

A HISTORY OF BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
IN MENOMONEE FALLS, WISCONSIN

James Bolda
Senior Church History
Professor Frederick
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Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

The history of the Wisconsin Lutheran Mission in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin begins in 1959. In the early part of the year the Mission Board of the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod decided to begin a mission in the Village proper. Time would prove this decision to be very wise. Word had gotten around of an impending large expansion of the old village area. And indeed, the area would become ripe for harvest because of a population shift from Milwaukee to the suburbs, and especially to Menomonee Falls.

Five lots were purchased in early summer 1959. They were on Menomonee Avenue east of Pilgrim Road. Hindsight being better than foresight, it is now seen as a detriment that they did not purchase more lots than they did. Consequently Bethlehem, the name the congregation would take, is rather hemmed in. At the time the lots were purchased there were only a few homes being erected in the subdivision. However, as the area developed much more rapidly than expected, the Mission Board began the mission as soon as possible. In February 1960 students from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary canvassed the area. The canvass proved heartening. One student thought he could get along without any training for this work but found out otherwise when, at the very first house he went to, he found a lady shouting a line of expletives at him. After proper training and canvass work the canvass revealed a mission right in the old village confines was most desirable. Thus, plans for beginning the mission were laid.

Finding a place for worship was a problem for the mission at first. Finally the VFW Post on Main Street gave the mission permission to use their facilities for \$10.00 per Sunday. Pastor Herbert Kurschel of Pilgrim Ev. Lutheran Church consented to serve the mission until a resident pastor would be installed. The first service was held on March 6, 1960 with 35 in attendance. It was not the ideal

building for a church service, but it would do for the time being. A card table was used for an altar with a white table cloth for the altar cover. Hymnals from Salem Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee were used. A bread basket was used for a collection plate. Beer signs had to be covered, chairs had to be set up, and very often it had to be thoroughly aired because of the partying and drinking that had gone on the night before. Under such primitive circumstances Bethlehem Congregation began worship of their Lord. With established churches not far away, it was no doubt difficult to worship at the VFW building. Yet the members realized the large potential the area possessed and saw a bright future for their mission. At this time Sunday School was started. And on May 15, 1960 the first baptism was performed. On July 17 the Lord's Supper was celebrated for the first time

Attendance at the services varied, mostly because it was required to have the time of the church service earlier than Pastor Kurschel desired. Mr. Chester Cone Sr., an older seminary student who was energetic in his efforts, was assigned as a vicar during the summer of 1960. During this time another canvass was made. In May 1960 the Mission Board had granted \$40,000.00 for the erection of the Mission Chapel from the Synod's C.E.F. On November 10 construction began. Meanwhile, In July 1960 the District Mission Board called Pastor Daniel Habeck, Muskegon Heights, Michigan to be the first resident missionary. This call was returned. Subsequently a call was extended to Pastor Phillip Janke of Johnson, Minnesota, who accepted the call. Pastor Kurschel was to search for a parsonage for him.

As families began to transfer their membership to the mission, the need for more formal organization became apparent. To that end

a meeting was held on August 29, 1960. Temporary officers were elected until a constitution could be drawn up. At the first voters meeting ten members were present and they were to fill nine offices. Instead of the normal procedure, they voted on which office they would like. The first President would have to leave before the year was out because his job would force him to move. At a meeting on September 26, 1960 it was decided to table any further organizational efforts until the pastor-elect, Phillip Janke, was present. His arrival was delayed because of difficulty finding a parsonage to rent, which wasn't "too rich for the blood" of the congregation. The installation of Pastor Janke would take place at St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Lannon, Wisconsin, on November 13, 1960.

Pastor Janke would prove to be a very good man for the mission. He would put the church on the map. Pastor Janke helped the church right away as he, his wife, and five children would add seven members to the mission. Since most of the members were between the ages of 25 to 35 years old, Pastor Janke, who also fit that age category, would not only be the shepherd of the congregation, but he would quite naturally become good friends with many people also.

