

The First 60 years of Grace:
St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Balaton, Minnesota 1877-1937

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St. Peter's Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church
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In 1994, Lord willing, St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Balaton, Minnesota will celebrate 110 years of grace under our Lord and Savior's protecting and guiding hand. St. Peter's began as a gathering of believers on the unforgiving prairies of southwestern Minnesota. They were pioneers on the outer edges of a new frontier, in a state that was less than twenty years old. For the German Lutheran pioneers those days were easier for them than others because of the faith and trust they had in their Lord to carry them through all things, good and bad. It might be interesting and helpful to see that if we first place St. Peter's beginnings in its historical backdrop and see how the Lord provided for his Church in a new land.

Perhaps the earliest entrance of white men into what is now the state of Minnesota is recorded by the Kensington Rune Stone. It was discovered near Alexandria, Minnesota in 1898. It claims that Vikings first visited the area in 1362. Whether or not that actually happened is debatable. Perhaps more importantly in the history of Minnesota was the opening of the frontier almost 300 years later by the French explorers, Pierre Radisson and Medard Chouart, as early as 1648. These "were the first known white explorers who passed the winter with the Sioux Indians in the Mille Lacs Region" (Vexler 1). They were just the first in a wave of French explorers and traders who came at first to find a quick route to the Pacific but later came to capitalize on the rich trading, trapping, and hunting opportunities. Not far behind them were missionaries looking to convert the many Indians.

souls as well as to serve the few white settlers.

In 1700 Le Sueur, a French trader, built Fort L'Huillier at the junction of the Blue Earth and Le Sueur rivers near present day Mankato. At that time it was the furthest west outpost in the wild Indian territory. There were only a few other posts in the wild region and most of them were on the Mississippi. Rivers provided the main trade routes for the early trappers and traders. The two widest rivers, the Minnesota and the Mississippi, provided the easiest access to to get goods in and out of the state. The Mississippi provided just about the only connection to the more settled areas to the east and to the south. The land was slowly becoming French domain as French trappers, traders, and trading companies made their way into the valuable wilderness of Minnesota.

In 1671 France officially claimed the land around the Great Lakes including Minnesota at Sault Sainte Marie. Representatives of 14 Indian nations were present when Sieur de LaSalle read a proclamation urging the the claim of all the Great Lakes region for France. Daniel Greysolon was one of the first to do just that. In 1679 he entered Minnesota by way of Lake Superior. He hoped to blaze a trail to the Pacific. Obviously he was disappointed in that endeavor, but by following the rivers he penetrated to the interior of the land and claimed it for King Louis XIV of France.

The territory was destined to go through several changes of hands before becoming a state of the Union. In 1762⁷ France gave the land west of the Mississippi to Spain as payment for their support during the Seven Years War and the French and Indian War.

A year later France gave the land east of the Mississippi to England. It was signed over in the Treaty of Versailles as a concession in the French and Indian War. Twenty years later Great Britain would lose the Revolutionary War and give its recently acquired half of Minnesota to the United States. In 1800 Napoleon Bonaparte forced Spain to give back the western half of Minnesota to France. America then bought that region from France in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase. Finally in 1818 England ceded Northern Minnesota to America.

It was about then that Britain's influence in the territory really ended. Britain had never really honored the Treaty of Paris which turned over the the eastern half of Minnesota to America. They had continued to trap and trade in the Minnesota area since they controlled most of the upper Mississippi and all the trading done on it. The Indians usually supported their efforts as well. Most advancements by America as far as they were concerned only resulted in a loss of tribal lands.

In 1805, under the orders of President Thomas Jefferson, Zebulon Pike laid claim to Minnesota. In 1806 he made a treaty with the Sioux Indians for nine square miles at the mouth of the St. Croix and 100,000 acres at the junction of the Minnesota and the Mississippi Rivers. Fort Anthony, later renamed Snelling, was built on that second piece of ground in 1819.

