

God's Grace Through It All

A History of St. Andrew Lutheran Church -- the
Obstacles, the Challenges and the Blessings

Lutheranism In America

Professor John Brenner

May 9, 1996

David Waterstradt

**The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him,
“We have found the Messiah.”**

Not much is known about the Apostle Andrew. Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide only bits of information -- he was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, he was a fisherman, and he was Simon Peter's brother -- all interesting facts, but they don't tell us very much about this man's personality. St. John is the only Gospel writer who gives us a little more insight into the true character of this Apostle. There Andrew is mentioned on three separate occasions and each time we see him bringing someone to Jesus. From the time when he was first led to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, Andrew was a man who knew that simply being with Jesus wasn't enough. Having Christ was something to share. So it was only natural for Andrew, after meeting Jesus for the first time, to race home to tell his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah." It was that same kind of missionary zeal which led to the formation and establishment of a congregation in southern Sacramento named after this little known Apostle.

A Congregation Forms¹

Sometime during the last weeks of the summer of 1974, District Mission Developer Hugo Warnke sat down and typed out his report to the Arizona-California District Mission Board describing the factors which led him to and his work in the southern part of California's capital -- Sacramento.

For a year your California Mission Developer, Hugo M. Warnke, worked in Las Vegas to help establish our first and only church in the State of Nevada -- a thriving little group in this playground of Satan and his evil angels.

Then the missionary moved to Marin County (north of San Francisco) last July 1 on a sort of trial basis. And, unfortunately, it turned out to be no more than just a trial.

¹ The majority of this paper is based on four interviews conducted with Pastors Robert Hochmuth and Marc VonDeylen. Where the pastors are quoted directly this will be noted.

Vacation Bible School was a success with about 40 in attendance, but a worship location change robbed us of any Sunday School increase from this source. The original nucleus was faithful but very few outsiders joined their ranks. In the judgment of your District Missionary this area did not seem to warrant a \$200,000 investment for land and a modest chapel at this time.

The next move was to South Sacramento after January 1, 1974. Two ex-Missouri Synod families, one Wisconsin Synod member family from St. Mark's and one Wisconsin Synod family that needed recycling, formed the seed of this new plant in the Garden of God. Not a very auspicious start, but like Gideon's experience of old, this tiny group won a great victory against the Evil One.

Interest in St. Andrew Lutheran began with explosive force. Several ex-Missouri families, several of whom hadn't attended worship for some time, because they couldn't tolerate the intrusion of false doctrine, came to visit us. After a few sessions of orientation and review some of these decided to lock arms with us.

There is more excitement, enthusiasm and competent leadership among the members here than in any other place that your District Missionary has been privileged to serve. Attendance averaged 60 for the last two months with a high last Sunday of 76; four children are in confirmation class; six adults are receiving instruction, Bible Class attendance is 18-20.

A site selection committee is hard at work and has narrowed choices to about three locations. Manpower and a site acquisition loan has been requested.

St. Mark's of Citrus Heights, our sister congregation to the northeast, has been most helpful and cooperative. Several families were transferred to aid in the initial stages of congregational existence; a few more communicants from there living in our area attend regularly.²

South Sacramento was a premier location for exploratory outreach. The Mission Board felt that a congregation in that area would open the window to some huge opportunities for outreach to people who were without the message of the Gospel and up to this point beyond the reach of any WELS mission efforts. Since Sacramento was growing rapidly, especially in the southern suburbs, and the homes being built there were, for the most part, modest single-family houses appealing to young, middle-class families who were quickly moving into the area, and since the nearest congregation was St. Mark's 25 miles to the northeast, the need for outreach in South Sacramento had become more

² Report from District Mission Developer Hugo Warnke addressed to Arizona-California District Mission Board August, 1974

and more apparent and the decision was made to send District Mission Developer Hugo Warnke to begin exploratory efforts there.

Most mission congregations begin rather slowly -- in some cases there may not even be a nucleus of members in the area. Often pastors put in countless hours canvassing neighborhoods, knocking on doors, making evangelism visits, conducting Vacation Bible Schools, and adult instruction courses before they're blessed with a group large enough for regular worship services. But that wasn't the case with St. Andrew. The Lord blessed St. Andrew with a very quick start and a small nucleus became a small congregation in a matter of a few months.

In the first few weeks of January, 1974, Pastor Hugo Warnke started services in South Sacramento. As Pastor Warnke mentioned in his report, he began with a group of



Our Savior Lutheran Church (LCMS)

four families, but just about the time he was getting started in South Sacramento, several families in a nearby Missouri Synod congregation had sadly reached the decision to leave their church because of a steady doctrinal decline on the part of that congregation's spiritual leaders. The truth and purity of Scripture had come under attack by the pastors there who subscribed to the error of the higher critics. About a dozen families at that church -- Our Savior Lutheran, also in South Sacramento -- recognized these problems and were very disturbed to see this happen in their own congregation. Although their decision to break away from the Missouri Synod was a very difficult one, it was one they felt they had to make and they left.