The organizational meeting of the congregation was held on November 15, 1960 at the rented parsonage. Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran Church was chosen as the name of the congregation, and the constitution was approved.

Excuvation for the new church-school building was begun on November 25, 1960 and construction started on the parsonage on January 29, 1961, at N 83 W 15250 Manhattan Drive. The cornerstone laying ceremony for the new church school building took place on March 19, 1961. Sealed into the cornerstone are the following

items: the Holy Bible; a brief history of the congregation as well as a list of the names of all members as of March 1961; a copy of the Constitution of Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran Church; a copy of the March 12 church bulletin; a copy of the latest issue of the Menomonee Falls News.

Pastor Janke, a stand-up comedian at times, was heard to remark during the construction of the church, "the hole is there, we just have to get the dirt out of it." At any rate, the building of the church and parsonage progressed quite well, especially considering that the members of the congregation, sometimes assisted by friends such as the Men's Club of St. John's Lutheran Church in Lannon, did as much of the work themselves as they could. In the history of Bethlehem, work done by members and friends would be an important factor for the congregation. It would save the congregation a great deal of money as well as establish and strengthen friendships. During the week of May 21, 1961 the new parsonage was occupied. The dedication of Bethlehem's first house of worship and the two classrooms for the Christian Day School as well as held on June 25, 1961.

The congregation was formally accepted as a member of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod at it's convention in August, 1961. The first annual Mission Festival was celebrated on September 10, 1961. The District Mission Board authorized the calling of the first teacher for Bethlehem Lutheran School in October. During November the Bethlehem Lutheran Ladies Guild held it's first meeting. Sometime in the early history of the Bethlehem Ladies Guild, a fine tradition began, which continues to this day. The Ladies Guild decided to invite the old people from Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service to Bethlehem for a meal once a year. It was decided

to make this an annual event despite the comical event which occurred the first year. It seems that a mistake was made and the Missouri Synod Old People's Home was invited instead of Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service's elderly. The Guild put the meal on for them the first year and then straightened out the details of inviting the correct people in all the following years.

The Sunday School was growing under the direction and teaching of Pastor Janke and also under one of the members who still teaches in the Sunday School to this day. The congregation was also growing in size and taking shape as the Lord continued to bless Bethlehem with strong leadership from the pastor and leaders of the congregation. The number of organizations and new ways to serve the Lord through Bethlehem were also increasing steadily. Another tradition which began and which is an important, even though simple, way of serving the Lord was the cleaning of the church by members. This too continues at Bethlehem to this day.

In view of the developments at both Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran Church and neighboring Pilgrim Ev. Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls, the church councils of these congregations met on January 14, 1962, to discuss the possibility of establishing a classroom for the upper grades to which both congregations would send their children. The Mission Board, however, did not grant the request to call an upper grades teacher at this time. In its attempt to find a teacher for the lower grades, Bethlehem was not successful in calling "from the field." On April 8, 1962 plans to open the Christian Day School, Kindergarten through fourth grade, were developing fast. The classrooms were being made ready for their first pupils in September. Interested families were contacted. On April 15, a special meeting was held to discuss Christian Education and

plans for opening the school. The first teacher for Bethlehem was Miss Judith Kirwan, a graduate of Doctor Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, who was assigned to Bethlehem.

On June 13, 1962 the first Adult Instruction class met to study the teachings of God's Word. June 24, 1962 was Anniversary Sunday, observing the first anniversary of the church dedication. During the summer of 1962 the first Vacation Bible School was held. As August rolled around, it became time for the first registration of pupils for the school, after extensive preliminary work had been done. Continuing chronologically, on November 30, 1962 the first meeting of Bible Class took place. On December 2, 1962 a Baldwin Orgasonic Organ, purchased for the church, began to be used. Men's Club organized and held their first meeting December 12.

