

Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church
A 40th Anniversary History: 1967-2007

Timothy Bourman
Church History 3031
Professor John Brenner
December 7, 2007

A 40th Anniversary History: 1967-2007

There is a story behind everything. Some stories are more interesting than others. Some stories need embellishing to be interesting. Other stories are interesting because they are just plain good stories. The history of Our Savior Lutheran Church is one of those stories that fall into the latter category. It is a good story that does not need embellishing to be interesting. It is a story that has not ended and will continue by the grace of God.

My own personal story with Our Savior Lutheran Church began on April 15th, 2006. I arrived at Our Savior late on the Eve of Easter on a rainy, dreary night. I was on choir tour. At that time, the church became known to me as the “dessert church” because of the wide array of desserts provided by the women of Our Savior. Just a few short months later, I was called to serve as vicar from August 2006 – August 2007. I will always have fond memories of my time in Brookings. Personally, I will go down in the history of Our Savior as the first former vicar to marry one of its members, Amanda Haffner, on May 31, 2008. During my time in Brookings, I headed up the anniversary committee. The anniversary committee planned special events to celebrate the church’s 40th anniversary. This paper serves as my last contribution as a member of the anniversary committee. I present it as a gift to Our Savior for its 40th anniversary.

I pray that this paper will serve as a way for the congregation to praise God for his blessings over the last 40 years because they see his hand in their history. I also pray that the congregation will see this paper as an opportunity to learn from the past in repentant faith and to use this history to plan for future ministry as they *Come and Learn – Go and Share – Honor and Serve*¹.

I. The Dream of a Brookings Congregation

¹ This is the new mission statement for Our Savior Lutheran Church being publicized in the 40th anniversary celebrations.

If it had been up to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod², Our Savior would have started in the 1930's. In the late 1930's, Wisconsin decided to establish a mission congregation in Brookings, SD. A man by the name of Blakewell was called to begin the new congregation. Not much is known about Blakewell's work in Brookings. We do know that he was not able to establish a congregation. Blakewell abandoned his work in Brookings soon after he began it. He abandoned it because of the seemingly greater potential for mission work in the nearby city of Aurora, SD. Blakewell saw greater potential for mission work in Aurora, SD for two reasons. First of all, the Missouri Synod just a few years early had established a congregation in Brookings. Blakewell was respecting the "gentlemen's agreement" between Missouri and Wisconsin to stay away from each other's mission fields. Secondly, Aurora was also a better mission field because it already had a large number of WELS people in the city. These WELS people wanted a congregation of their own. This offer was too enticing ~~of an offer~~ for Blakewell to pass up.³ The mission in Brookings closed.

Despite one failure to establish a congregation, the Wisconsin Synod still did not give up its desire to serve the city of Brookings with the gospel. In the years leading up to the 1960s, some recollect that a man was sent to do student work with South Dakota State University⁴, but again a congregation was not established. As late as 1962, the mission board thought of calling a man to start a congregation in Brookings. However, it was felt that a building for ministry must be purchased first.⁵

In the mid 1960s, the mission board of the Wisconsin Synod again began to seriously consider another mission start in Brookings. This time, the conditions for starting a congregation seemed to be favorable for several reasons. In 1961, the Wisconsin Synod had broken fellowship

²For our purposes, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod will be referred to as WELS, Wisconsin Synod, or Wisconsin.

³Birner, Herbert. "Re: Our Savior – History Paper." Email to the author. 26 Oct. 2007.

⁴South Dakota State University is abbreviated SDSU in this paper.

⁵Birner Email

with the Missouri Synod. With the split, the “gentlemen’s agreement” with Missouri was ended. WELS began to move into urban areas in South Dakota to do mission work.⁶ Another result of the split was that the WELS students attending SDSU needed to be served by the gospel. Previously, the students had been served by Mt. Calvary, a Missouri Synod church. Furthermore, St Paul’s Lutheran Church in Argo, SD was ready to close. St. Paul’s members would need a place to attend church. Finally, the economic conditions were such that small farms were closing. Area WELS members were moving into the larger city of Brookings to find work.⁷ The city was at a low point economically, but it was ready to grow. Finally, the last piece of the puzzle was in place because in the fall of 1963 the Wisconsin Synod purchased the student center, a gathering place for WELS collegians, at 919 Ninth Ave.⁸ The stage was set for WELS to attempt another mission start in Brookings.

Although it was not until 1967 that Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church was formally organized, WELS immediately began doing gospel ministry in Brookings. At the newly purchased student center, Pastor John Brandt of Clear Lake began conducting worship services. The first worship service was held on January 19, 1964. There were just three families and a small number of SDSU students. The student center was dedicated to the Lord on January 26, 1964.⁹ Pastor John Brandt continued to serve WELS members, especially students until 1966. During Pastor Brandt’s years of ministry, several inquiries were made regarding the formation of a congregation. Formal requests were made to the General Board for Home Missions of the WELS. In the fall of 1966, the congregation was granted mission status. They were also given permission to call a pastor.¹⁰ With great joy, the group of believers began the process of formally organizing into a congregation.

⁶ Heins, Ronald. Personal Interview. 18 Oct. 2007.

⁷ Birmer Email

⁸ For Picture see Appendix D

⁹ “Hither to Hath the Lord Helped Us.” Dedication Booklet for June 4, 1972. Church Files.

¹⁰ Stohr, Pamela. “History of St. Paul’s/Our Savior for Mr. West.” July 29, 1982. Church Files.

II. Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church Is Born: 1967-1971

Our Savior Lutheran Church was officially formed on February 14, 1967. The original charter members of the congregation were Norman Evers, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Herrick, Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Klavetter, Mr. and Mrs. Roger Moore, and Mr. and Mrs. Larry Schlomer. Pastor Larry Ellenberger from Elkton was called to serve as vacancy pastor. On February 19, 1967, a letter was sent to the WELS with a request to join the synod.¹¹ The congregation decided to call a graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as their first pastor. Pastor Ronald K. Heins was assigned to Our Savior and he accepted their call. He was installed as their first resident pastor on August 6, 1967.

It would have been easy for young Pastor Heins to have been discouraged as he began his ministry at Our Savior. When Pastor Heins arrived in Brookings, already four charter members of the congregation had left. At the 35th anniversary of Our Savior, Pastor Heins was quoted in the Brookings Register, "Our Savior had five members when I received the call from the assignment committee, two of whom moved away from Brookings, before my wife and I arrived."¹² Pastor Heins was starting with a smaller membership than he had previously anticipated.

Furthermore, Pastor Heins could not start his ministry right way in July as he had planned. The congregation was not prepared to have him come. In fact, the mission board had planned for Pastor Heins and his wife to live in the student center. However, they had rented that house to another tenant until the end of July. In collaboration with the mission board, Our Savior decided to delay Pastor Heins' installation until August 6, 1967.

Not only was the congregation not prepared, but the mission board also was not prepared for Pastor Heins to begin his efforts. In the years leading up to the founding of Our Savior, the

¹¹ Heins Personal Files

¹² The newspaper clipping was taken from the October 13, 2002 copy of the Brookings Register. The clipping is located in the church files.

WELS student center had accumulated debts in the community with plumbers, carpenters, etc. When Pastor Heins began his work, these debts were still outstanding. Much of his early correspondence with the mission board included an urgent plea to pay off these bills.¹³ The bad impression left with the community about the newly formed Our Savior had an impact on the early evangelism efforts of Pastor Heins.

Finally, Brookings was not exactly a boomtown. The area was actually at a low point economically. Pastor Heins remembers that the local paper was filled with farm auctions and that 3M was certainly not on the scene.¹⁴ It was for all of these reasons combined and the WELS failures in the past that Pastor Herbert Birner, the mission board chairman, wrote that the work in Brookings would be very slow and difficult.

None of these factors discouraged the optimistic and hard working Pastor Heins. He went right to work. In some ways, Pastor Heins proved that Pastor Birner was not a prophet. Pastor Heins began his work in August of 1967. By December 11, 1967, Pastor Heins wrote this letter to Mr. and Mrs. Irving,

The Lord has greatly blessed our work here since we arrived in August. Our attendance has risen from an average of 14 during August, to 35 when the students came back until two Sundays ago we had to go to two services with an average around 70. Our Sunday school is growing too...up from five last week to 15 this week with hopes of even more...¹⁵

As seen above, Our Savior established a Sunday school in December. At the end of 1967, there were 42 souls in the church and 14 communicants. The average attendance for Sunday services was 31. The Bible class average attendance was at 37.¹⁶ It was evident that the Lord was blessing the work of Our Savior. As Our Savior began a new year in the Lord, Pastor Heins wrote to Pastor Birner again,

¹³ Heins Personal Files

¹⁴ Heins, Ronald. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 10 Oct. 2007.

¹⁵ Heins Personal Files

¹⁶ Our Savior Annual Report of 1967. Church Files. For a visual analysis of these number see Appendix B.