Fort Snelling served as a base for further exploration and protection against the Sioux Indians. A small settlement would later spring up around it- the beginning of St. Paul. Stillwater however, was the first real settlement. It started in the nearby St. Croix River Valley. The acquisition of the St. Croix Valley

and other lands from the Sioux Indians in 1837 opened the way for lumbering. There was already a strong French-Canadian element in the area. Lumbering brought in new settlers from the New England states, especially Maine, also Swedes came from Maryland, Delaware, and Ohio. In 1848 a land office opened in St. Croix Falls and brought in a new wave of Germans, Swedes, and Norwegians. This influx of people gave Minnesota a big enough population to be established as a separate territory on March 3, 1849. On July 23, 1851 two treaties with the Sioux Indians, negotiated by Indian Commissioner Luke Lea and the territory Governor Alexander Ramsey, opened up most of the land in the territory west of the Mississippi for settlement. On May 11, 1858 Minnesota was admitted as the 32nd state to the Union.

It was against this backdrop that two of the first churches of the Minnesota Synod had their beginnings. There were already other Scandinavian Lutheran churches established or beginning in the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Stillwater area along with a Reformed church and one of the Albrechtsbrueder (Koehler 125). One of the first German Lutheran influences though, came in the person of the Rev. F. Wilhelm Wier. He was a former Buffalo Synod man who came to St. Paul after trouble at his last church in Martinsville, New York. He arrived in St. Paul in July of 1855 and by September 14 of the same year Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church had its first official meeting. They drew up articles of incorporation and adopted them (Golden Jubilee History 304). St. John's of Stillwater was not far behind. An entry in Wier's diary reads, "A.D. 1855, on the 19th day of August, being the

11th Sunday after Trinity, I preached the first Lutheran sermon in Washington County in the house of Albert Boese who had the best house suited for this purpose" (GJH 329). The congregation organized soon afterwards and called Wier to serve them fulltime in November of 1857.

His successor at Trinity was none other than the famous Pastor John C. F. Heyer. Both of these men were part of the original group that banded together to form the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota in the spring of 1860. The other pastors were Adam Blumer, Albrecht Brandt, William Thomson, and W. Mallison. "Father" Heyer was the first president of the Minnesota Synod from 1860-68 (Koehler 126).

Those were very stormy years both for the country and the state. In 1861 the country was split by the Civil War. Although Minnesota did not see any fighting within her borders she was the first state to supply troops for the Union Army. Over the course of the war 22,000 Minnesota men contributed to the Union cause. Then, suddenly in 1862, tragedy struck at home. The Sioux, seeing a prime opportunity with so many men gone to war, attacked the settlers on the western prairies. The uprising was sparked by a late payment of cash annuities and food promised in treaties. The supplies and payment had been diverted because of the war effort.

That was not the only factor though. There had been a history of abuses against the Indians in the past. They had depended on their hunting lands in the past to feed their families. Now those were gone. It seemed the Sioux were always being moved and usually it was to a smaller plot of land. Game was no longer

nearly as plentiful as it had been in the past. The Sioux saw recapturing their lands as a matter of survival. Another problem was the infringement of other Indian tribes who were settled in Iowa. At times those tribes made advances onto land promised to the Sioux.

So the Sioux banded together under Chief Little Crow. They began a line of massacres and also took some of the settlers hostage. Over 400 settlers were killed within a few days. Minnesota militia men and federal troops led by Col. Henry Sibley responded to the Sioux threat. Decisive battles were won on September 23 and again on the 26 when over 2,000 Sioux were surrounded and captured. At Montevideo 269 captives were released by the Sioux after their defeat. In 1863 Col. Henry Sibley pushed the hostile Indians even further away from settlers in the west. Eventually the Sioux were pushed back to the other side of the Missouri River.

After the Indians had been expelled; the southwestern area of Minnesota began to fill with settlers in earnest. Railroad tracks were laid in anticipation of the resources that specific areas held. Most of southwestern Minnesota is flat fertile prairie. A new strain of winter wheat was developed and it was quickly becoming a cash crop. To give an indication of the potential in the combination of land and wheat consider these numbers.

"The receipt of wheat in Chicago in 1885 was 19,226,000 bushels; in Duluth 14,880,000 bushels. The receipt of wheat in 1886 at Duluth was 22,425,730 bushels; at Minneapolis,

33,394,450 at Chicago, 15,982,524.... In 1869 Minnesota raised about 18,000,000 bushels of wheat; in 1886, about 50,000,000" (Vexler 104).