Miss Kirwan was married December 22, 1962. She would finish the school year teaching and then resign. Mrs. Myron Sordahl accepted the call to teach at Bethlehem. That year the fifth grade was added to the school. On October 6, 1963, a schedule of two services was adopted and carried out because of increasing attendance. Rapid growth in the area was taking place. The economy was going well. Thus members of Bethlehem helped round up families to bring along to church. Pastor Janke, an evangelical-minded preacher, continued to teach and preach God's Word in it's truth and purity. The result was that God continued to bless Bethlehem congregation with growth. It is also noteworthy that fellowship in Bethlehem's early years would continue to be an important ingredient in the make-up of the church. Everyone had a hand in the church and it's work. Building was exciting. The problem was more of "where are we going to put everyone" as far as serving the Lord and the congregation were concerned. One member remarked, "Bethlehem in it's early days was

similar to a large family.

The year 1964 was a year of expansion of the school plant. Two teachers were called and both accepted the calls to replace Mrs. Sordahl. The teachers were Miss Marcia Heintz (Mrs. David Fischer) and Miss Luella Kirst. Early that year it also became evident an expansion project was necessary because of increased enrollment in both the Sunday School and the Christian Day School. Thus the members of Bethlehem resolved to enter in another building project in which they would do much of the construction work themselves. During the building project an estimated total of at least 2,000 man-hours of labor was donated by members of the congregation during the first building project. This resulted in a saving of at least \$10,000.00 in the over-all cost of the project.

In February of 1965 the congregation received permission to call it's first male principal. March 12, 1965 the first meeting of Lutheran Pioneers was held and on March 19 the first meeting of Lutheran Girl Pioneers was held. Mr. Robert Meyer accepted the call as first male principal on April 15, 1965. Mr Meyer would also take over as choir director at Bethlehem. During this time at Bethlehem many babies were being born and subsequently many babies came along to choir practice with their mothers. ^{at} ~~Sos~~at times poor Mr. Meyer had to attempt to direct the choir in between babies cries which sometimes became a choir itself.

In June 1965 the teacherage next to the church was purchased with Parsonage-Teacherage fund money. So this is where the Meyers would have their new home. School enrollment in September 1965 was up to 63. A grade a year continued to be added as the school now consisted of grades Kindegarten through sixth grade. Athletically Bethlehem was just too small to be much competition for the other schools in the area. ^{So} Thus, in basketball they joined with Pilgrim

Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls. Still they lost most of their games. Thus Mr. Meyer came up with a twist to give the children more confidence in themselves. He taught them chess quite well. At Lannon they would win a chess tournament and it would prove to be one of the few trophies Bethlehem would win for some time.

By November, 1965 the church had grown to 170 communicant members. The Mission Board was asked for permission to call a third teacher for the 1966-7 school year and this permission was granted. Miss Arleen Fiebiger, a graduate of Doctor Martin Luther College was assigned to the school. As the school continued growing in 1966, the transportation of school children was becoming more of a problem. Thus a 60 passenger school bus was purchased from Atonement Lutheran School in April of 1966. Two members drove the bus as well as the pastor. Later the pastor would also drive a van of students to Wisconsin Lutheran High School at times. The pastor's bus driving abilities became renowned as he was a rather crazy driver at times. Yet he loved children and would continue his driving as the parents no doubt said prayers for their children's safety when the pastor would drive.

In ~~May~~ May, 1967, the members of the congregation installed 420 feet of sidewalk along Menomonee Avenue in front of the church and school. A special offering for this project brought in more than enough money. Members could "sign up" for a section of sidewalk and call the section their very own. During the pastor's vacation a concrete driveway was installed with the surplus funds from this fund drive.