Our attendance at services has continued its upward trend. The last two Sundays saw an attendance of 77 and 82 yesterday with the students gone for semester break we had 41 (last year there was an attendance of 3 on semester break weekend)...¹⁷

How did Pastor Heins accomplish all of this in five short months? The simple and best answer is that he didn't accomplish it. The Lord blessed the work of one of his servants who faithfully proclaimed the Word and distributed the sacraments. But what methods did the Lord bless? Pastor Heins tapped into the seemingly endless energy of college students to do the work of the Lord. First of all, he used the student energy and manpower to gather a group of committed college students. Then, he trained those students to start a congregation. According to Pastor Heins, several of these students ended up playing integral parts in starting other WELS congregations. The amount of work the college students accomplished was nothing less than astounding. For example, on one Saturday in November of 1967, Pastor Heins and his group of student leaders canvassed the entire city of Brookings.¹⁸ At that time, the population of Brookings was just over 13,000. Each of the years following 1967, the students canvassed a quarter of the city every fall.¹⁹ The students from SDSU not only helped start a congregation in Brookings, but Pastor Heins also offered the services of his students to any congregation within 600 miles of Brookings – a pretty incredible offer.²⁰

Pastor Heins was able to use the college students in this way because he was respected by them. In fact, when Pastor Heins and his wife, Mary, lived in the apartment located above the student center, it was absolutely the place to be. He described the community in this way,

Mary and I first lived in the upstairs apartment of the student center. My office all the years I served there was in the student center in the northeast room of the addition. The opposite

¹⁷ The letter was dated January 29, 1968. (Heins Personal Files)

¹⁸ In a letter to Herbert Birner on Nov. 5, 1967, Pastor Heins wrote, "We were blessed again this Sunday with an attendance of 60. The Lord also blessed our canvass this past Saturday. We found 71 prospects and were successful in covering the entire city with the exception of trailer courts and apartment complexes of which there are few. I haven't had time to sort them yet, but from the canvassers' reports, there are at least 15 excellent prospects among the 71." (Heins Personal Files)

¹⁹ Heins Email

²⁰ This was not just a boast. Heins said that the students did work in Madison, SD and Yankton, SD. (Heins Email)

room was called King Art's room because it has a large round oak table in it. It served as the meeting room and a study room. Worship on Sunday was at 11:00 AM with Sunday school at 10:00. Student vespers were on Thurs. night at 7:30PM with some kind of discussion/Bible study after. Sunday night were "cost suppers." There was no food service at the dorms on Sunday night so the students would get together and make a meal for all. Food prep was spread around the group on a rotating basis. The guys were, after the first year, charged with providing one pheasant cost supper per fall. The student center was open from 9:00 AM to mid-night every day and the Lord made it the place to be when you were not in class.²¹

With this kind of close-knit community, over 100 WELS students on the campus of SDSU, 60 of whom were active collegians, it was natural for Pastor Heins to tap into them as a resource. Pastor Heins was indeed training leaders for the body of Christ. From this group of college students, five young men went into the pastoral ministry.²² Throughout his time at Our Savior, Pastor Heins used this strategy to bring God's Word to the community of Brookings.

With the congregation's steady growth in mind, on December 27, 1967, Pastor Heins wrote to the District Mission Board requesting that land be purchased for the building of a new church. Only a few weeks later on January 29, 1968, Pastor Heins wrote to Pastor Herbert Birner wanting not only that land be purchased, but that a church be built on that property. Pastor Birner wrote back to Pastor Heins' requests on February 1, 1968 telling him that they would not have a church building for sometime because, as he saw it, the gathering in Brookings was a group of students and not a congregation. This letter began a flurry of letters between the two pastors. Pastor Heins was confused about the direction his work was supposed to take. Was Pastor Heins supposed to build a congregation of students? Was Pastor Heins supposed to establish a local congregation?²³ This was

²¹ Heins Email

²² Heins wrote three separate letters to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to announce the collegians change of career paths. (Heins Personal Files)

²³ Pastor Heins wrote in his letter of January 29, 1968, "The question that is developing in my mind is, is it the wish of the mission board to build a city congregation with the students on the periphery or should we consider the effort to build our students efforts with the congregation (something like the present system in Madison, WI.) The practical results of this thinking would effect the placement of the future building and its construction." (Heins Personal Files)

a critical moment in the history of the church. What direction was the congregation supposed to take?

After discussing the issue with the mission board, Pastor Birner wrote to Pastor Heins in a letter dated February 22, 1968,

...this mission board is still committed to establishing a mission congregation in Brookings, with the missionary doing such student work as he can on the side. We know that is not the way the work has been developing, not that this is your fault. You were thrown into it by us asking you and your wife to live in the student house. Naturally the students have taken advantage of the situation and have monopolized your time and energy...For this reason the mission board asked me to ask you how you felt about moving out of the student house into a parsonage off campus.²⁴

The mission board had answered Pastor Heins' question decisively. They asked Pastor Heins to establish a local, city congregation. The first step toward the establishment of a local congregation was the purchase of a parsonage.²⁵ During the summer of 1968, a parsonage was purchased at 327 Eastern Ave.²⁶ A second step toward the establishment of a city congregation came about a year later in the spring of 1969. The land on which the present church is located was purchased at 1010 8th Street South.

The Lord greatly blessed the mission work of Our Savior. In just two years, a parsonage was purchased, prime land was purchased for a church and for a future parsonage, and a willing group of collegians was ready and willing to go to work. The church was young and vibrant with LeRoy Klavetter being the senior citizen at the age of 30. Also 3M was coming to town with the promise of many good paying jobs.²⁷ Add to this mix a committed pastor and you have a church poised for an explosion of growth.

However, God had plans for Our Savior other than an explosion of growth. Over the next few years, the work of Pastor Heins would be greatly hampered. The Dakota-Montana District has

²⁴ Heins Personal Files

²⁵ For picture see Appendix E

²⁶ "Hither to Hath the Lord Helped Us." Dedication Booklet for June 4, 1972. Church Files.

²⁷ Heins Email

a traditionally had a high turn over rate of pastors. Therefore during these years, Pastor Heins served repeated vacancies. He served two vacancies at Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls. One of these vacancies was 18 months long. The second vacancy was almost a year long. The Sioux Falls vacancy was not an easy vacancy because of the hospitals, state prison, and the mental hospital in Yankton. Pastor Heins also had to serve Elkton as vacancy pastor for a time. The mission board asked Pastor Heins to divide his time still further because they expected him to start campus ministries in both Madison, SD and Yankton, SD. With so many opportunities for service, Pastor Heins remembers,

It became very difficult for me to do the follow up work our evangelists had begun with our prospects. Yet, the Lord chose to bless our slow steady ways in the congregation and in a very vibrant campus ministry. The students and members picked up the slack.²⁸

The optimism and hard work of these years at Our Savior was evident from 1967 to 1971. Just reading some of their brochures gives one a sense of the enthusiasm in Our Savior. These were fun times to be a member at Our Savior. In one evangelism brochure, the church proclaimed,

As it goes for new ventures, we are still quite small – sort of a family, as it were. But we do not expect to stay this way. As a Christian Church body under the guidance and direction of our Savior Jesus, we are here because our Savior wants us to be in order that we may share his message of salvation with others who may not have heard it, or who wish to be further strengthened by it.²⁹

But Our Savior wasn't just talk. They acted as well. In a letter to Leroy Dobberstein, the new mission board chairman, Pastor Heins wrote,

We are attempting to reach every newcomer to the community with a personal visit. This is running from 15-30 hours/week. Those that we are not able to contact receive a letter with our brochure enclosed.³⁰

²⁸ Heins Email

²⁹ Church Files

³⁰ Heins Personal Files

The new church was marked by a spirit of cooperation, hard work, and optimism. This is the spirit that Our Savior was founded on. This is the spirit worked by the Holy Spirit through study of the Word.

The church was ready to grow exponentially with God's blessing, but its growth was being hindered because the student center was too small and its pastor was busy. Our Savior's next step towards expanding ministry was obvious. They needed a new building. The congregation began planning a building in the fall of 1969. Our Savior first applied for a building loan in November of 1970. At that time, their loan was rejected primarily for one reason: funds in the CEF³¹ were low. In order to qualify for a loan, they would need more members for an extended period of time. The hopes of building a church were dashed. Our Savior was told to reapply after a few years. They now planned to build a building in the mid 1970s. However, the Lord would answer the prayers of Our Savior for a new building sooner than anyone even imagined.

III. A Death Gives New Life: 1971-1973

The Lord answered the prayers for a new church building by closing a church building and a congregation. While Our Savior was being born in the heart of Brookings, St. Paul's in Argo was struggling to survive. In fact, the church needed to close. Pam Stohr summarized the reasoning for closing St. Paul's Argo in her history on the church,

Precipitating the action by the two churches was the earlier announcement by Reverend L. Schroeder of Hendricks, who had served for three years, that he had accepted a call to serve a church in Bowdle, South Dakota. Both the Hendricks and Argo congregations were not large bodies, with Argo the smaller; neither had shown any growth in the past ten years. On the other hand, through death and the trend of shifting populations, membership had, if anything, declined. Both of the congregations were faced with a dwindling economic base and a re-alignment of the two congregations was proposed by synodical district officials. The re-alignment embraced two other area congregations of the WELS. They were a mission congregation at Brookings and First Lutheran congregation at Gary. The proposal for re-alignment proposed that the Hendricks congregation merge with the Gary congregation and that the Argo congregation merge with the mission at Brookings. The dissolution of the Henricks-Argo parish was further urged due to a shortage of pastors in the

³¹ Church Extension Fund

synod. In carrying out the realignment two pastors could minister to four congregations under improved economic conditions, rather than three pastors serving five congregations under diminishing economic conditions...the goal was to have one large church incorporating the churches around. That church was to be Our Savior's in Brookings.³²

The reasoning behind closing St. Paul's in Argo was simple. By joining with the Brookings congregation, one pastor could serve what used to be two parishes. St. Paul's could not afford a pastor. Furthermore, the synod could not provide St. Paul's with a pastor. The need to join with Brookings was evident. Our Savior was a mission congregation. A pastor cannot effectively serve a dual parish with one of the parishes being a mission congregation.