Wheat was the crop of choice that established Minneapolis as a milling town. Because of it Minneapolis became a bigger milling town than Chicago for many years. Flour export also established both Minneapolis and Duluth as major shipping ports. That kind of growth and earning potential brought a large influx of new settlers into Minnesota from the mid 1860's to the 1920's. For example, Duluth's population between 1880 and 1886 grew from 3,740 to 25,000 people (Vexler 104).

Minnesota wanted settlers and they began pouring in when the state and the railroad companies started advertising in Europe. Rail companies wanted to capitalize on the lines they had put down across Minnesota. They plotted out the land and offered payment plans for new settlers. At that time whole counties were often laid out by rail companies.

"The prairie counties in the western half of the state were settled after 1870, hand-in-hand with the expansion of the railroads. The tracks created a new transportation network, and rails-not waterways-were the key to a town's fortune. In southeastern Minnesota, towns subsidized the rail companies with land and cash donations. In the western prairies, on the other hand, the rail companies usually created the towns. Few "inland" towns-off the tracks-ever existed, and as many as half the towns in the region were controlled directly by the railroads or their subsidiary town-site agents. In Lyon County, [which contains Balaton] every

town was founded by a railroad. Rail dominance and cash-crop agriculture on a large scale led to the scores of small elevator towns and farm trade centers, a few major processing centers, and several transportation-dominated rail-division points" (Harvey 106).

Such advertising and methods brought quick results. Another wave of immigrants started coming to Minnesota with dreams of setting up new homes and lives in a country far away from home. Only this time the numbers were much larger than those that came during the lumber boom. Unfortunately these settlers were also far away from their home churches. Most of them came from Germany, Sweden, and Norway.

"The "immigrant century" spanned the period from around 1820 to WWI. The first great wave of immigration to America had crested on the eve of the Civil War; a second wave covered the post-Civil war period to 1890; and a third the 1890's to WWI. A peak year for immigration from heavily Lutheran lands was 1882... More Germans and Scandinavians crossed the Atlantic to America in 1882 than in any prior or subsequent year, there being a total of 250,000 Germans ...who came in that single year. ...The many catalysts which had long been at work in furthering immigration were still operative: "American letters", publicity brochures, and books, tickets or travel money sent by friends or relatives, returned immigrants, the activity of immigrant agents of states or transportation companies, and the like. ...The destination of the largest number of German and Scandinavian

immigrants of the post-Civil War period was the Upper Mississippi River Valley, the plain states of mid-America, and the Pacific Northwest" (Nelson 255-57).

All of these factors could have and probably did play a part in bringing over the group of German Lutherans who settled in and around (near) the Balaton area. A nearby German Lutheran church, Immanuel Lutheran of Tyler, attributed the move of German settlers to the area as a result of the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (GJH 335). Considering the close proximity of these two churches it is not an unreasonable guess that the Germans around Balaton may also have come to America for the same reason (GJH 335).

Most of these Germans settled on the unbroken prairie and began to establish the farms that would provide their livelihood. They loved their Lord, yet they had no church and no trained minister. But the Lord watches out for his Church. He provided for his sheep through the Minnesota Synod.

We looked very briefly at the Minnesota Synod's beginnings earlier. Since it was a new Synod it was still facing the usual problem that all new synods in America had to face at first: a reliable source of confessional pastors. They were not a large enough or old enough synod yet to build and support their own worker training school. They were at the mercy of whatever the Lord provided. And again the Lord showed his merciful and guiding hand to his church. The Minnesota Synod found a fairly reliable source of missionary pastors in the famous "Pilgermission" school near Basel, Switzerland. Chrischona, as it was also called, operated out of a medieval chapel overlooking Basel. It was one

of two schools established by Christian Friedrich Spittler; a German with a very mission minded outlook. The school concentrated on Bible study and practical courses as well as personal growth in faith.

The Rev. J.J. Hunziker finished his schooling at Chrischona in 1865. Three of his schoolmates went directly to America; whereas Hunziker's first assignment took him to India. He did not come into the states until the 1870's (Koehler 127). His first call in the states was to the prairies of Minnesota. The Minnesota Synod was aware of the many German Lutherans who were moving into the southwestern part of the state so the Synod called Hunziker to be a "Reiseprediger," an itinerant missionary or circuit rider in 1870.