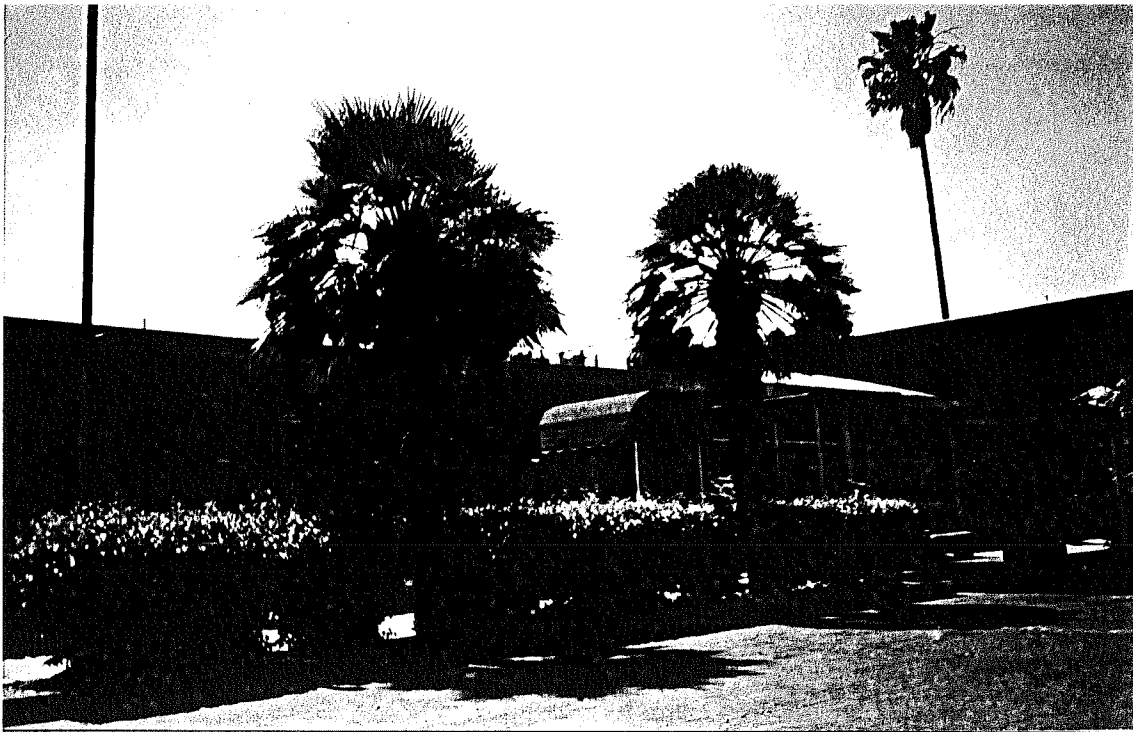
In my initial interview with Pastor Hochmuth, he commented on these families:

Some of those LCMS families that did join felt very concerned and uneasy about their decision because they had been raised with the belief that you couldn't be saved outside the Missouri Synod. These people were salt of the earth kind of people and they were extremely disappointed that they had to conclude that something was wrong with their Synod. These were staunch Missouri Synod people who had a history in that Synod that went way back.³

These dozen families quickly came into contact with Pastor Warnke who had a Missouri Synod background himself and they decided to join St. Andrew.

The small congregation rented a conference room at a local Holiday Inn on 47th Avenue, just a block east of Hwy. 99. The cost was a reasonable 25.00 per service and their first worship service was held there on Epiphany Sunday, 1974. With the initial group of four families joined by the dozen or so families from Our Savior and a couple other families from St. Mark's, attendance started off in the fifties and increased rapidly. That most promising start prompted the Mission Board to approve the purchase of a piece

³ From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996



The Holiday Inn on 47th Avenue. Over the years the hotel has gone independent and the area has gone downhill.

of land in the area. Three different sites were carefully considered and then sometime during the first two days of November 1974, Pastor Warnke received some good news from Synod Headquarters which he promptly shared with the congregation in the following Sunday's bulletin:

GOOD NEWS! This week our parent body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Executive Secretary of the Board of Trustees, sent us a check in the amount of \$2,000 to place in escrow toward the purchase of our new three acre church site located 500 feet south of Mack Road on Center Parkway. This escrow is to run ninety days to give us the opportunity to obtain a Special Use Permit.⁴

Along with a final decision on the purchase of a specific site came the decision to issue a call for a permanent pastor. Ironically, the call was extended to District Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Robert Hochmuth who, at the time, was serving Peace Lutheran Church in Santa Clara, California. As District Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Hochmuth

⁴ Announcement from the bulletin for November 3, 1974

had played a very big role in nearly every aspect of St. Andrew and its brief history -- from the decision to begin work in South Sacramento, to the decision to purchase land, he had been involved with this small congregation from the start and now had been called to serve as their first pastor.

A New Pastor

Pastor Hochmuth received the call in the mail on October 19, 1974. In a letter of acknowledgment he wrote:

Today's mail brought me the call to become your pastor. I want to acknowledge it with an expression of the sense of responsibility this prompts at the realization of the confidence you are reposing in me by your action. It should go without saying that I will ask our Lord's guidance in the decision that now confronts me. Let us go to Him together in our prayers and ask that He prompt the decision that will serve His purpose. We bear in mind that the Church is His, not ours.⁵

Just a little over a month later Pastor Hochmuth reached a decision and addressed a letter of acceptance to the congregation on November 22, 1974:

I have been led to the conclusion that I should accept your call to be the first permanent pastor of your congregation. I believe that by doing so at this stage in my life I can best employ my experience and inclinations in the service of our Lord and His redeemed people. ... Looking ahead I anticipate working with you all so that all of us might grow and function as the disciples and witnesses and stewards of our Savior in these crucial times, making most of the opportunities to share the Word of life with neighbors and acquaintances in Sacramento.⁶

St. Andrew Lutheran Church had its first pastor. Pastor Hochmuth began wrapping things up at Peace, Santa Clara, but because his children were mid-way through the school year and because of Pastor's involvement in several projects within the congregation as well as with the Mission Board, he and his family didn't arrive until the

⁵ From Pastor Hochmuth's letter of acknowledgment, October 19, 1974

⁶ From Pastor Hochmuth's letter of acceptance, November 22, 1974

end of January, 1975. The move was a difficult one. Pastor Hochmuth had children in High School and one in college in Santa Clara and they stayed behind to finish off the school year there, while the rest of the family packed up and moved to Sacramento. A member from the congregation in Belmont (a suburb of San Francisco, about 90 miles away) provided the Hochmuth's with an eight foot U-haul trailer which they could use whenever they wanted and they used it for months, slowly moving more and more stuff every weekend. In addition, the housing situation was up in the air and Pastor had to find housing when they arrived -- not an easy task for a new missionary and his family. They decided to move into the condominium Pastor Warnke had rented while he was serving St. Andrew. They stayed there for several months and then after the rest of the family arrived, they rented a house until a parsonage could be built.

Pastor Hochmuth was installed on February 2, 1975. The special service was held at the Holiday Inn conference room and the guest preacher, all the way from Apostle's Lutheran Church in San Jose, was Pastor David Valleskey. Several pastors from the Northern California Conference made the trip for the special service and the laying on of hands.