To the leaders of the district and to Pastor Heins, the choice had been clear for many years. However, to the members of St. Paul's in Argo the decision to close was by no means clear-cut. For many members of St. Paul's in Argo, there were dear memories attached ^{to} ~~with~~ their old building and congregation. The people had seen baptisms, marriages, confirmations, and funerals in the same church known to them as St. Paul's. For some, the closing of their old church was a very emotional issue. The people of St. Paul's were concerned with keeping their old church building open. There were a solid few who supported the decision to merge with Brookings because they were in the words of Pastor Heins, "spiritual giants."³³

For district officials, the vacancy at Argo in 1970 became a chance for them to encourage a merger of St. Paul's with Our Savior. With this idea in mind, Pastor Heins was assigned the vacancy. The congregation became divided about whether to merge with Our Savior. The situation became so bad that almost the whole congregation talked of joining a different church, while only two members of Argo were agreeing to join Our Savior.³⁴

Pastor Heins did his best to lead the two congregations into the merger. He put three St. Paul's men on the Our Savior church council in 1970. St. Paul's men also served on the building

³² Pam Stohr

³³ Heins Email

³⁴ Heins Email

committee for Our Savior. Pastor Heins wanted to bring the two congregations closer together in this way. Pastor Heins even sent a letter to every member of St. Paul's inviting them over to the parsonage on March 21, 1971. Enclosed in the letter was the Our Savior handbook.³⁵ Pastor Heins tried everything that he knew to unite the two church bodies. However, even while the two congregations united in works of service and planning, deeper division resulted because of culture clashes. Our Savior was a mission congregation. St. Paul's was a culture where privacy was everything. At one meeting of the mixed church council, the whole agenda was setting up a canvassing date and planning it. One of the men from St. Paul's spoke up, "You are going to go to their door on their private property and ask them about their spiritual welfare???"³⁶ The division between St. Paul's and Our Savior suddenly came into sharp focus.

The whole issue came to a head on April 20, 1971 during a St. Paul's council meeting. There were three votes to close St. Paul's and three votes against. The congregation was divided and the church council was deadlocked. The meeting became very heated. The chairman of the meeting and another councilman walked out ^{of} the meeting. After a half hour conversation in the parking lot, the men returned to vote again. One man abstained. The motion to merge with Our Savior passed because one man abstained.³⁷ Pastor Heins wrote about the meeting to Pastor Dobberstein in a letter dated April 21, 1971,

To quote a familiar line, "There is trouble in River City." Last night we had the quarterly meeting at Argo and there was a stacked deck waiting. The first item on the agenda was the date of closure recommended by the council – May 23. 45 minutes of discussion followed the introduction of this motion - heated discussion. The tone of discussion was heading for a postponement of closure until the next facility was complete. Some of the women are apparently driving the men crazy with why should we crowd into a smaller facility when we have one of their own, why should we rent why complete the merger when we don't even know whether we will be funded. To head off complete collapse, I suggested an alternate proposal that we postpone merger until the Sunday of ground breaking. Three votes were

³⁵ Heins Personal Files

³⁶ Heins Interview

³⁷ On April 20, 1971 the original document to the State of South Dakota called Statement Of Intent to Dissolved was signed. (Church Files)

taken all ties. The chairman and another member who were arguing for postponement got up and walked out of the meeting after the last tied vote. After a half hour of persuasion they returned and voted on the compromise again it passed due to one abstention...it may be fought all the way to completion of the new building.³⁸

With the vote, St. Paul's in Argo was to close on August 1, 1971. Our Savior continued its efforts to welcome their brothers and sisters from St. Paul's into their midst. Their effort to reach out to St. Paul's was especially seen at the ground breaking for the new building of Our Savior. It was reported in the Argus Leader on August 5, 1971,

On Sunday August 1, the members of St. Paul's together with the members of Our Savior held a joint special service of Thanksgiving to the Lord for all the blessing which he has granted to the many people of our community...there was a dinner served by the congregation at the church following the worship service. Following the noon meal, the members and friends formed a caravan and drove to Brookings for a ground-breaking ceremony at their new church site.³⁹

Our Savior also decided to bring St. Paul's pipe organ to Brookings to help the transition. The organ was taken apart piece by piece and then moved by Mr. Nolte. As of 2007, this organ is over 100 year old. It is still the principle worship instrument at Our Savior. The goal of Pastor Heins during this period was to help the congregation mourn their loss.⁴⁰

After the vote was taken over the merger, emotions began to subside quickly. To the credit of the members of St. Paul's in Argo, the merger was completed quickly and with few problems. Slowly, the hurt from the closing of St. Paul's was eased. This issue did not come back up to haunt the congregation again. The members of St. Paul's in Argo integrated with Our Savior and began serving in many important ways. Perhaps the excitement, the new life, and the new building going on at Our Savior helped to heal the painful closing of their dear St. Paul Lutheran Church of Argo. In the end, Our Savior only lost one of the 28 members from Argo to another church.⁴¹

³⁸ Heins Personal Files

³⁹ Taken from the article, "[Argo Township Church Joins Our Savior Evangelical Church of Brookings.](#)" (Church Files)

⁴⁰ Heins Interview

⁴¹ Heins Email

This whole controversy leads to an historical question: Should St. Paul's in Argo have stayed open? This is not an easy question to answer, but Pastor Heins asserts that the merger was best for the kingdom and for all the souls involved in the end for several reasons.⁴² From the St. Paul's – Our Savior merger 28 members were added to Our Savior. This enabled Our Savior to build large enough and early enough to take advantage of mission opportunities in Brookings. Also, the larger body of believers was a huge encouragement to each other every Sunday. Two groups of people resulted from the merger, the city folk and the St. Paul's folk. The city folk had a positive influence on the St. Paul's folk. The city folk were passionate about missions. At the same time the St. Paul's folk were able to share their experience with church organization with the Our Savior folks. During this time, both groups were stretched spiritually as they slowly grew together. However, it is not an open and shut case. Could St. Paul's have stayed open to this day serving their community? Would Our Savior have found more ways and better ways to reach non-WELS members if St. Paul's would not have joined Our Savior? Perhaps, this is a moot question. St. Paul's in Argo closed and God blessed the decision in a huge way.⁴³

With the closing of St. Paul's in Argo, Our Savior doubled in membership. Their plans for a new building also doubled in size. The plans for constructing the new building also doubled in speed. Here is a chronology of those events.

- February 1971 - Even before St. Paul's had officially voted to close, the original plans for a church building were scrapped.⁴⁴
- February 1971 - Our Savior engaged Mr. Duane Anderson, the Synod's architect to develop new plans.
- February 1971 – Our Savior requested the CEF for \$100,000.
- May 1971 – CEF approved the loan for \$100,000.
- May 1971 – Our Savior signs with Curtis Construction Company.
- August 1, 1971 – St. Paul's closes and Our Savior breaks ground.⁴⁵

⁴² Heins Email

⁴³ For picture see Appendix F

⁴⁴ "Hither to Hath the Lord Helped Us." Dedication Booklet for June 4, 1972. Church Files.

⁴⁵ For picture see Appendix G

- August 2, 1971 – Curtis Construction begins work.
- June 4, 1972 – Our Savior dedicates their new worship space.

During the construction of their new building, the congregation worshiped in the Dairy-Bacteriology Building on the campus of SDSU.⁴⁶ They could no longer worship in the student center since the congregation had now doubled in size. The congregation did not have to wait even a year and they were in their new building. On June 4, 1972, Wayne Schulz preached at the church's dedication on Exodus 3:1-6, 11-14. His sermon theme was "Take off your shoes, this is God's house." Our Savior had their building years earlier than they had planned.⁴⁷

A little over a year later, Pastor Heins would leave Our Savior to serve as the senior pastor at St. John's in Wauwatosa. It was August of 1973. Pastor Heins had demanded hard work from himself and those around him.⁴⁸ It showed from what the Lord accomplished through him while he was in Brookings. Just months before Pastor Heins left Our Savior there was a newspaper series on local churches. Pastor Heins' interview gives a good summary of how God blessed his ministry,

The more conservative the church, the more rapid its growth is a phenomenon that seems to be happening today among the Christian churches, according to Rev. Ronald Heins...Our Saviors in Brookings has 180 baptized members and 136 students from SDSU that attend the church's chapel on campus. Rev. Heins was the first resident pastor of the Brookings congregation when he came here five and a half years ago. His congregation then consisted of five members and he had more students on campus to minister to than he had congregation members.⁴⁹

For six years, Pastor Heins faithfully had served Our Savior with the means of grace.

If Our Savior had been built on a pastor, then it would have had problems at this point in its history, but Our Savior was built on the means of grace. The congregation did not skip a beat when its first pastor left. Instead they called another faithful man to serve in their midst. Pastor Zarling picked up right where Pastor Heins had left off and Our Savior continued its growth.