That year a new Wisconsin State Law regarding student transportation to private schools made the school bus unnecessary, so it was sold. Bethlehem Lutheran Teen Club held its first meeting August 23, 1967. In September the school enrollment proved to be its

largest ever at 109 students, with a full school of Kindegarten through eighth grade. On June 7, 1968, the first graduation service of an eighth grade was held at Bethlehem. The graduating class numbered 11 students. In July of 1968 Mrs. Allen Leinberger accepted the position of first "full-time" Kindegarten teacher. Previously a number of mothers had taught Kindegarten under the direction of the lower grade teacher. Now these volunteer mothers would no longer need to assist with the Kindegarten.

During the year 1968 Bethlehem Lutheran Church Resolved to become "self-supporting" by the end of the year. This meant that the monthly subsidy from the Synod would be discontinued. This is a very happy and big step for a mission congregation, but Bethlehem was ready for it. There were also plans for yet another addition to the school in the making this year also. As of June 30, 1968 the church had grown to 288 communicants; 542 baptized members; and an average attendance at Sunday services was 298. A pictorial directory of the congregation was produced that year. The synodical "Called to Serve" program was implemented. Church picnics had become annual events. The picnics during Bethlehem's early years and still at this time were usually held at David's Star Lutheran Church where the pastor would preach the sermon from a stone pulpit.

On January 1, 1969 "self-supporting" status was reached. Financial assistance from the Synod was no longer required for operating expenses. Ground breaking for the school addition took place on June 14, 1969. This would be a two-classroom addition on the north side of the original school section and it would be two stories. For the 1969-70 school year two new teachers were added to the school faculty. They were Miss Patricia Mrotek and Mrs. Marion Brand. When school opened in September the upper room of the addition was ready but the

rest of the building needed more work to bring it to completion.

During 1970 the "unified budget" system was inaugurated at the beginning of the year. Only the building fund offerings were not included as part of the budget under this system. In May the Principal, Mr. Meyer, resigned from the teaching ministry. Mr. Keith Palmbach, a DMLC graduate, was assigned to our school to become the new principal. At this time a new organ was also purchased for the church. The organ dedication concert was July 19 with the guest organist Mrs. Hildegard Fischer. That summer midweek vesper services were conducted. Mrs. Keith Palmbach also accepted the call to teach Kindergarten at Bethlehem. On September 6, 1970 a schedule of three services each Sunday began. Dedication of the new school addition was finally held October 18. Donated labor and talent by the members of the congregation made it possible to erect the two-classroom, two-story addition for about \$12,000.00, none of which needed to be borrowed. Work was also done on other portions of the building at this same time. November 15, 1970, the tenth anniversary of the congregation was observed. In preparation for this event, the church was renovated with floor tile and carpeting.

During 1971 project "E" was adopted by the Wisconsin Lutheran High School Conference as an effort to liquidate their debt. Bethlehem agreed to take part in this program, especially since more and more young people from the congregation are attending WLHS. Because of its continued growth another pictorial directory of the members was undertaken. Bethlehem continued to be blessed with much forward progress and not many setbacks. As in previous years, the on-going stewardship emphasis included an every member contact during the fall. Discussion and planning began once again for still another church and school expansion project.

In 1972 two practice teachers from DMLC spent the second quarter at the school. They were Miss Barbara Becker and Miss Kathleen Pederson. The congregation voted to go ahead with plans to expand the church and school. An architect was engaged to draw preliminary plans. During the fall of the year the matter was presented to the entire congregation for informational reasons. The matter of finance was not resolved when Pastor Janke would take a call to teach at Manitowac Lutheran High School. Much discussion about this project would take place into 1974.

Pastor Janke's leaving was accepted with both joy and sadness on the part of the congregation. Many strong friendships with Pastor Janke had developed through the years. But the people also realized Pastor Janke had many joyous years ahead of him at Manitowac Lutheran High School. The people were happy for Pastor Janke and his family and yet sad at the idea of losing a man most had come to love and respect very much. Thus Pastor Janke's leaving was a particularly sad event for many. His last sermon was particularly touching and during his farewell service that October of 1972 the school children sang at the close with Pastor Janke directing them. When the song was finished the pastor stood with his head bowed for some time. When he finally turned to the congregation the tears in his eyes were quite evident. Many would miss Pastor Janke. Yet many realized their blessings from the Lord in having Pastor Janke as their pastor as long as they did.