A Parsonage

Shortly after Pastor Hochmuth's installation, work towards a future parsonage was about to begin. The land had been purchased and the congregation was very eager and ready to build. In fact, in early January 1975, Pastor Hochmuth had traveled to Sacramento to be present for a voter's meeting at St. Andrew. Shortly after returning to Santa Clara, he wrote a letter to the California Mission Board and commented on the



Participating in Pastor Hochmuth's Installation (from left to right): H. Dorn, F. Bivens, A. Keibel, J. Boehringer, R. Hochmuth, T. Franzmann, D. Valleskey, G. Geiger, N. Sauer, R. Langbecker

congregation's plans to build.

On Tuesday night I met with St. Andrew voters. ... They had a building committee at work, which I had thought was "looking into" parsonage plans. I was not prepared for what came about. The committee came in with a firm proposal to ask for authorization to build the Concord⁷ plan. They are extremely capable men, well acquainted with building, all three of them involved in that field, and they recognize a good thing when they see it. As new pastor I stayed out of the discussion as much as possible; I said that we would be happy to live in whatever they decided was economically and structurally what the congregation ought to have, under GBHM guidelines. (They feel strongly that the bedrooms ought to be a little larger to be practical for a larger family.)

They had gone so far as to get a "bid" from one of the contractors with whom they work. He is willing to do whatever we want on a time and material basis, and let the congregation members do whatever they can or want. If he has to do the whole thing -- ready to move in -- his "bid" is \$42,7000.

⁷ The Concord plan was a plan used for several parsonages built in California around this time. It was called the Concord plan because it was first used to build a parsonage in Concord, CA.

The congregation already has an offer of donation of the cabinets and is expecting to do a good deal of the work. \$5,000 worth was estimated Tuesday night.

The question is, of course, whether we want to try to go this way. Cost seems tremendous. They had mentioned previously that we ought to look into plans that local builders are putting up to see if there is something suitable in a "stock plan" that we could use, but they came up with nothing.

Would you agree that this ought to be pursued further? I intend to recommend that before feeling right about the cost for the Concord plan. This I will do as Mission Board Chairman, not as the new pastor, OK?

What I need to know from you is how to proceed on the basis of the information we have so far. Do you agree that the first thing is to try to get further possible information on stock plans from builders in the area, if they are adaptable? This is what I will inform Warnke tonight and will ask him to inform the committee that it is necessary to look into this more thoroughly, before we as a board could give an OK to the request to build the Concord plan.

By the way, the assumption is that we will act as our own contractors. We have the men highly capable of doing so; they have the necessary connections with suppliers, etc. Mr. Neidhardt has operated his cabinet shop there for 15 or 20 years. Mr. Sutter designed and supervised construction of the parsonage of Our Savior LCMS; Mr. Rieppel has been involved in building a good share of his years there. Mr. Kunz is an electrician. So if we act as our own contractors we ought to cut the "bid" by 10 - 15% on that alone without donations and volunteer help.⁸

While those plans were being considered, about three months after Pastor Hochmuth's arrival, the congregation made a change in the location of their worship site. The Holiday Inn was quite nice and provided good facilities as well as a fine location, but there was one major inconvenience: every Sunday, someone had to bring in the materials needed to set-up for worship since storage there was very limited. One of the members who left Our Savior had been the Sunday School superintendent there and his wife operated three nursery schools on the south side of Sacramento. She generously offered the use of one of her nursery schools to the congregation. The building was very presentable and fairly well located for a meeting place with a couple of great benefits: they

⁸ Taken from a letter addressed to the California Mission Board by Pastor Hochmuth on January 9, 1975

could use it for free and there was a storage unit on the premises -- an instant remedy to the problem of moving everything needed for worship each week.



A New Worship Site -- The Nursery School on Brookfield Drive

Quite pleased with their new site for worship, the congregation continued with plans to build the parsonage. Some consideration was given to the idea of having a tract home builder in the area take over the project, but that was mostly for the sake of price comparison and the idea was quickly abandoned for reasons outlined in a letter Pastor Hochmuth addressed to the WELS Board for Home Missions.

1-8-87 } Regarding the parsonage: The men are getting together a little more information for comparison sake. They are firmly convinced that the wisest expenditure is to build rather than buy, one for quality sake since a number of them are in the trades, and two for long range economy. There are tract builders who could offer a better price, but they are slab houses just passing code. Good houses are going up at \$25 per foot, they could get ours at \$23 before deductions for donated labor and items such as cabinets.

indent The chairman of the congregation's elders just voided a contract for a tract home because of faulty workmanship and poor materials by which the builder was trying to take shortcuts.⁹

The decision was made to go ahead with the original plan of contracting for the foundation, framing, roofing, and plumbing and the rest of the project was to be completed by donated labor from the building professionals St. Andrew had within its membership. The Concord plan home was to be built with some exceptions: there was a one foot cantilevered extension added to the master bedroom and a two foot extension added to the back of the other two bedrooms (allowing more breathing room for Pastor's larger family). The cost was \$400 for the addition to the plan, a very reasonable price to pay for the much needed space, especially since there wouldn't be a church building for several years which meant one of the larger rooms in the house would have to be used for Pastor's study, the church office, as well as storage for the additional items Pastor Hochmuth had as District Mission Board Chairman.¹⁰

With the decisions that had to be made, the loan which had to be secured, the acquisition of the necessary permits, and all the construction work involved with a building project of this size, the Hochmuth's didn't move into the new home until February of 1977. But once they were moved in, Pastor's comment in his February report to the congregation concerning the parsonage was one word: Delightful.¹¹

⁹ From letter addressed February 7, 1975, to Pastor Norman Berg, Executive Secretary GBHM WELS

¹⁰ Information taken from letter addressed by Pastor Hochmuth on May 8, 1975 to Pastor Norman Berg, Executive Secretary of WELS GBHM

¹¹ Pastor's Report to the Congregation, presented at the February, 1977 Church Council meeting

A St. Andrew Sidelight: The Vicar Program

With the constant demands and responsibilities as the Arizona-California District Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Hochmuth was provided with a new vicar each year he held that position. Pastor Hochmuth's responsibilities included a lot of meetings, a large district, and many new mission congregations which meant the vicars certainly had their hands full while they served the District Mission Board and Pastor Hochmuth at St. Andrew. In all, there were 6 vicars while Pastor Hochmuth was DMB Chairman at Sacramento and there were even several while he was in Santa Clara. When I met Pastor Hochmuth for an interview here in Milwaukee, one of the questions I asked him was, "What was it like to be both the pastor at St. Andrew and the Chairman of the Arizona-California District Mission Board?" I expected him to talk about the demands of serving in two different offices, maybe even share a few stories about attending meetings late Saturday night, catching the red-eye back to Sacramento to preach for the 9 AM service Sunday morning, but, to my surprise, his answer was very different.