⁴⁶ For picture see Appendix H

⁴⁷ For picture see Appendix I

⁴⁸ Schumacher Email

⁴⁹ Conservative Church Keeps Growing. Brookings Register. December 11, 1972. (Church Files)

IV. Three Become One: 1974-1981

On January 13, 1974, Pastor Thomas Zarling was installed as pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church. The congregation had experienced a vacancy of about five months. Pastor Zarling remembered that in 1974 the communion/fellowship/ministry really consisted of three groups.⁵⁰ When Pastor Zarling arrived at the church, the three groups were too distinct for him to call them a congregation. He notes that even though the college students were very active, most were not members of the congregation. The task ahead of him was clear: to bring unity to these three distinctive groups, while letting each group serve with its distinctive gifts.

The three groups within the congregation were the original Our Savior group, the St. Paul's group, and the Lutheran collegians. The original group from Our Savior had special gifts in the area of mission work. They were known as the city folk. Pastor Zarling noted that they brought an outlook and attitude for missions. They understood how important it was for Our Savior to reach out to their particular community. The group from St. Paul's in Argo had exceptional gifts in experience as a church and in serving the needs of the actual church building. The group from St. Paul's had experience with setting up organizations within the larger church. They also brought a positive attitude. Finally, the Lutheran Collegians brought energy, eagerness, and an active hands-on approach to missions. The three groups complemented each other well. Over time, they learned to serve well as one unit. This was an exciting time in the congregation.⁵¹

The Lord Jesus brought these three diverse groups into unity by the faithful preaching of the gospel by Pastor Zarling and through the use of the means of grace. Worshipping together and studying God's Word together will always have that effect. As one's relationship and fellowship with God grow, one's fellowship with a fellow believer will also grow. At Our Savior, this was proven true. During Pastor Zarling's years of ministry, church attendance steadily grew. Pastor

⁵⁰ Zarling, Thomas. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 19 Oct. 2007.

⁵¹ Zarling Email

Zarling also brought a continued emphasis on Bible study and worship. Every Thursday night, there was vespers and Bible study for the collegians. Pastor Zarling was writing two sermons and two Bible studies for each week. The congregation greatly benefited from his hard work. They grew in love towards God and towards each other. In fact, Pastor Zarling says one of the joys of his ministry in Brookings was watching the congregation grow in unity and harmony throughout his years all by the blessing of our Holy God.

As the congregation grew in unity, they began to work together as a family. They began to take responsibility for their budget. Already in July of 1975, Our Savior went off synod subsidy for its operation. Just four years later in September of 1979, Our Savior became a self-supporting congregation after 12 years as a mission congregation. During Pastor Zarling's years, the congregation also began being served by a part-time secretary, Miss Linda Remmele, now Mrs. Linda Schumacher.⁵² The congregation was no longer a mission congregation and they had their own secretary.

Not only was Our Savior going off synod subsidy, but the congregation also was working together to build a parsonage for its pastor. In January of 1976, the parsonage on Medary Ave. was dedicated.⁵³ Pastor Zarling and his family became the first people to live in the brand new parsonage. The members of Our Savior participated in many areas of the construction.⁵⁴ In particular, they helped with the painting and staining in the parsonage.⁵⁵ Work on the church was also being done during these years. In September of 1977, the stained glass windows in the church were installed.

Finally, by the grace of God the congregation showed unity in their work as evangelists. Despite the fact that the congregation was no longer a mission congregation, they still wanted to

⁵² She has now been church secretary for at least 30 years depending on the exact date she started being secretary.

⁵³ For picture see Appendix J

⁵⁴ Zarling Email

⁵⁵ Schumacher, Linda. "OSLC History Responses." Email to the author. 20 Oct. 2007.

grow and they did grow. In 1974, there were 180 souls in the congregation. By 1980, there were 255 souls in the congregation. Pastor Zarling describes the reason for the steady growth of the congregation in this way,

The growth in membership of the congregation was due to the Lord's blessings through the typical WELS dynamic. We could identify three areas. 1. Individuals that transferred into the congregation from other WELS churches. 2. Individuals that came to Our Savior for confessional reasons, Professions of faith. 3. Individuals who were brought as part of a FRAN network. – It was rewarding to work with each group of people and go through basic Biblical truths. But it was especially rewarding to be a “team mate” of a member that was working with friend, a relative, (generally a spouse), acquaintance or a neighbor to bring them to Christ.⁵⁶

However, like Pastor Heins, Pastor Zarling too felt that he wanted to do more work on the congregational level. In fact, the hardest part of Pastor Zarling's ministry was time management. His work with the collegians was time consuming. It was hard to serve a congregation with members in both the city and the country because they were so spread out. It was also during this time that Pastor Zarling served as National Advisor to Lutheran Collegians and on the Campus ministry committee for WELS. Finally, he was the circuit pastor. In all of these capacities he served faithfully. In fact, Travel Canvass Witness was founded and funded by Lutheran Collegians while Pastor Zarling served. Even so, all these duties took away from his work with the congregation and his time with his family. After seven years of “being spread thin,” Pastor Zarling accepted the call to serve as Dean of Students at Dr. Martin Luther College. Pastor Zarling commented, “I often prayed asking whether or not I was truly serving the needs of the congregation/campus ministry.⁵⁷” We see in history that he did indeed serve the needs of Our Savior. He preached God's Word. We praise God for his blessing on Pastor Zarling's work.

V. Here Today; Gone Tomorrow: 1981-1989

⁵⁶ Zarling Email

⁵⁷ Zarling Email

The next nine years of the congregation were difficult years because they had three pastors in nine years. Each pastor served Our Savior for three years. Each pastor had his own strengths and weaknesses. The first of these three pastors was Pastor Robert Jensen. Pastor Jensen was installed on February 1, 1981. There were 251 members at this time.

Pastor Jensen served Our Savior from 1981 until 1983. In many ways, these were routine years. Pastor Heins and Zarling had established a pattern of ministry. Pastor Jensen stepped into the role of pastor at Our Savior and did what Our Savior pastors normally did. He did a fine job. He faithfully preached law and gospel. He faithfully administered the means of grace. He emphasized Bible study. He worked hard to help the congregation grow in the area of stewardship. The Sunday school program flourished. The congregation kept thinking about ways to expand. The congregation worked hard to keep up its buildings. There is even one story that during Pastor Jensen's tenure the church parsonage was repainted, but shortly after it was painted it rained. It had to be painted again.⁵⁸

The congregation's slow and steady growth continued during his tenure. Two facts contributed to the congregation's growth. The first most obvious factor was the gospel in Word and Sacrament. The second was the closing of a nearby ELS church named Oslo Lutheran.⁵⁹ John Moldstadt, Jr. was serving this country church just south of Volga, SD. Pastor Moldstadt received the call to Oslo Lutheran in 1980.⁶⁰ Accompanied with the call document was a letter requesting that he help them close the congregation. The congregation had 15 souls on the membership roster. Oslo Lutheran was just too small. A dual parish was not a good option for them. There was really no hope that Oslo Lutheran could grow from young families joining.⁶¹ The church finally did close in

⁵⁸ Jensen, Robert. Personal Interview. 20 Oct. 2007.

⁵⁹ For picture see Appendix K

⁶⁰ The content of this paragraph is take from the following source: Moldstadt, John. "RE: Our Savior Church History." Email to the author. 8 Nov. 2007.

⁶¹ Schumacher Email

1982. Between 1980 and 1982, Pastor Moldstadt was sad to see several younger families leave for the larger LCA⁶² church in nearby Volga, SD. They went to the LCA church because there was a better children's program. In the early discussion of the church closing, the hope was for Our Savior to take over the property. The ELS⁶³ lawyer discouraged this and instead the property was liquidated.⁶⁴

Pastor Moldstadt was apprehensive about the church closing. He wanted to make sure that the church membership would be served with the pure gospel. He wondered if the majority of the members would join the local ALC church in Volga, SD, instead of driving the 10 miles to Our Savior. Here, God showed that he is Lord of the church. Pastor Moldstadt tells the story,

Pastor Jensen, whose mother's maiden name is Quill, happened to fill in for me for a couple of Sundays during the summer. On one of those occasions he was in the basement of the church looking at pictures of former pastors. He did not know this at the time, but his great-uncle, C. J. Quill, once served as pastor at Oslo. Some of the older people remembered Pastor Quill well. Because of this "insider connection," the members at Oslo became more interested in attending Our Savior in Brookings (about 10 miles away). In the months ahead, right before the closing date, I began to realize how every one of the members (including two 90 year old shut-ins) now were planning to transfer their membership not to the Volga ELCA (as I wrongfully suspected could possibly occur) but to our Savior. This made closing the congregation much more palatable.⁶⁵

The closing service at Oslo was held on Christmas, December 25, 1982. Among those who did join Our Savior at this time were: Manda Twedt, Lyle, Milford, Henry and Leonard Twedt, John and Dorothy Geardink, and Mrs. Hillestad.⁶⁶ By the end of Pastor Jensen's ministry, there were 289 souls at Our Savior. The Lord knew what he was doing when he called Pastor Jensen to Our Savior.

⁶² Lutheran Church in America. This is now know as ELCA.

⁶³ Evangelical Lutheran Synod

⁶⁴ "The Board of Trustees from Oslo was authorized to sell and dispose of all the tangible property, except the land. There was a desire to utilize the corporate assets remaining for the perpetual care of the cemetery. Soon afterwards a large auction was held. The large bell from the tower was removed and purchased by Bethel Lutheran of Sioux Falls. A shipment of hymn books (the *Lutheran Hymnary*) went to Trinity Lutheran Church in Calmar, IA."