In the 1972-3 school year there would be more changes. Miss Mrotek accepted a call to DMLC. Mr. E. Pierre Montojo was assigned to Bethlehem upon graduating from DMLC, as well as Miss Kristine Schuetze; since the congregation had resolved to call a sixth teacher. Mrs. Palmbach also asked for a leave of absence from teaching and Mrs.

Janice Enderle accepted the call to teach Kindegarten for one year. The Christian Day School had grown to 153 pupils by this time. October 1 was the date on which the tenth anniversary of the opening of Bethlehem's school was observed in a special service of thanksgiving to God. Practice teachers were Miss Raddatz and Miss Arndt this year. Pastor Marvin Zand of Medford was issued the call to replace Pastor Janke. Pastor Zand declined the call. Vacancy pastors were Pastor Kenneth Lenz and Pastor James Berger, who were also members of Bethlehem. Pastor Berger did the preaching on Sunday and Pastor Lenz had the visitations to the sick, shut-ins, etc., as well as handling administrative duties. A call was extended to Pastor Roland Zimmermann who was pastor at churches in Bonduel and Zachow, Wisconsin. Pastor Zimmermann accepted the call to Bethlehem in January of 1973. A fund drive was taken to defray the cost of Pastor Zimmermann's move to Menomonee Falls. At the time of this drive at Bethlehem the usual comments as the fund grew were "he's as far as Oshkosh now, next week he'll be as far as Fondulac, and then West Bend, etc," and finally to Menomonee Falls." In April 1973 Mrs. E. Pierre Montojo resigns. Mr. Darwinn Schramm teaches the remainder of the school term. Miss Arleen Fiebiger resigns effective after the school year in 1973

The new teachers for the 1973-4 school year would be Mr. Ralph Koch and Mrs. Ralph Koch, and Mrs. Elzoy Conradt. Miss Schuetze would be married in 1973 to Mr. Charles Learman but would remain teaching that year. There was also a large increase of Bethlehem students at Wisconsin Lutheran High School this year. There were now 737 baptized members at Bethlehem Lutheran Congregation.

In 1974 the theme of the new building endeavor at Bethlehem was entitled "An Expansion By Faith." Pastor Zimmermann was an experienced builder of congregational facilities and his experience

would be invaluable for Bethlehem's newest and largest building project. In May the building committee was instructed to hire an architect for the new expansion. In September the voters encouraged the building committee to go ahead with the plans for the new worship addition. New teachers at Bethlehem were Mr. Gary Hahlbeck, Mrs. Gary Hahlbeck, and Mrs. Gerome Scheitel and Miss Kathryn Witzelsteiner. During the school year Miss Witzelsteiner would leave and Mrs. Allen Leinberger would return to teaching at Bethelhem. In September it was decided to use the New International Version of the Holy Bible for the Gospel and Epistle lessons. September 8, 1974 was the opening service and installation of faculty at the new Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School at David's Star Lutheran Church. This High School would, in time, slowly become the High School where Bethlehems teen-agers would predominantly attend, replacing WLHS. In 1974 C.E.S.(Christian Education Society), a new organization at Bethlehem is first mentioned. Two other organizations for which I do not know the time of formation, but which need mentioning as organizations which, with the others, serve the needs of the congregation, are the Buckaroos and Sunbeams. These two organizations provide an organized program and sense of belonging for younger boys and girls along with the Pioneers and Girl Pioneers at Bethlehem.