As far as being both Pastor of St. Andrew and Chairman of the District Mission Board, just one thing stands out in my mind: I always had just excellent vicars. I never felt uneasy about being gone, even as I tried to be gone as little as possible. The flip side to that is the fact that St. Andrew is an older congregation made up of many elderly members from the LCMS who had terrible experiences with Seminary students and absolutely fell in love with each vicar that came through. As they put it, they didn't think there were any young men left like that who wouldn't just get up on Sunday morning and start spouting a lot of academic superiority.¹²

The 6 vicars who served while Pastor Hochmuth was at St. Andrew were:

- '74 - '75 Earl Noffsinger
- '75 - '76 Randall Rathje
- '76 - '77 Scott Klein
- '77 - '78 Glen Schmiede

¹²From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996

'78 - '79 Philip Merten¹³

Who was the sixth vicar?

The Church is Built

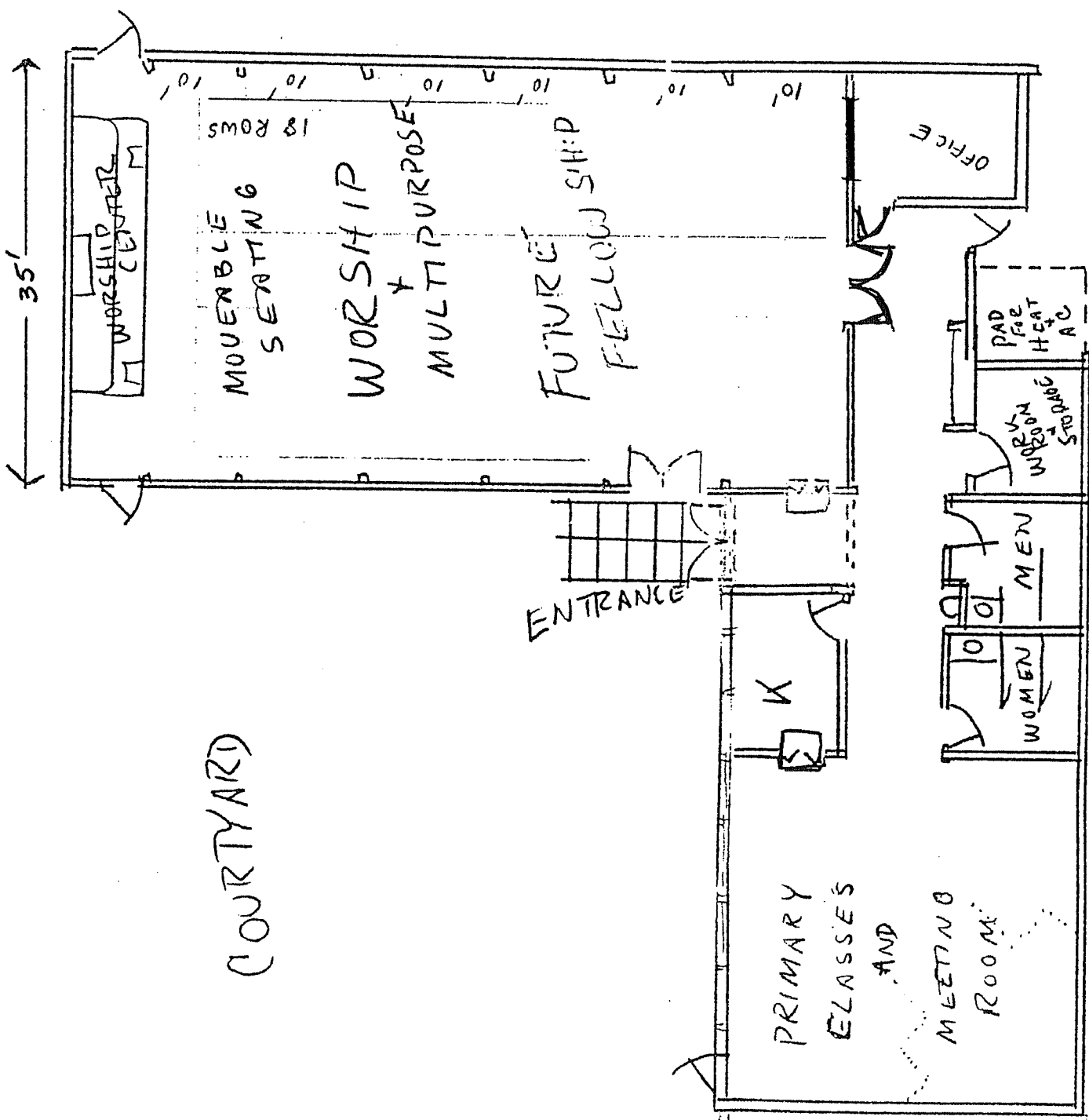
As construction of the parsonage progressed, the congregation was already thinking about the construction of an education/fellowship building on their three acre site. In late August, to mid-September, 1976, the council began considering plans for the building and only a few short months after that the congregation made a request for a Church Extension Fund Loan. Since St. Andrew was off to such a promising start, the Mission Board authorized what, at that time, was called a full Church Extension Fund investment of 4300 sq. feet. In May, 1977, St. Andrew Lutheran Church was presented with a loan from the CEF in the amount of \$260,000 for the construction of their church building.¹⁴

The congregation opted to build a chapel with a multi-purpose kind of role in mind. This would later be convertible into a future parish hall and the front of the property would then be used for the future church. The chapel would be about 35' x 70' and there would also be a 24' x 30' multi-purpose area with provisions in the building plan to be able to convert that into a school.