(Moldstadt Email)

⁶⁵ Moldstadt Email

⁶⁶ Schumacher Email

However, these were not perfectly happy days either. There was a certain amount of tension on the church council especially over matters of stewardship.⁶⁷ The church was struggling to meet its budget. Pastor Jensen and those on the church council did their best to do the work of the Lord despite tensions. Some felt that Pastor Jensen would not let the stewardship issue drop.⁶⁸

Notes from a January 17, 1984 meeting of the church council perhaps exemplify the tensions on the church council. At this particular meeting the most dramatic discussion that took place that day was not even on the agenda. There was a discussion that took place over who should chair the church council meeting.⁶⁹ In personal notes made on one council agenda from this meeting, it is written, "Pastor chairs meeting." Underneath this phrase are two illegible reasons why the pastor should chair the church council.⁷⁰ This issue regarding who should chair the church council was brought up later that meeting underneath the new business section of the agenda. The item was apparently tabled.⁷¹ On February 14, 1984, the church council moved that "the chairman of the congregation shall preside at church council meetings until a committee of congregational members will meet and present revisions and interpretations of the church constitution and by-laws. Motion passed."⁷² To this day, there are differences of memory over who was pushing to have the pastor chair the meetings.⁷³ Whatever the case, these were not the most comfortable discussions on the church council. During these months, a recurring item on the agenda was a "discussion of

⁶⁷ Schumacher, Chris. Personal Interview. 10 Nov. 2007.

⁶⁸ Schumacher Interview

⁶⁹ Schumacher Interview

⁷⁰ It was strange that someone could even argue for the pastor to chair the meeting. Article IV of the 1980 constitution of Our Savior read that the chairman of the congregation would chair the business affairs of the congregation.

⁷¹ The church does not have a copy of the minutes. The church only has a copy of the agenda with notes from a member of the council.

⁷² Church Council Minutes (Church Files)

⁷³ Schumacher Interview. Jensen Interview.

problems, needs, and concerns of the congregation...”⁷⁴ The church council was working together as it should to carry on the Lord’s work and resolve differences in a God pleasing way.

However, outside the council there were other members of the congregation who called for a congregational meeting with the circuit pastor. These members in the congregation spoke their opinion that Pastor Jensen ought to leave the congregation.⁷⁵ When Pastor Jensen received another call, he was urged by these members to leave Our Savior so that the congregation could move on.⁷⁶ In the May 8, 1984, church council meeting, Pastor Jensen announced that he had accepted the call to Glendale, Arizona.⁷⁷ Pastor Jensen’s ministry was coming to an end in Brookings.

As Pastor Jensen concluded his faithful ministry at Our Savior, the Lord continued his gracious care of his people. He kept blessing the congregation in Brookings. Then, God blessed them with another faithful shepherd in Pastor Paul Zell. Pastor Zell was installed after a 6-week vacancy on July 15, 1984. He was a recent graduate of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He was a good listener, very patient, and became well liked by the congregation.

Pastor Zell served as pastor of Our Savior from July 15, 1984 until June 14, 1987. His years as pastor were peaceful and prosperous years. Pastor Zell, like every pastor before him, faithfully preached law and gospel. His sermons were interesting.⁷⁸ Worship attendance increased because people could see that members of Our Savior “were at peace in the Lord Jesus and happy for his many blessings. They also heard Jesus’ good news in preaching, teaching, and singing of the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit used his means of grace.”⁷⁹ At Our Savior, the Word was preached.

At this time in the church’s history, the church grew inwardly just as much as it did outwardly. They found unity in God’s Word and Sacraments as they always had. At the end of

⁷⁴ Church Council Minutes (Church Files)

⁷⁵ Jensen Interview

⁷⁶ Jensen Interview

⁷⁷ Church Council Minutes (Church Files)

⁷⁸ Schumacher Email

⁷⁹ Zell, Paul. “Re: Church History Paper.” Email to the author. 12 Oct. 2007.

Pastor's Zell's short time in Brookings, he felt comfortable leaving because he saw strong leadership in the congregation. Pastor Zell remembers, "I regarded Our Savior as a very healthy congregation with solid leaders that would transition to a new pastor quite easily and that would continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and in numbers as well."⁸⁰

During Pastor Zell's ministry there were not any major historical events, but there were small victories along the way. He lists these as God's blessings during his pastorate:

- During the 1984-85 school year the basement of the Student Center was remodeled and redecorated. Don Schmeichel played a pivotal role in that undertaking.
- In August of 1985 three Sunday School classrooms were built in the basement of the parsonage to relieve crowding in the church building. Alvin Krause was one of the leaders of the project.
- Sidewalks were added along the north and west sides of the church property. This was probably 1985. The Twedt brothers spearheaded the project.
- Elroy Begalka constructed a beautiful new church sign in the summer of 1985. He managed to match the design of the sign with that of the church building.⁸¹

Even though no major building projects started, the congregation was beginning to feel the pinch especially on Sunday morning. There was not a place for the congregation to have Bible class except in the church itself. Sunday morning attendance was at 229 people for an average. Some long-range planning began, but the funds were not available. The building project would have to wait for Pastor Parlow.

After a short, but blessed ministry in Brookings, Pastor Zell accepted the call to St. Croix Lutheran High School, West St. Paul, MN in April of 1987. The Lord Jesus had healed a congregation that had been hurting through his Word and Sacrament. He left a congregation at peace.

On June 28, 1987, Pastor John Parlow was installed as the fifth pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church. Pastor Parlow was hard-working, energetic, and willing to think out-of-the-box.

⁸⁰ Zell Email

⁸¹ Zell Email

He was charismatic, popular, and strong in his opinions.⁸² He served Our Savior from June 28, 1987 until January of 1990. His sermons were short, yet dynamic. He was known often to be at church by 5:30am.⁸³

Despite his short time in Brookings, Pastor Parlow helped the church grow in two ways. First of all the church experienced growth numerically. In fact, during these years the church grew faster than any other point in its history, with the exception of the two earlier mergers with St. Paul's and Oslo. The church also grew physically. Right after Pastor Parlow left, the church voted for its long over-due expansion of its facilities. This vote took place on January 7, 1990. The vote was 20 yes, 2 no, and one abstained.⁸⁴ Shortly before this vote, Pastor Parlow had taken a call to his former vicar congregation in Baraboo, WI.⁸⁵ God had blessed Pastor Parlow's ministry with much fruit as his Word was preached.

IV: Pastor Marggraf: 1990-2000

Pastor Paul Marggraf was installed on February 18, 1990. He served Our Savior until January 2000. The congregation needed a pastor to stay with them, love them, and teach them to grow because the congregation was reeling from such quick turn-over of pastors. God blessed them richly with Pastor Marggraf. While pastors in the past were tested by difficult times, Pastor Marggraf was faced with the most challenging times in the history of the congregation. It was during his pastorate that the congregation would go through its second building project, have their church destroyed by a storm, begin and close a preschool, and at the end of ten years face a divided congregation.

When Pastor Marggraf arrived at the congregation, the congregation was "afraid yet filled with joy at the prospect of starting a major building project. They were also trying to come to terms

⁸² Hansen, Ann. "OSLC Survey." Email to the author. 15 Oct. 2007.

⁸³ Schumacher Email

⁸⁴ Quarterly Meeting Minutes. (Church Files)

⁸⁵ Brokmeier, Ken. "Re: Our Savior Church History." Email to the author. 16 Oct. 2007

with the loss of their third pastor in 9 years, the last of whom was very dynamic.”⁸⁶ Pastor Parlow, a very popular pastor, had left them right after leading them into a building project. Pastor Marggraf boldly stepped into this situation with a call from the Savior.

After the January 7, 1990 vote to add onto their facilities, Our Savior contracted once again with Curtis Construction Company in April 1990. On June 4, 1990, Our Savior had the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new addition.⁸⁷ Excitement was high in the congregation. While the addition was being built, the congregation planned to worship in the sanctuary. Then while the sanctuary was remodeled, the congregation planned to worship in the new addition. The plans never came to fruition. God brought to Pastor Marggraf his first major challenge. Less than two weeks after ground breaking on June 16, 1990, straight-line winds blew the roof off of the church.⁸⁸ The congregation had to scrap their plans and worship in the University Lutheran Center, the ELCA⁸⁹ chapel, on the SDSU campus for the rest of the summer. Then from September 1990, through early February 1991 the congregation worshipped at the former Boswick’s store in the University Mall.⁹⁰ Finally, ~~From~~ ^{From} early February 1991 through March 17, 1991, Our Savior worshipped in their newly remodeled sanctuary.⁹¹ Finally on June 2, 1991, everything seemed to be set right again. On that day, the church dedicated their new fellowship hall and Sunday school rooms.⁹²

Needless to say, the building project did not go as smoothly as planned. The destruction of their sanctuary had been completely out of the congregation’s hands. However, other challenges arose in connection with the building project. The congregation had hired Curtis Construction Company “to build the classroom areas in such a way that they could be used for a future Lutheran

⁸⁶ Marggraf, Paul. No subject line. Email to the author. 26 Oct. 2007.