Hunziker started serving two gatherings of German Lutheran families in 1870 at Flora Township [St. Matthew's] and Emmet Township [Bethany]. The city of Renville was founded in 1878 very near those two churches. Hunziker did not live near Renville but on a farm in Posen township near Cottonwood and Wood Lake. He drove his horse and buggy 30 miles to the churches on Sunday mornings. St. Matthew's organized in 1872 and Bethany followed in 1875. Hunziker continued to serve those churches until 1879 (GJH 268-72). He served in Hutchison as a vacancy pastor for a year from 1871-72. From 1871-73 he also served the preaching station the Hutchinson pastor normally served in Darwin. A small group of Lutheran also gathered around him in Posen township. Several families from Echo started coming and worshipping with the Posen township congregation. Hunziker established them as

St. Luke's Lutheran Church on June 20, 1875 (GJH 119).

In 1876 the Minnesota Synod called Hunziker to begin more extensive missionary work in the field as more people were moving into the area. They also began to pay him an annual salary of \$300.00 for this work (SPY 3). Hunziker is credited with starting eight preaching stations, one of which was near Balaton. The first service of the Minnesota Synod recorded in Lyon County was the marriage ceremony of William Loeck and Caroline Welsand in or near Balaton on March 10th, 1877 (SPY 3). It seems probable that Hunziker may have begun to hold services somewhere in or near Balaton before that, however. He had been in the vicinity for seven years by the time he performed the marriage mentioned above. It seems doubtful that he would have married two people he hardly knew.

It is from this date that the anniversary books dates his first work in Balaton at 1877. It appears to be the only firm date the author(s) had to work with. You get a strong impression that they had very few records that were pre-1885. Another piece of evidence that suggests mission work may have been carried out to some extent in that area before 1877 is recorded by the history of Christ Lutheran in Marshall:

"The county history states that the first Lutheran pastors investigated the mission opportunities in 1876 and 1877. Upon receiving their report, the Minnesota Synod called its first general missionary at its meeting in 1878 in the person of Pastor Christian Boettcher of Eitzen, Houston County, Minnesota. He became the first Lutheran pastor to reside in Marshall, and his field extended as far

west as Redfield, South Dakota" (GJH 195).

More than likely Hunziker is one of the pastors who made that report. It would have coincided exactly with the type of work he was called to do. This record tends to support an earlier date as well.

As a result of that report Pastor Boettcher was called by the Minnesota Synod to assist Rev. Hunzicker. He arrived in Marshall on December 20, 1878. Boettcher was trained at Chrischona as well, as were most of the missionaries the Minnesota Synod called. Once churches were established their full time pastors were usually trained either by Wisconsin or Missouri Synod schools. Boettcher took over the preaching station at Balaton and is credited with opening 27 preaching stations including Balaton in the following counties of Minnesota: Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Lac Qui Parle, Yellow Medicine, and Redwood; also in Moody, Lake, Brookings, Kingsbury, Hamlin, Deuel, Codington, and Grant Counties in South Dakota. He served the Balaton station from early 1879 till 1885.

What follows is a record of his report to the Minnesota Synod in 1879.

"It was on the Friday before Christmas (December 20th) 1878, when I arrived in Marshall, Lyon County. Finally, I wish to remind you that I cannot continue to live in Marshall for any length of time due to the high cost of living and rental, and that I must support my family with my meager income. Furthermore, the number of services for my family is so few, and reading services are not easily arranged,

because only a few Germans live in Marshall, and they have so little interest in the preaching of God's Word that they will not even attend services. A more suitable place to live would be in the midst of a settlement of 12 Lutheran families about 20-22 miles west of Marshall. A homestead of 80 acres is to be had there. It is not worth very much, but for a pastor, who is not a farmer and does not desire to be one, which he should not nor dare not do, it would be good enough, if it had a dwelling. However, since the people have been living there barely a year, and are so poor that they have no bread to eat, due to crop failure, therefore I have suggested to the committee of three, for the consideration of Synod, the following plan: 1. That the Synod build a home there, and lay claim to the 80 acres; or 2. That the Synod build the parsonage for the congregation, and give title to the congregation as soon as the amount invested has been repaid. In either case let it be done in the name of the Lord..." (GJH 195).

The crop failure he spoke of probably was due to the grasshopper plague of 1873-78. Knowing the length of this affliction it was no wonder the small group he lived among could ill afford to supply him with a parsonage.