For this particular project a contractor was hired and the facility was to be built entirely by his company (please see attached plans on the following page). Construction got underway and was completed with very few snags. The new building was dedicated at a special service on August 27, 1978 at 7:00 PM. The guest preacher for this very special occasion was Pastor Hugo Warnke.

¹³ Vicar assignments taken from the Northwestern Lutheran 1974 - 1979

¹⁴ Pastor's Report to the congregation, presented at the May, 1977 council meeting

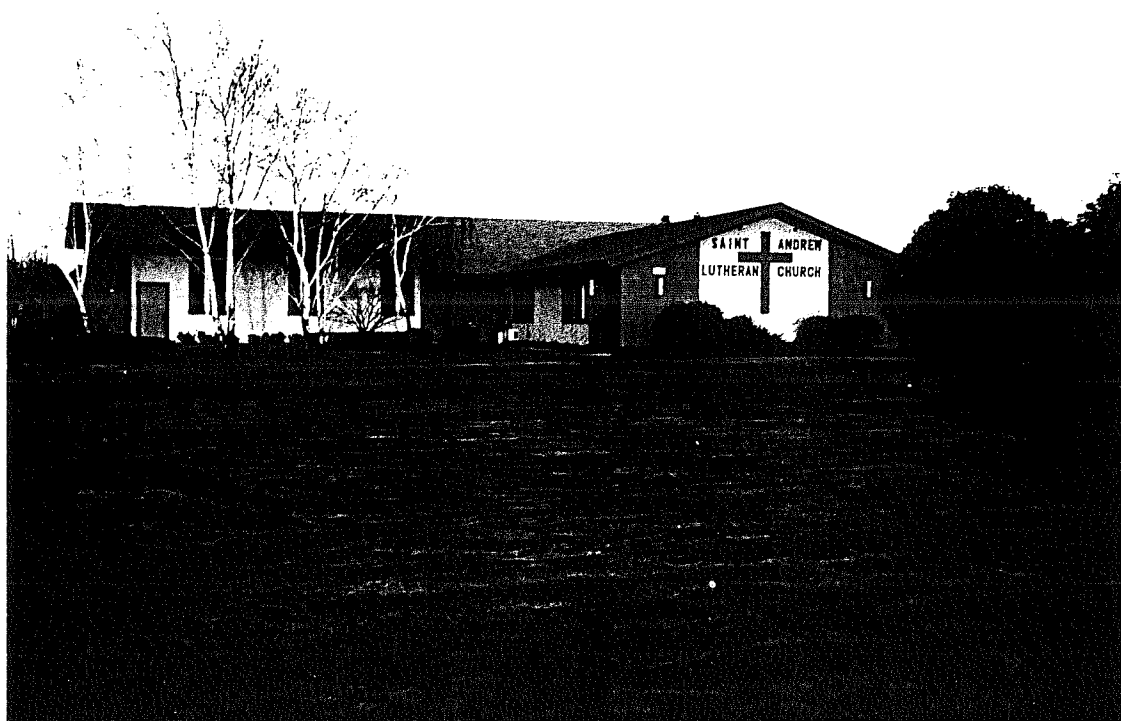


FUTURE CHURCH

This represents 4300 sq. ft. maximum CE. facility.

A St. Andrew Sidelight: St. Andrew's Special Ministry

While Vicar Bill Herrmann was at St. Andrew, he and Pastor Hochmuth started a convalescent ministry program. Eventually the program included three different convalescent homes in the area. The program worked this way: Since the majority of the residents in these homes were not being served by any church body, Pastor contacted those in the area with a request to conduct Bible study for any residents who might be interested in such a program. The homes that consented were then visited twice a month by Pastor or Vicar and several volunteers from St. Andrew. Large print literature was



The new church building

distributed -- even read to those who wanted it read to them, portions of Scripture in large print were also distributed, and all were invited to a brief service which included hymn

singing and a short devotion. Everything was kept very simple, with a very clear law and Gospel message since nearly all of these people were not Lutheran. Pastor and Vicar, as well as those who volunteered to help out, forced themselves on no one and even sent letters from the church to the closest relative of each resident who participated, outlining the program and providing them the opportunity to remove their relative from the program if they didn't want their relative involved.

This special ministry program was and still remains a significant part of this congregation's history. Many people have benefited from it: the dying were pointed to their Savior and those who had not received any spiritual care in the past were nourished with the saving message of the Gospel. But the residents of these homes weren't the only ones who benefited; everyone involved -- including Pastor Hochmuth and the Vicars who also served -- had the privilege to witness the Gospel at work. And where congregations sometimes find themselves losing their vision and forgetting their purpose, this program did a lot to help keep the congregation focused on real spiritual goals. St. Andrew's Convalescent Ministry Program has continued for some 20 years now without interruption.¹⁵

New Developments

As 1980 got underway things looked very good, the Lord had richly blessed St. Andrew and where there was once no WELS congregation on the south side of Sacramento, now there was a small, flourishing church. The parsonage was complete. The church had been built. Everything was moving along and the activities of St. Andrew Lutheran Church were very much like any other small, growing congregation in the

¹⁵ Information obtained from a letter from Pastor Hochmuth to Dave Waterstradt dated February 28, 1996

Wisconsin Synod. But then a couple of things happened which would later prove to be set-backs to the continued growth of this young congregation.