⁸⁷ For picture see Appendix L

⁸⁸ For picture see Appendix M

⁸⁹ Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

⁹⁰ For picture see Appendix N

⁹¹ Church Directory of 2001. (Church Files)

⁹² For picture see Appendix O

elementary school – meeting all the appropriate codes, etc.”⁹³ Curtis Construction Company did not meet the expectations of Our Savior.⁹⁴ Curtis Construction stated, “(We were) asked to build an education wing that would meet all fire and safety codes for a full-time Christian Day School. However, there is nothing in our written contract about a full-time Christian Day School.”⁹⁵ In fact, Curtis Construction constructed a building that fell short of code in several areas.⁹⁶ Our Savior was forced into a dilemma. Should they pursue legal action to make Curtis Construction meet Our Savior’s expectations and also to meet code?⁹⁷ The church council discussed the matter in a meeting on February 19, 1991. A motion was adopted which read, “The Building Committee will be contacted regarding the stairways and code. The contractor and city will have to work out the problem.”⁹⁸ This motion did not end the issue. Finally, the issue came before the voters at a meeting on March 24, 1991. Two options were presented to the voters,

- 1) Approve the building as is and make final payment to contractor
- 2) Get contractor to bring education wing up to fire and safety codes by either: a) widening stairways, lowering windows, and installing fireglass in doors or b) sprinkling entire classroom area (if option ‘2’ is chosen, a lawyer should be retained to see if there is a case).

The congregation voted for number option one.⁹⁹

⁹³ Marggraf Email

⁹⁴ Hansen, Seth. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2007.

⁹⁵ In a document provided to the voters of Our Savior on March 24, 1991.

⁹⁶ In a document provided to the voters on March 24, 1991, the reasons why the facility did not meet code were listed as follows:

1. “No pre-school, kindergarten or 1st grade class may occupy a classroom that is not on ground level. As it stands, our congregation could not conduct pre-school through 1st grade in the education wing.
2. All stairways must be 44 inches from the wall to the nearest obstruction (in our case, the hand rail). As it stands, the stairways are approximately 36 inches from the wall to the handrail.
3. The bottom of the window sill in any and all rooms used for class rooms must be no more than 44 inches from the floor of the class room. The window sills in the lower class rooms are approximately 60 inches from floor to the bottom of the sill.
4. All class rooms must be served by a fire-alarm system.
5. All glass in a classroom door must be of wire-mesh, fire safety glass.
6. The state and city fire and safety officials will not grant a variance for numbers 2,3, and 6 above if the entire school area would be served by a sprinkler system.”

⁹⁷ Hansen Interview

⁹⁸ Church Council Minutes (Church Files)

⁹⁹ Hansen Interview. Minutes for the meeting are not in the church file.

With the vote, the reality of ever starting a Christian day school in the near future died. It was a momentous vote. Our Savior had always dreamed of building a Christian day school. Those dreams began when the congregation was worshipping in the WELS student center. It was thought that some day the student center could be the school.¹⁰⁰ The dream of a Christian day school was built into the long-range plans during the purchase of the plot of land on 8th Street South. When Our Savior bought their plot of land on 8th Street South back in 1969, the members proclaimed, “Future long range planning for this site will include facilities for an eight grade Christian Day School and a Sunday School/fellowship area.”¹⁰¹

One question that needs to be answered here is whether the congregation should have pursued legal action against Curtis Construction. There is a solid group of people who believed that they should have. The vote was a disappointment for a core group of people committed to Christian education and a group of people who wanted Curtis Construction to honor their contract.¹⁰² They wanted to see a Lutheran elementary school built in Brookings. Over the years, many of this core group transferred to St. Martin’s in Watertown, SD when their children were of school age because St. Martin’s operated a school.¹⁰³ Furthermore, Our Savior never received the building for which they had contracted, even though they had completed their obligations. Though we still don’t know the full consequences of taking no action against Curtis Construction, this much is clear: Our Savior left itself with no opportunity to begin a school at the current facilities without significant remodeling expense.¹⁰⁴ A huge and significant roadblock to a Lutheran elementary school was allowed to remain. It was plain that the congregation could have in good conscience decided to pursue legal action. They had kept their part of the agreement. Curtis Construction had bound

¹⁰⁰ Pastor Heins wrote to Pastor Dobberstein on March 10, 1970, “In the course of our PFR study the thought was rendered that perhaps when the time came that a Day school would be considered seriously, that it could be held in the student center...” (Heins Personal Files)

¹⁰¹ Press Release to Brookings Register. (Church Files)

¹⁰² Hansen Interview

¹⁰³ Marggraf Email

¹⁰⁴ Hansen Interview

itself to keep their part of the agreement. Our Savior let them off the hook. It seems the congregation did not pursue legal action to be “nice” and because they were tired of running into problems with Curtis Construction. Maybe the congregation was not sure it could win the case in court. It is also understandable that the congregation wanted to begin using their new buildings as soon as possible. Perhaps this vote also showed the congregation’s attitude toward Christian education. Was it becoming clear that the congregation as a whole did not put a high priority on Christian education with a Lutheran elementary school?

Even though this action by the voters dampened the hopes of many for Christian education, just a few years later a “Little Lambs” Christian preschool was started. A special voters meeting was held on June 16, 1996 to establish the preschool. The motion to start a preschool in September of 1996 passed 17-5.¹⁰⁵ Rachel Wendler was called to serve as Pre-school teacher. The Preschool was open for two school years. On April 26, 1998, the voters decided to close the “Little Lambs” program.¹⁰⁶ The preschool had experienced success. It was even reported in several quarterly voter’s meetings minutes that there was a waiting list to get into the program. However, the congregation did not get behind the preschool. Some felt that the children would destroy the carpet.¹⁰⁷ Others were concerned about the “wear and tear” on the buildings because of the program.¹⁰⁸ The preschool director held classes in the fellowship hall because the Sunday school rooms did not meet code. Each week much of the preschool items had to be moved to make room for Sunday activities. This caused undo wear on the buildings.¹⁰⁹

The final challenge that Pastor Marggraf faced was an attack on his ministry. Near the end of his 10 years as pastor in Brookings, a petition was circulated around the congregation. The

¹⁰⁵ Special Voter’s Meeting Minutes (Church Files)

¹⁰⁶ Quarterly Meeting Minutes (Church Files)

¹⁰⁷ Schumacher Email

¹⁰⁸ Hansen Email

¹⁰⁹ Hansen Interview

petition called for a vote of no confidence in Pastor Marggraf's abilities to lead the congregation. The signed petition was given to him on Christmas Eve, 1999.¹¹⁰ At this time, Pastor Marggraf was holding the call to Delano, MN.¹¹¹ The vote of no confidence did not come out of no-where. The tensions had been building on the church council. But it was not the church council that passed around the petition. The impetus for the petition came from outside the leadership of the congregation.¹¹² The congregation was divided on the issue. Some wanted Pastor Marggraf to stay while others wanted him to leave.¹¹³ Pastor Marggraf decided to take the call to Delano, MN in January of 2000. Thus the challenges he had faced in Brookings came to an end. The Lord had used Pastor Marggraf to lead the congregation through very challenging times. We praise God for his ministry among God's people and his faithful proclamation of law and gospel. God had once again blessed Our Savior with a faithful pastor.

VII. Starting Over: 2000-Present

After a controversy in a congregation, the congregation often has difficulty obtaining a new pastor. This was true for Our Savior in Brookings. The congregation experienced an 8-month vacancy, but their wait was worth it. In April 2000, Pastor Ken Brokmeier was called to serve at Our Savior. He accepted the call, but due to other obligations he was not able to begin his work in Brookings until August 2000. He was installed on August 27, 2000. His work was cut out for him.

He knew that Our Savior was a divided congregation. His goal was to love each member as a child of God. In Northwestern College, Dean Lindemann had uttered a truism that struck home to Pastor Brokmeier, "God's people will overlook and forgive many of your weaknesses if you try and love them like the Savior loved you." He did his best to avoid conversations about the past. In

¹¹⁰ Hansen Email

¹¹¹ Marggraf Email

¹¹² Palmer, Deanna. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 10 Nov. 2007.

¹¹³ Palmer Email

fact, he did not do an “every member visit” for this very reason.¹¹⁴ For Pastor Brokmeier, it was time for Our Savior to get back to the basics: worship and corporate Bible study. These were his emphases in 2000 and they continue to be his emphases today.

In connection with his emphasis on Bible study, he began offering new Bible classes. He began offering mid-week Bible studies year-round for the first time in the congregation’s history. He offered options for Bible study on Sunday mornings. He also urged the leaders of the congregation to get involved in Bible study. Finally, he encouraged Bible study by publicizing it in bulletins and in public announcements.

Pastor Brokmeier has significantly broadened the ministry of Our Savior in his time as pastor in his attempt to lead the congregation to grow inwardly and outwardly. In August of 2003, Our Savior officially entered into the vicar program of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Peter Sternberg was called to serve as vicar from August of 2003 to August of 2004. Every year since 2003, Our Savior has called a vicar to serve among them. James Backus, Clint Rogas, Timothy Bourman, and G. Philip Arnold have all served among the believers at Our Savior. The vicar program has been beneficial for the congregation because they have received gospel ministry from all of these men. The vicar program has also been beneficial because it has led the congregation to take a broader view of the work of the synod and finally of the kingdom of God.

Pastor Brokmeier has also broadened the ministry at Our Savior by offering more programs and events. Christmas for Kids and Little Lambs Story Time are now regularly on the church calendar. An Advent Tea by the women of the congregation is also a special annual event.

The work with the Lutheran Collegians is moving into the 21st century with Pastor Brokmeier. He makes weekly contact with the collegians via email. There are also monthly

¹¹⁴Brokmeier Email

congregational/collegian lunches. Finally, there are service opportunities for the collegians as they serve as ushers, choir members, Sunday school teachers, and TCW¹¹⁵ canvassers.