His report in 1880 indicated that the Synod acted on his suggestion. They built him a house and it was being put to use not only as a home but also as a church and a school. Not only that, but children who were old enough to receive confirmation instruction went to live at his home near Minneota until they finished their instruction. They were put to work around the

house while they stayed there. Surely that must have been a lively, noisy household!

He was helped in these educational endeavors no doubt by the work of Mr. George Lahme.

"Mr. George Lahme was a homesteader of the neighborhood of Brookings, South Dakota, and a bachelor. While during the summer months Mr. Lahme would attend to his fields he preferred 'teaching' to the lonesome life of the open prairies during the winter months. Though Mr. Lahme was but a 'self made' teacher; he had the reputation of 'being a man of no mean knowledge in religion, languages, and arithmetic.' In a wagon pulled by a team of oxen, Mr. Lahme made his way to the John Goltz farm where he drilled the fundamentals into the rising generation of the later St. Peter's Church" (SPY 5).

Mr. Lahme supplied a very valuable service to the pioneers in and around Balaton. It seems likely that Pastor Boettcher met Mr. Lahme while he was serving on the Dakota end of his rounds and convinced him to use his talents at some of his preaching stations. Mr. Lahme's teaching days ended though in 1884 when he sold his oxen and started attending Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm as a student of theology. He graduated in 1887 and moved back to his homestead in Brookings. He began a church there and also started a circuit that covered 250 miles and took him three weeks to cover (SPY 5).

There is no reliable written record of the early services held by either Hunziker or Boettcher. The anniversary booklets

cite two different sources that supplied them with their information: 1. Resolutions in the early minutes of the congregation (which seem to be fairly scanty,) and 2. The memories of those who were children at the time. Services were held alternately between the railroad depot and at least four members' homes. The homes were those of Ludwig Mitzner, John Goltz, August Smerling and John Breening. The Mitzner and Goltz families lived in a cluster of German Lutheran families a few miles north of ^Aon the road between Balaton and Marshall. August Smerling's house was south of town in Murray County, while Mr. Breening lived first in town and later in a farmhouse northwest of town. Services were probably held in both of his homes.

In the fall of 1884 the people at the Balaton Station began to seriously think about organizing into a church. At the same time the Minnesota Synod took a great stride forward in the establishment of a new school in New Ulm called Dr. Martin Luther College. The first building, Old Main, was built and dedicated November 9, 1884. School began that very same fall. The school had the immediate effect on Balaton when Mr. Lahme enrolled and again in four years when their first resident pastor had just finished his training there.

Under the guidance of Pastor Boettcher a constitution was drawn up during the winter of 1884-85. It was officially signed on February 8, 1885. The "History of Lyon County" published in 1912 listed 18 men who signed the constitution. In St. Peter's Golden Anniversary booklet Pastor Bade published a list that included an additional nine men who signed. They may have been men who just did not make it to the official signing but that

seems unlikely. The minutes of a meeting held on July 9th, just a few months later sets the number of members at 20. 20 members is much more in line with the original 18 names listed by the county history. Perhaps the additional names came at a later signing. Even today some of our churches still require that you sign the constitution before you can be a voting member. Perhaps those men signed later under that pretense.⁷⁴

The first thing St. Peter's did as a congregation was buy land. Six and a half acres of that land are still owned by the church today. They bought the land with a twofold purpose in mind. Part of it they wanted to use as a cemetery and the rest was used as a field to raise grain for Pastor Boettcher's horses. 40 acres were purchased for \$300.00. The minutes of a meeting on July 9, 1885 written by Pastor Boettcher record that "Since there were 20 members in the congregation, it was decided that each should contribute \$15.00 for the purchase of the land." [It was on this evidence that I based my earlier conclusion about the number of original constitution signers.] An immediate collection yielded \$57.00 and the rest was borrowed from the Bank of Tracy. The remaining land is still used as a cemetery plot on the north edge of town.

