Schlavensky is still teaching at North Trinity after 35 years.) In May of 1957, the Synod gave approval for North Trinity to open a school. On June 16, 1958, the building committee was directed to proceed with the plans for a new school. On November 3, 1958 the congregation accepted a bid of \$161,594.00 and ground-breaking was set for November 9. The school was dedicated on October 18, 1959.

Back to the year 1954. It was during this year that North Trinity called its first Vicar, a tradition that was to be in place for the most part until 1991, when North Trinity received its last full-time Vicar.

In April 1965, the congregation decided to remodel the church by adding a large meeting room and church offices to the South of the church proper. This remodeling was completed in May of 1966 and it was dedicated on May 8, 1966.

The 75th Anniversary of the church was to be celebrated in 1968. It was decided to celebrate this on the morning of May 26, 1968 with Dr. S. Backer of WLC guest speaking at all the services.

Now to the year 1972. The workload was becoming more than

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Pastor Liesner could handle due to the number of members so it was decided to call another pastor. Before this could be done, however, another parsonage would have to be acquired for the new pastor. It was decided to buy a home in the 5500 block of N 38th St. It was acquired from the Melzer family. Now the congregation could call a pastor. They sent a call to a Pastor Carl Otto of Council Bluffs, Iowa. He accepted and was installed on May 20, 1973.

In the summer of 1977 Pastor Liesner decided it was time to retire. With his announcement, North Trinity would again need an associate pastor. It was decided by the congregation to go to the assignment committee of WLS to fill their need. A graduate by the name of Thomas Fischer was secured and he was installed in August 1977.

In 1977 it was made known to the congregation that the existing organ was in need of extensive repairs costing major money. It was suggested that a new organ be purchased to replace the older, less functional one. It was installed over a period of months and dedicated in December of the same year.

A major renovation of the church was undertaken in 1978. The entire interior was redone which included replastering and repainting. Extensive decorative painting and goldleafing was added to beautify the church. New carpeting was put in and the basement was totally redone. North Trinity was proud of their beautifully redone church.

What had started as a relatively small school had outgrown its original building by 1981. Something needed to be done so it

was resolved to add on to the existing school. Three classrooms and a library were added which, so far, has been enough extra room to accommodate the present enrollment of 195.

To the year 1990. The parsonage at 5363 N 37th St. had grown unsafe to live in because of numerous burglaries. The congregation decided after much discussion to purchase a new church property on Tower Rd in Brown Deer. The old parsonage has been remodeled to include two new pastor's offices, a meeting room, a secretary's office and Sunday School classrooms.

At present, North Trinity's membership stands at 1308 souls, 975 communicants. This number has declined from present years because of the deteriorating neighborhood but outreach work is being done to get members from this neighborhood. The school enrollment is currently at 195. The two pastors are still Carl Otto and Tom Fischer who do a fine job at caring for the souls of North Trinity. Extensive plans are underway to celebrate the church's 100th Anniversary in 1993. May God continue to bless North Trinity and its members as they approach their 100th year and beyond. All glory be to our wonderful God.

I would like to thank Pastors Otto and Fischer for their input and help. I would also like to thank those who wrote the 50th and 75th Anniversary booklets which provided me with much of my information. I would especially like to thank my parents who brought me to North Trinity and encouraged me to follow in its Pastor's footsteps. May this paper serve to edify another generation of God's children.