Our Savior has always struggled with stewardship in its history. For the past few years, the congregation has been running in the black. Pastor Brokmeier points to higher Bible class numbers for this change. The formation of the Planned Giving Committee has also led to better stewardship in the congregation. It is to be noted that the congregation's CMO¹¹⁶ has never been higher.

Pastor Brokmeier is training men to be leaders at Our Savior. One particular group of men meets monthly to receive training. This group of men is known as the shepherds. They are seen as the future of the congregation. It is the hope that these men will head up the elders program and take an active leadership role in every facet of the congregation.

At the present, the congregation is at an exciting time in their history. Our Savior is a thriving church, a church at peace in Jesus. God has worked among his people with the gospel. Church and Bible class attendance ^{are} ~~is~~ starting to look again ^{like} ~~it~~ did in the boom years from 1986-1988. Really the congregation is back to where it was in the late 1980s. That group of believers built a brand new fellowship hall. What will this group of believers do?

Only God can know the future, but by taking a look at the history of the congregation, we can see where God is carrying Our Savior. Our Savior has always been a forward looking and forward moving congregation of believers. To make a broad statement, history is saying that it is time for Our Savior to do more ministry. Most of all it will take a continued emphasis on the Word and Sacraments to do more ministry. Is it time for the congregation to add a second pastor? Pastor Brokmeier is trying to balance his time working for both synod and Our Savior. He could use a full-time helping hand. Furthermore, the step from a vicar to a pastor is not a huge jump to make financially speaking. Pastor Brokmeier could continue his focus on patiently dealing with inactive

¹¹⁵ Travel Canvass Witness

¹¹⁶ Congregational Mission Offering

members, while the second pastor could focus on evangelism. Is it time for Our Savior to daughter a congregation? Our Savior could get back to its roots and become active in doing evangelism. The Brookings community is growing right now. Unemployment is at an all-time low in Brookings. The collegians are willing to roll up their sleeves alongside the members of the congregation to do the work of evangelism. Is this the time for the congregation to go through a building project? Church services are starting to fill up. Stewardship is going well in the congregation. The congregation has not gone through a building project in 17 years. Our Savior needs to keep working on its buildings just to keep them in repair. Is this the time for the congregation to consider a Christian day school? Confirmands and all children can always using more training in God's Word. For this reason, alone the congregation should consider a school. Furthermore, the congregation is full of capable, able teachers. These are questions that time will answer when we look at history and see what God works through his grace.

For 40 years, God has blessed Our Savior through our Savior, Jesus Christ. God will continue to bless Our Savior as his Word continues to be preached and his Sacraments administered. Our Savior has had ups. Our Savior has had downs. Through the hard times and the good times, the Lord Jesus brought Our Savior faithful preaching of law and gospel. God blessed his people at Our Savior with his Holy Supper. As we peer at the history of Our Savior, we rejoice as we see God's blessings to his people. We see how God foresaw how certain men needed to pastor his church at certain points in history. We see how God's plan is much higher than our plans. God certainly was with his people at Our Savior throughout their history. With God's Word and Sacraments, Our Savior now moves confidently into the future knowing that God will continue to bless the congregation as he always has in the past. May God continue to dwell with his people in Word and Sacrament. To God be the glory!

Bibliography

- Birner, Herber. "Re: Our Savior – History Paper." Email to the author. 26 Oct. 2007.
- Brokmeier, Ken. "Re: Our Savior Church History." Email to the author. 16 Oct. 2007.
- Church Directory of 1991. Church Files.
- Church Directory of 2001. Church Files.
- Church Directory of 2004. Church Files.
- "Growing Up As Christ Builds Us Up." Church Stewardship Program 1982. Church Files.
- Heins, Ronald. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 10 Oct. 2007.
- Heins, Ronald. Personal Correspondence. Located in his personal files.
- Heins, Ronald. Personal Interview. 18 Oct. 2007.
- Hansen, Ann. "OSLC Survey." Email to the author. 15 Oct. 2007.
- Hansen, Seth. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2007.
- "Hither to Hath the Lord Helped Us." Dedication Booklet for June 4, 1972. Church Files.
- Jensen, Robert. Personal Interview. 20 Oct. 2007.
- Marggraf, Paul. No subject line. Email to the author. 26 Oct. 2007.
- Moldstadt, John. "RE: Our Savior Church History." Email to the author. 8 Nov. 2007.
- Palmer, Deanna. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 10 Nov. 2007.
- Schumacher, Chris. Personal Interview. 10 Nov. 2007.
- Schumacher, Linda. "OSLC History Responses." Email to the author. 20 Oct. 2007.
- "Seventy-Five Years Of God's Blessings: 1920-1995." Dakota-Montana District Publication, 1995.
- Stohr, Pamela. "History of St. Paul's/Our Savior for Mr. West." July 29, 1982. Church Files.
- Zarling, Thomas. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 19 Oct. 2007.
- Zell, Paul. "Re: Church History Paper." Email to the author. 12 Oct. 2007.

Appendix A - Timeline of Events

Late 1930's – WELS decides to establish mission congregation in Brookings, SD.

Mission abandoned

Mid 1960's – WELS considers another mission start in Brookings, SD

Fall 1963 – Student Center purchased

January 19, 1964 – First worship service held by Pastor Brandt from Clear Lake, SD

January 26, 1964 – Student Center is dedicated to the Lord

February 14, 1967 – Our Savior Lutheran Church is officially formed

February 19, 1967 – Our Savior sends a letter to the synod requesting to join the synod

August 6, 1967 – Pastor Ronald Heins is installed as the first resident pastor

December 27, 1967 – Pastor Heins sends a letter to the District Mission Board requesting that land be purchased for the building of a new church

January 29, 1968 – Heins writes another letter asking also for a church to be built on the requested property

February 1, 1968 – Our Savior receives a letter stating they will not receive a church at this time

Summer 1968 – Parsonage is purchased at 327 Eastern Ave

Spring 1969 – Land is purchased on 8th Street South

Fall 1969 – Plans are started for a new building

November 1970 – Our Savior applies for a building loan, which was rejected

August 1, 1971 – St. Paul's in Argo closes

- Groundbreaking for new building of Our Savior

August 2, 1971 – Construction work begins on the new building

June 4, 1972 – Our Savior dedicates the new building

August 1973 – Pastor Heins takes a call to serve in Wauwatosa

January 13, 1974 – Pastor Thomas Zarling is installed

July 1975 – Our Savior goes off synod subsidy

January 1976 – parsonage on Medary Ave is dedicated

September 1977 – Stained glass windows in the church are installed

September 1979 – Our Savior becomes self-supporting

February 1981 – Pastor Robert Jensen is installed

December 25, 1982 – Oslo church holds closing service

May 8, 1984 – Pastor Jensen accepts a call to Glendale, AZ

July 15, 1984 – Pastor Paul Zell is installed

April 1987 – Pastor Zell accepts a call to W. St Paul, MN

June 28, 1987 – Pastor John Parlow is installed

January 7, 1990 – Vote passes to expand on the current facility

February 18, 1990 – Pastor Paul Marggraf is installed

June 4, 1990 – Our Savior hold ceremonial groundbreaking of new addition

June 16, 1990 – Straight-line winds blow off the roof of the church

September 1990 to February 1991 – Church worships at Boswick's store as repairs were being done

June 2, 1991 – Dedication of new addition

June 16, 1996 – Vote passes to start a preschool

September 1996 – Little Lambs preschool opens

January 2000 – Marggraf accepts a call to Delano, MN

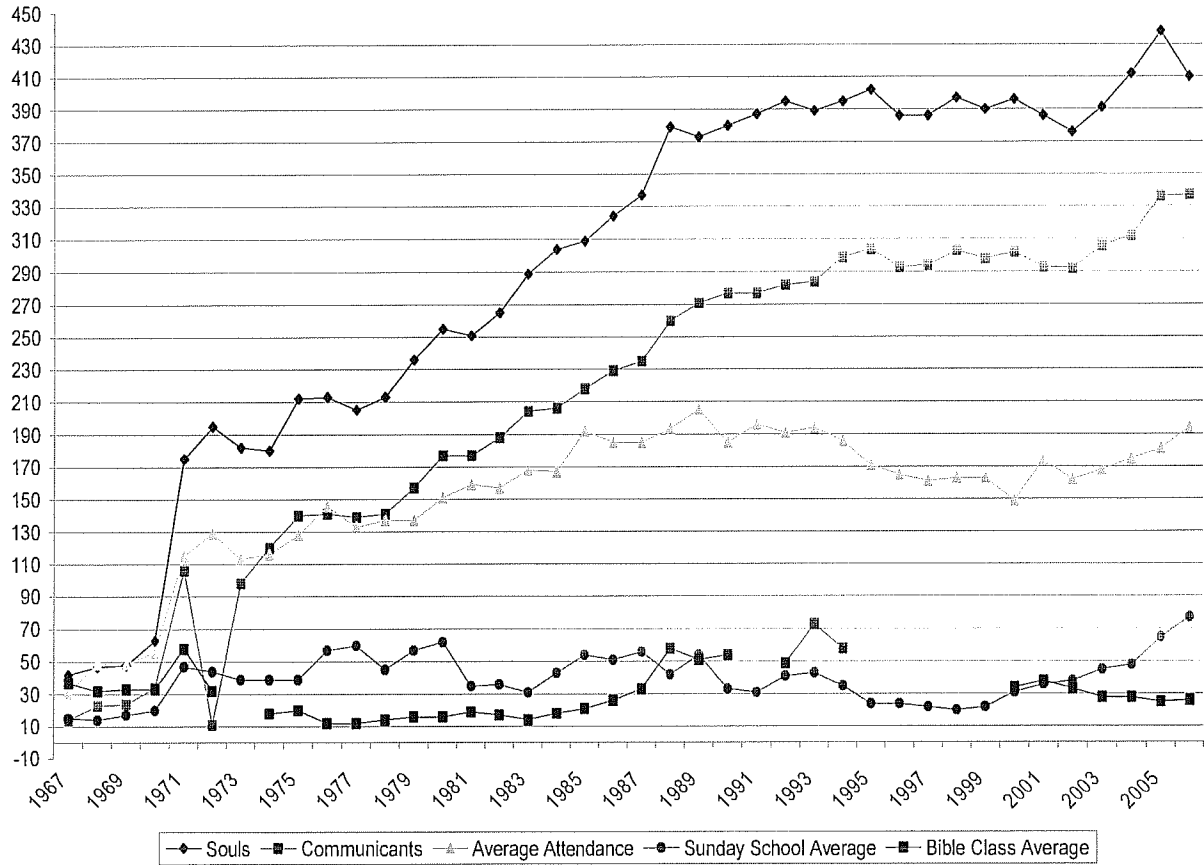
April 2000 – Pastor Ken Brokmeier receives the call to serve Our Savior