June 8, 1975 was the groundbreaking ceremony of the new church. On Christmas Eve, with the church far from being completed, the congregation held a song service in the new church. Meanwhile, another canvass is held close to Menomonee Falls in the village of Germantown. This was becoming the newest and fastest growing area around Milwaukee. But no new mission is started in the area and so Bethlehem, being the closest church in the Wisconsin Synod,

continues to absorb the responsibility and privilege of serving many people in God's Kingdom from Germantown who desire membership in the Wisconsin Synod. The new teachers at Bethlehem this year are Mr. Michael Haase, assigned from DMLC, and Miss Nancy Nichol who would be married that summer and assume the name Mrs. Ebeling. This year the voters also voted upon and adopted a new constitution. It was also decided to have three years of confirmation class instruction from sixth through eighth grade.

In 1976 the new teachers are conspicuously absent. For the first time in the history of Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran School, this the fifteenth year, the same teaching staff returns to serve. On May 16, 1976 the Dedication of the new church takes place. Thus, 1976 was a stable and important year for Bethlehem. Their newest and largest worship facilities were completed and the same teaching staff was intact from the year before. In 1976 we have first mention of two other sports-minded organizations of Bethlehem. The Dartball team is mentioned as the champions and there is mention of an organizational meeting of a softball team. Sometime in the history of Bethlehem a woman's softball team would also form and also a men's basketball team. Such organizations, though seemingly irrelevant, are relevant as they help develop friendships and encourage good Christian fellowship within and between congregations. In a growing and large church, such fellowship is important whenever it can be made. The members of Bethlehem realized this and so supported such activities and organizations whenever possible.

In 1977 the number of souls at Bethlehem is now 885. With the increase, the work is becoming harder for one Pastor alone. In time thought would be given to a vicar program at Bethlehem. But for now such a program is not adopted by the congregation. Another pictorial directory is undertaken this year. One new teacher is called. Mrs.

Rita Bartsch, the wife of a first year Seminary student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, replaces Mrs. Ebeling. As Bethlehem grows in number it also grows in support of other organizations in God's Kingdom outside Bethlehem. Besides supporting Synod it also supports other organizations and activities in Synod such as Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service Guild, Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, Wisconsin Lutheran Adult Band and the Lutheran Chorale, the Institutional Ministry, the Milwaukee Federation, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Wisconsin Lutheran Synod Singles, WEIS International Youth Rally, Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, and Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

1978 brings some new organizational elements into the school. The principal, Mr. Palmbach, is called and given responsibility as Minister of Education. Miss Jeanne Moldenhauer is called as a teacher and as Coordinator of Primary Education. A Pre-Kindegarten class is also organized to aid parents in early instruction in God's Word with Mrs. Leinberger as teacher. Such changes were made to help serve the people in God's Kingdom at Bethlehem more efficiently since the number of souls at Bethlehem has now arisen to 926. Another sports organization is begun in the formation of couples Volleyball.

In 1979 Mrs. Rita Bartsch submits her resignation. Her husband, Mr. Mark Bartsch, accepts a call to be summer vicar at Bethlehem. Mr. Bartsch did canvassing work and assisted the pastor, at times, with other congregational work. Bethlehem now has 950 souls and 133 enrolled in the Christian Day School. In June 1979 three young ladies from Bethlehem graduate from DMLC in New Ulm and take calls into the teaching ministry. They are Carol Buelow, Barb Laubenstein, and Kathryn Zimmermann. Others with connections to Bethlehem who were, or still are, in the teaching ministry are Barb, Steve, and Richard

Janke and Diane Page. Miss Emily Footh accepted the call to replace Mrs. Bartsch for the coming school year. That summer Mr. Gary Hahlbeck would resign from the teaching ministry. In August Mr. James Zander accepted the call to replace Mr. Hahlbeck. In October, another vicar was called to assist Pastor Zimmermann and to do evangelism work for the congregation. Mr. Ken Paasch, a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, accepted the part-time call. On November 11, 1979 a special service is held to honor the 25 years in the teaching ministry of Mr. Floyd Schwecke. The service which was held at Bethlehem honored him for this God-blessed ministry. Mr. Schwecke also is a member of Bethlehem while he teaches at Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