Because of failing health Pastor Boettcher could no longer serve the congregation after 1885. None of the anniversary books record who served the congregation during the three year vacancy that followed. It is briefly mentioned that in 1886 they began renting space at the new Presbyterian church in order to hold services every third Sunday so apparently they were still being

held. The most likely candidate for conducting those services was Rev. William Scheitel who replaced Hunziker at Posen Township. Scheitel served at Marshall during the same years once Boetcher slowed down. Koehler mentions that since no men could be found at the time to replace Boettcher, that "part of the field, indeed, had to be turned over to the Missouri Synod" (195). That apparently did not happen in Balaton.

The vacancy was finally filled October 4, 1888 by the Rev. Reinhold Poethke. He was a man of a rare breed. He was one of the few men who graduated from D.M.L.C. as a pastor. In those days the four year school had a dual purpose of training teachers and pastors. It served this dual purpose until 1892 when the Minnesota Synod affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod. After that point all pastor training was carried on at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin. Rev. Poethke was one of the few pastors who were trained by D.M.L.C..

It was during Poethke's pastorate that another wave of settlers began pouring into the area. The surrounding countryside began to take on a more civilized look. Yet it doesn't seem the roads improved much. One of the women of the congregation who had babysat for him occasionally as a little girl recalled how one night he came back late from Tyler where he served two other congregations. He told her he had tipped over in his sled twice during the trip but each time managed to right the sled and continue on.

Pastor Poethke served three other congregations besides Balaton. Apparently Balaton still only had services every three weeks even though they had a full time pastor. In Marshall a

group had gathered together under the name of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pastor Poethke served this group out of Balaton until his retirement in 1900. Eight years later St. John's joined with Christ Lutheran Church of Marshall and called Pastor Poethke out of retirement to serve them. He accepted and served them another seven years (GJH 196). He also served two churches in Tyler, Immanuel and Zion Lutheran of Island Lake township. Immanuel continued to share a pastor with Balaton until 1919. Zion did the same until 1896 when they called Pastor Ewald to serve them.

Since Poethke was St. Peter's first resident pastor the congregation had to assume the responsibility of supplying a parsonage. The first year he lived on a farm a few miles out of town. The next year it is speculated they rented a house that they later purchased in the spring of 1892 in cooperation with Zion Lutheran. In December of 1898 St. Peter's bought out Zion's third of the house.

St. Peter's was still meeting in the Prebyterian church for services, but they intended to build a church someday. Action towards that end was finally taken in the annual meeting held December 5, 1899.

"It was suggested that the time is now at hand for us to build our own house of worship. In response to this suggestion the congregation appointed a committee to obtain pledges from the members for this worthy cause and to report to the congregation at a meeting called early in the year (1900). This committee is to consist of the pastor and Mr.

Carl Bollmann. The treasurer reported that there was a sum of \$42.11 in the treasury." Minutes Dec. 5, 1899.

On February 6, 1900, the congregation held a special meeting to consider the construction of its own church building. At the request of the members present, the pastor read the list of members and the amounts of their pledges. Pledges totaled \$2110. Therefore, it was resolved that the construction of the church should commence this very year. A committee was chosen to find a site for the church. The committee members are C. Bollmann, L. Luedtke, and A. Hasse." Minutes Feb. 6, 1900 (SPY 7).

At another meeting held on March 12th it was reported that a building site had been purchased. At the same meeting the dimensions of the church were agreed upon.

By the fall of 1900 the church was built. It was also equipped with a homemade altar and pulpit along with a wood stove, a reed organ, and 150 chairs. The tower was not entirely painted however, till the next spring. The church was dedicated by the new pastor, the Rev. Fehlau, soon after that work was finished.

Rev. Poethke was compelled to resign from his post because of a throat ailment in 1900. The Rev. Fehlau accepted the call to Balaton and began his pastorate in January 1901. Before that he was doing Jewish and Polish mission work in New York City and Newark, New Jersey. Fehlau led the St. Peter's and Immanuel churches for three and a half years before accepting a call into the Missouri Synod.

While Rev. Fehlau was in Balaton the next building project

began. Soon after his arrival the congregation sold the parsonage they owned. It was used afterwards for a millinery establishment and a store was built next to it. In the meantime another house was bought as a stopgap while planning went on to build a new residence for the pastor. Two lots were chosen at a meeting on June 2, 1901 and purchased soon afterwards. At a July 15th meeting the building plans were presented and approved. Construction began and the house was finished that fall. The parsonage served the congregation for 37 years before a different parsonage was purchased and the old one was sold.