At that time, Mission Board policy didn't allow congregations to begin a school until they were off of operating subsidy and the end of operating subsidy was in sight for the members of St. Andrew. About this time, there were ten children from the congregation making the daily commute to attend St. Mark's Lutheran School to the north in Citrus Heights. With these two things in mind, the Board of Education at St. Andrew began discussing the possibility of taking on the tuition of those children as a congregation with the hope that this might encourage some talk about starting a Lutheran Elementary School. They put together their recommendation and brought it before the voters but it was voted down. In our interview, Pastor Hochmuth commented, "This undermined the thought of getting a school started once the congregation was off of operating subsidy."¹⁶

So St. Andrew came off of operating subsidy in five years and had an average number of good prospects and adult confirmands. The congregation was energetic, eager to continue outreach, and thankful for the growth it had already experienced. But change was on the way, not from within the church, but in the neighborhood around it.

In March of 1974, plans for a 2,000 acre development were submitted to the Sacramento County Planning Department by developer Floyd Pederson. This new development of mostly single family homes would be called Laguna Meadows and was going to be built on the remaining property all around St. Andrew.¹⁷ At first, this new

¹⁶From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996

¹⁷From an article which appeared in the Sacramento Bee, March, 1974.

report (please see attached article on following page) seemed rather encouraging. Upon completion, Laguna Meadows would be home for nearly 18,000 people right outside the church's back door -- it seemed to be every missionary's dream. The problem was that as this development was slowly completed, many of the people moving into Laguna Meadows weren't the slightest bit interested in St. Andrew Lutheran Church and unfortunately, some of these people were even less interested in obeying the law.

When St. Andrew started in the mid-70's the surrounding neighborhood was about 70% Anglo, 20% Hispanic, with another small percentage of other minorities in the area. St. Andrew was blessed with representation from several different ethnic backgrounds and the Vacation Bible School occasionally was even 50% African-American. But over the next five years the neighborhood really changed. The area had been built out as far as single family residences were concerned and all the remaining property along Mack Road and California Street had been purchased and developed into low-income apartments. Nearly 1,700 apartments were built all within 3/4 of a mile from the church. Then all those blocks and blocks of affordable homes which made South Sacramento so attractive to younger families in the early 70's -- and attractive to the Mission Board as well -- suddenly became a liability as those neighborhoods became a huge district of rental homes. The area was changing and by 1992, when St. Andrew conducted a self-study, the population of the four public schools around the church had become 40% Anglo, 25% African-American, 20% Hispanic and 15% Asian.¹⁸

¹⁸ Figures taken from the St. Andrew 1992 self-study

Meadows Plan Aims At 18,000 Population

Plans for a 2,000-acre development with a potential population of 18,000 in the Laguna Creek area south of Sacramento have been put before the County Planning Department by Brentwood developer Floyd Pedersen.

Pedersen, who calls the proposed community Laguna Meadows, filed a project map in connection with his application to amend the county general plan to make its construction possible.

His initial hopes to proceed with the project were stymied last year when the Board of Supervisors decided no development in the area would be allowed until a community plan is completed.

Such a plan now is being developed as part of the overall Elk Grove Community Plan. As a result, the Laguna Meadows proposal also has been put before the Elk Grove Citizens Advisory Committee, a group helping with the planning process.

20 To 25 Years

The Laguna Meadows plan was developed by Donn Reiners of the Murray McCormick Environmental Group who said it is seen as a 20 to 25-year project.

In addition to the 2,000-acre development, Reiners also submitted a specific plan for the first 116-acre phase on the west side of Highway 99 near its intersection with Bond Road.

He said Pedersen hopes to begin work on that phase late this year.

The complete 2,000-acre project is bounded generally by Highway 99 on the east, Elk Grove on the south and Sheldon Road on the north. Its westerly boundary would be about a half mile west of Bruceville Road.

Action In April

Reiners hopes to obtain the general

plan amendment in April.

He described Laguna Meadows as a generally low density plan with about 3.2 dwelling units to the acre. About 32 per cent of the land, he said, would be in open space and parks including a parkway along Laguna Creek.

The map of the complete project shows some commercial construction as well as some multiple family units and business and professional offices.

Also included are four school sites within the 2,000 acres as well as a potential high school site at its northwest corner and only partially within the project.

Schools Get Plans

In this connection, Reiners said the plans also have been submitted to the Elk Grove Unified School District.

Reiners said the development would be predominantly single family homes and proposes an unusual internal transportation system involving routes to be used only by bicyclists, pedestrians and public transportation vehicles.

More Outreach and New Obstacles

Over the years all the new apartments in the area were placed on mailing lists and frequently canvassed which made for a lot of visitors, but the people were so transient that this didn't build the congregation. Work always continued in the neighborhood, but the members began to relate less and less with those in the area and growth began to stall. Pastor Hochmuth and all the members were very careful not to do anything which might embitter or chase anyone away, but Pastor feared that unconscious things may have taken place. In our first conversation, he cited one example: "One time during Vacation Bible School some of the students in the back were misbehaving and I told them to 'stop monkeying around back there.' It wasn't until later, while talking to one of the black women in the congregation, that I was told that the phrase 'monkeying around' is a racial slur."¹⁹

Watching your racial P's and Q's isn't always the easiest thing to do and sometimes even the best intentioned comments don't come off sounding so good. Pastor related another side story along these lines.

While Randy Rathje was serving as our vicar, we started services in a home in Modesto (about 70 miles south of Sacramento). Someone from a WELS congregation in the Midwest wrote me a letter to inform me that a new couple, new to the WELS, had moved into the area and I should keep an eye out for them. Their name was Cooper.

The next week, I went down to Modesto for services and the host informed me that a visiting young couple by the name of Cooper was there. I went in to meet them, turned the corner and here was a very large black man. Mr. Cooper was a doctor. He and his wife had met at the University of Minnesota and while attending a WELS congregation there, someone at that congregation told him that it might be better if he would start attending the black church downtown. I asked Dr. Cooper, "You were a new Lutheran at that time, how did that make you feel?" Dr. Cooper responded, "We weren't at that congregation very long since I was quickly sent to LeSuer, MN and that congregation is color blind. You know, the WELS is hard enough to get into even if you're not black."

¹⁹ From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996

That was kind of typical of some of the experiences of the black members at St. Andrew.²⁰

Despite continued outreach and evangelism efforts in the neighborhood, growth was beginning to stall. In the early nineties membership kept even, but near the mid-nineties, the congregation began to lose members and membership began to decline. St. Andrew and its ongoing mission of reaching out to the neighborhoods around the church had run into some problems.