In 1980, for only it's second time, the same teaching staff returned to serve at Bethlehem Lutheran School. Bethlehem called it's first full-time vicar in May 1980 and he arrived in August 1980. He was Mr. James Bolda. He assisted in congregational work during his training and also was responsible for canvassing and evangelism work. During this year the number of souls reached 1000 at Bethlehem as many membership transfers from congregations in Synod continued to come in. The school enrollment went down during this year to 123 students. In January 1981 Miss Footh submits her resignation effective at the end of the school year. During Spring a Stewardship program entitled "Knowing and Growing" was implemented. This every-member visit program was very unique in that it had nothing to do with money. It was an informational program designed to inform people of periodicals, bible classes at Bethlehem, serving at Bethlehem, devotional information, and information on the Means of Grace as well as information on education at Bethlehem, and growing in such things. In April 1981 Mr. Haase accepts a call. After some confusion and some problems it was finally decided to replace Mr.

Haase with another middle grades teacher. Mrs. Myrtle Gauger accepted the call to teach at Bethlehem in the lower grades while Miss Sherry Trappen accepted a one year call to replace Mr. Haase.

In 1981 sad news came from Manitowac, Wisconsin, where Pastor Janke, the former pastor at Bethlehem, taught at the Lutheran High School in Manitowac. Pastor Janke had passed away. A number of former parishioners and good friends attended Pastor Janke's funeral. Pastor Janke would remain in the memories of many people at Bethlehem for his important role in the history at Bethlehem.

In May 1981 Mr. Paul Kupke was assigned to Bethlehem as the new full-time vicar. He would begin his vicarship in early September. In May yet another pictorial directory was approved by the congregation and would be undertaken in the fall of the year. The congregation was an established congregation and also had become a large one. For the first time in its history the congregation did not increase in membership. Evangelism was stressed more than ever but it seems the economy had stunted the growth of the area for the time being.

In June 1981 Bethlehem held special anniversary services celebrating 25 years of marriage for Pastor and Mrs. Zimmermann and at the same time celebrating Pastor Zimmermann's 25 years in the Holy Ministry. Pastor Zimmermann, known as a builder, was instrumental in building the present worship facilities at Bethlehem. Under Pastor Zimmermann the Lord had continued to bless Bethlehem. As with any large church, fellowship was not as close as in previous years when Bethlehem was still small. People also have a tendency to become less involved in things in a large church also. It seems that building is exciting but maintenance is not. Nonetheless, even though there may have been a decline in interest in some of the organizations and work projects, there continues to be improved church and communion attendance.

This is the history of Bethlehem Lutheran Church of the Wisconsin Synod in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, to the best of my knowledge, up to January 1982. Looking ahead Bethlehem seems headed for more changes as already in the early part of this year Mr. Keith Palmbach, the principal and Minister of Education, will resign effective at the end of the school year. The church is also considering future possibilities such as calling an assistant pastor and such as helping to start a new mission in the village of Germantown. Though such things may not be practical for now, in time the Lord may bless Bethlehem in such a way that such long-range goals may come about.

As we look at the history of Bethlehem it becomes plainly evident that the Lord has blessed the congregation abundantly. The Word of God has continued to be taught and preached in its truth and purity. The Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified for all mankind has been the center and heart of the message from the pulpits and from the front of the classrooms for all 22 years. The rapid growth of Bethlehem is evidence of great blessings from the Lord, and of a wise decision by the Mission Board of the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod back in 1959, when they decided to begin a mission in Menomonee Falls. Truly, examining the history of Bethlehem shows our labor is not in vain, and we realize how true it is, that the gospel is a living and life-giving force.

Bibliography:

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