After Rev. Fehlau left, the Rev. J. Paul Scherf was eventually called from Fairmont, Minnesota to be the new pastor. During the six month vacancy that came between pastors Fehlau and Scherf St. Peter's was served by the famous Professor John Meyer from D.M.L.C.. In 1918 Myer became the president of the college for two years before accepting a call in 1920 to teach at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville, Wisconsin. In 1937 he became the president of Seminary. He served in that capacity he served until 1953. He is the author of the scholarly book, Ministers of Christ, a commentary on II Corinthians.

Rev. Scherf began to serve St. Peter's and Immanuel churches in January of 1905. Two years later he also started serving a congregation in Arco. The members at Balaton got used to the sight of Pastor Scherf getting into his buggy right after church and leaving for Tyler. His sons were responsible for having the horses hitched and ready to go. Near the end of his pastorate he bought and drove a Model T instead of his buggy. In addition to

all the other duties he had, Pastor Scherf also ran a small German school for the children of the congregation. His next call took him to Roscoe, South Dakota.

There was just a short vacancy between Scherf and Pastor Manteufel. During that time Rev. Werr of Lake Benton was the vacancy pastor. Rev. Frederick Manteufel was installed in October of 1921. Neither Tyler nor Arco were affiliated with St. Peter's any longer when Manteufel was pastor. But he did start a preaching station at Buchard just a few miles west of Balaton. Pastor Manteufel began the transition from German to English at St. Peter's. In 1925 a Ladies' Aid Society was organized for the purpose of "furthering Christian education by singing, praying, Scripture reading, and other discussions for the furtherance of Christian fellowship among the ladies of the congregation, and to assist in the work of the Lord at home and abroad" (SPY 10). Pastor Manteufel retired in 1926 and moved to a farm near St. Peter, Minnesota where he lived until he died. Rev. P. W. Spaude from Lake Benton served as the vacancy pastor after Manteufel.

Rev. John E. Bade was installed on November 14, 1926 as the next pastor at Balaton. Pastor Bade was a very talented and energetic man. He must have also been very evangelical. A number of interesting things happened while he was pastor. Within 14 days pastor Bade organized a Sunday School. Previous attempts by Fehlau and Manteufel to start one had both failed. Within a year he had also organized a Walther League. It was established for further instruction of the youth in the Bible. A new small pipe organ was dedicated in 1927 on October 16th. Prof. E. R. Bliefert from D.M.L.C. spoke at the special service. Rev.

Bade's wife and also his son, Arthur, played the organ for regular worship services. Rev. Bade could play the organ as well and he began to give organ lessons. He also organized a church orchestra. His wife taught music to a few piano students as well.

Upon the request of St. Peter's congregation the Dakota Montana district released them from membership and they were transferred to the Minnesota district of the Wisconsin Synod on April 6, 1930. The Dakota Montana District had been organized in June of 1920. In that same year the church was reshingled in the spring and plans began to redecorate the inside. On June 14, 1931 the congregation held a special service of thanksgiving upon the completion of their redecoration.

The congregation observed its 50th anniversary on June 4, 1934. Three services were held with a different guest speaker at each. The speakers were Professor ^{de}Albert Schaller, Professor Carl Schweppe, and the Rev. Herman Schaff. The Golden anniversary book was compiled and printed for the occasion.

Finally the time came when Pastor Bade moved on. He accepted a call to Zeeland, North Dakota in September of 1937. He preached his farewell sermon on the 26th. By the time he left most of the services held in Balaton were in English.

That completes the history of the first 60 years at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Balaton Minnesota. God had blessed his Church on the prairie richly in those years. From its small lowly beginnings up to 1937 he blessed St. Peter's Lutheran Church with faithful, talented pastors who administered his Word with care and concern. The Holy Spirit used that Word to bless

the hearts and lives of his faithful servants beyond compare.

St. Peter's continues to be blessed today even with the failing health of their current pastor, Dale Arndt. Despite the hard times of drought in the 1980's many of the members remained. The school at this time is staffed once again by two teachers, Alan Spurgin and Mrs. Joy Owens. For several years they only had one. The Lord surely continues to shower his rich blessings on his church. To God alone be the glory! I pray that the Lord continues to hold his hand of blessing over his sheep in Balaton, Minnesota.

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