St. Andrew is an older congregation -- the majority of its members are white senior citizens. In a very young, predominantly black neighborhood this makes evangelism, a challenge to begin with, extremely difficult. The members occasionally feel threatened by their neighbors and those living in the area don't feel comfortable at St. Andrew. Racial stereotyping is not easily avoided. Pastor Hochmuth commented, "Some of the neighborhood kids who come to Vacation Bible School are often taunted by other kids in the neighborhood with statements like, 'What are you doing at that Whitey church?'"²¹ Pastor VonDeylen remarked in an interview, "The majority of the people in the area around St. Andrew just aren't comfortable with our people or our style of worship."²²

In addition to these problems, the Vacation Bible School, one of St. Andrew's most successful forms of outreach, was hampered by the public school's decision to begin year-round schooling in the South Sacramento area, which meant that at any given time 3/4 of the children in the neighborhood were in school all day. The fact that St. Andrew doesn't have a Lutheran Elementary School has created some further problems. Nearly all

²⁰ From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996

²¹ From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996

²² From interview with Pastor Marc VonDeylen, February 29, 1996

of the younger families with children have transferred their membership to St. Mark's, Citrus Heights because of the school there.

A St. Andrew Sidelight: Problems in the Neighborhood

With a church in the midst of a decaying neighborhood one would almost have to expect some problems and over the years, there have been a few.

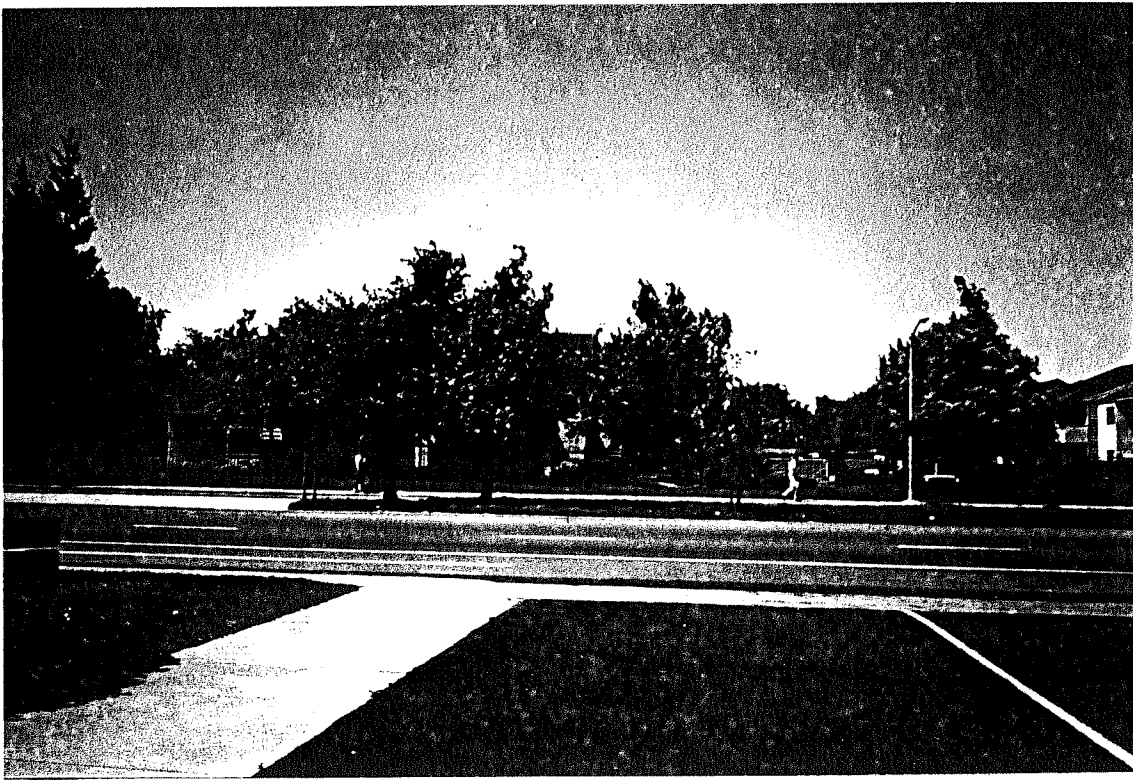
Once, Pastor Hochmuth recalls, a family visited St. Andrew for the first time during an evening Lenten service. They came in a brand new car and sometime during that service their brand new car was stolen. Pastor adds, "We never saw that family again."²³

Pastor VonDeylen related this story when I visited St. Andrew in person. About three days before my visit, Pastor was behind the parsonage mowing the lawn in the large lot behind the church when suddenly, two cars squealed into the parking lot and screeched to a stop. Several people got out of each car and many others came running from the apartments across the street. A large group of people formed in the parking lot and watched as the drivers from each car beat the living daylights out of each other.²⁴

There have been break-ins at the church and drugs are a real problem in the apartment complexes in the neighborhood. In fact, over the years the police have even used the church parking lot as a rendezvous point for drug raids in the area.

²³ From interview with Pastor Robert Hochmuth, February 8, 1996

²⁴ From interview with Pastor Marc VonDeylen, February 29, 1996



The view from the parking lot to the apartments across the street. The area can look deceptively peaceful.

One Pastor Departs and Another Arrives

In January, 1992 Pastor Hochmuth announced his plan to retire after Easter 1994, which he did, but soon after Pastor accepted a call to serve a vacancy at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Pleasanton, California. He was replaced by Pastor Marc VonDeylen who had been serving as an associate at King of Kings in Garden Grove, California. Pastor VonDeylen was installed in June of 1994.

Under the leadership of the new Pastor, the outreach efforts continue. In the two years he has served St. Andrew, Pastor VonDeylen has directed a couple ^{of} new evangelism programs. The first program was introduced to target minorities living in the area whose primary language was not English. The program was called English as a Second Language or ESL and was taught by Pastor and a couple of volunteers from the congregation. The hope was that as English would gradually become more and more

familiar for those participating, portions of Scripture could be studied and the precious message of the Gospel shared. But unfortunately, even though the program grew to about fifteen Vietnamese students, their complete lack of any kind of background in English made the study of Bible stories impossible even after much work in the ESL program. Slowly the numbers began to dwindle and eventually the program was halted.

Another enthusiastic attempt to reach out to the community is still in the works. Currently, the private kindergarten programs around St. Andrew are filled to capacity -- people have actually camped out at a nearby Lutheran Church to stand in line hoping to enroll their children in that school's kindergarten program. The public schools in Sacramento don't have a very good reputatuion and people swarm to private education programs when they discover a well-run facility. Recently, the members of St. Andrew have started preparing their facilities for the opening of a kindergarten at the church. The current fellowship area (the section with the cross on it in the picture) has been slightly modified to house a small kindergarten class and a call has been extended to Mrs. Helen Bogues, a teacher and member of St. Mark's in Citrus Heights. If Mrs. Bogues accepts the call and six children are registered by August 31 of this year, the school will begin ^{this} the Fall, if not, then the congregation will make plans for opening next year. This new program has an obvious goal: attract the younger families in the neighborhood to the congregation. If children are enrolled, the parents will be required to begin instruction with Pastor in an adult information course.

The Vacation Bible School continues as does the door-to-door canvassing. Since Pastor VonDeylen's arrival, all the closest apartments around the church have been

contacted and this summer Pastor hopes to do some work in a relatively new development a couple of miles to the South.

The challenges are there. The need to rebuild a nucleus of young families within the congregation is one not easily met. In my initial interview with Pastor VonDeylen he noted a few obstacles, "Finding prospects in this area is very difficult. What people are looking for in a church in this area -- what they're looking for, not what they need -- can't be found at St. Andrew and, if they walk in the door, our older, all white church turns them off."²⁵

For a young Pastor and a shrinking congregation the temptation to get discouraged is always there and, in fact, many have even entertained the thought of moving St. Andrew farther south to relocate where the new developments are springing up. To ideas like this Pastor VonDeylen is quick to add, "Seems to me that we came here and God had a reason for building all this around us like he did, so until we can be sure that the door has closed on us I don't think we should move. We are here for a reason and we need to reach out to the neighborhood."²⁶

One More St. Andrew Highlight: Special Additions

Step inside the main door at St. Andrew and you certainly won't miss the beautiful painting of the apostle Andrew and the catch of fish. Proceed into the church proper and the first thing to catch your eye will be the beautiful glass mosaic just above the altar. These two works of art are very special to the members and pastors at St. Andrew. The picture was painted and donated by its artist, Mrs. Gladys Riepple, one of St. Andrew's

²⁵ From interview with Pastor Marc VonDeylen, February 29, 1996

²⁶ From interview with Pastor Marc VonDeylen, May 1, 1996

charter members. The catch of fish represents the apostle Andrew's missionary spirit and his zeal to bring souls into the kingdom of God. Mrs. Riepple, who didn't even begin painting until sometime around her 70th birthday has also painted other paintings, one with a Thanksgiving theme, another of the Resurrection morning -- these are displayed at different times during the year.

The mosaic has an even deeper meaning and its significance is marked by two very sad events in the congregation's history. A plaque on the wall in Pastor VonDeylen's office describes the mural in full.

Even if you are a first time visitor to our church this morning, you will no doubt have immediately noticed the beautiful mosaic which is above the altar. This was given in memory of David Kunz, son of Elmer and Delores Kunz, and in memory of Esther Hochmuth, wife of former Pastor Robert Hochmuth. The following is an explanation of its message.

Beginning in the upper left, the star in the Nativity window recalls Old Testament promises that God would send his Son to restore our fallen race. It was also a star that heralded his birth. The lines descending from the star reach down to the nimbus (semi-circle indicating deity) over the head of the Christ-child in the manger. Below it the lengths of yellow represent the straw, reminding us of the humble circumstances into which he came to be our Redeemer and our Good Shepherd. Note the staff.

The lines from the Nativity window lead into the lines of the mosaic panel depicting his ministry. The greens portray the Galilean hills. The blues represent the Sea where he manifested his deity. Through them appear the grey lines of a net, and a close look will reveal several fish linking all of this to St. Andrew. Reds drifting through the design call attention to the blood of the One who came as the Lamb of God. Like the miracles which punctuated Jesus' humble walk with testimony that he is God the Son, so a few single gold tiles here and there appear among the subdued colors.

That he accomplished our redemption, once and for all cancelling the offenses of the world by his willing sacrifice on the cross, he announced with a cry, "It is finished!" The mosaic echoes his decisive proclamation by the position of the crown of thorns at the foot of the cross.

From there the flow of the design leads into the resurrection window, employing the familiar lily and butterfly as symbols of Christ's new life after the grave.

Now the sweep is upward for him and for us. He has triumphed over death and Satan. He is King of Kings, and he invites us to enjoy and to proclaim his victory over sin and the grave.

His cross has become for us the emblem of his saving love. An elongated, gold cross beckons us all to recognize his glory and anticipate his return.²⁷

How fitting that a memorial for two dearly loved people now with the Lord in eternity should point all who view it to the One who has given us eternal life.



St. Andrew and the Catch of Fish



The Mosaic above the Altar

²⁷ Taken from a plaque describing this mosaic which hangs in the St. Andrew church office

Some Final Thoughts

Putting together a church's history is quite an interesting job. You gather facts. You make sure you get the facts straight. And as you put those facts down on paper you realize that through all the events you've just recorded, behind all the pictures, and behind all the stories you'll always find our loving Lord and Savior's guiding hand. To those who've lived this history and to those who merely read about it, that guiding hand wasn't and isn't visible to the human eye, but it was and still is unmistakably there. It is purely by God's grace that the pastors and members of St. Andrew Lutheran Church have been so blessed to share in that most important work of reaching out to those around them with the message of God's love in our Savior Jesus Christ. God grant that those at St. Andrew and throughout our Synod might faithfully continue in that grace and always re-echo St. Andrew of old as he rushed to tell his brother Simon Peter: "We have found the Messiah!"