August 27, 2000 – Pastor Brokmeier is installed

August 2003 – Vicar program starts at Our Savior

Appendix B

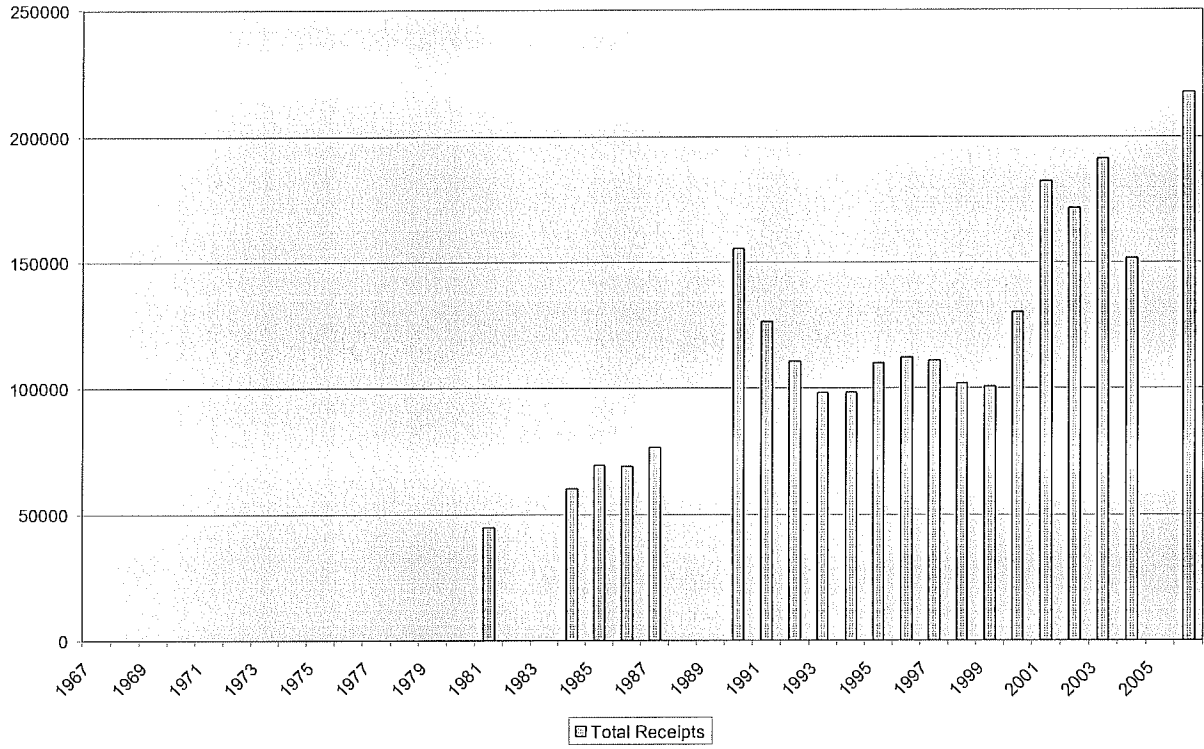
Attendance and Membership Analysis



*These numbers are based on the statistics reported in the annual reports in the church files.

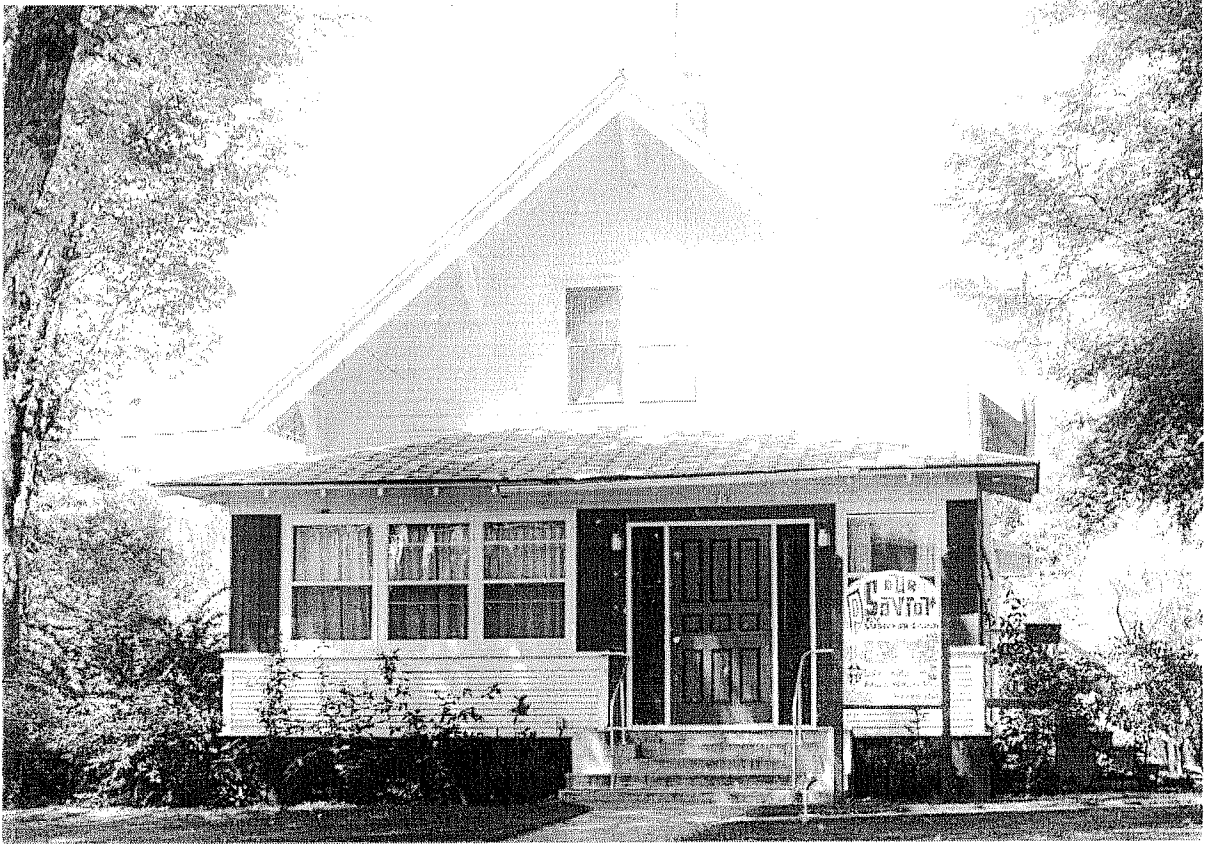
Appendix C

Total Receipts



*These numbers are based the reported receipts in the annual reports.

Appendix D



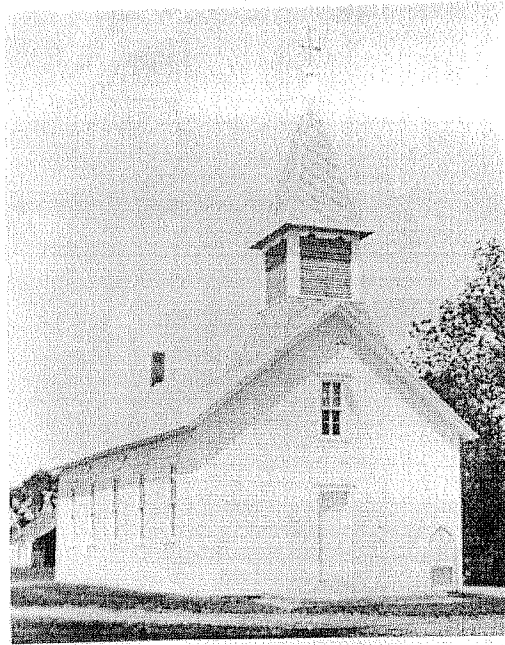
WELS Lutheran Student Center

Appendix E



Eastern Avenue Parsonage

Appendix F



Erected in 1890.

ARGO TOWNSHIP, BROOKINGS COUNTY
SOUTH DAKOTA

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Appendix G



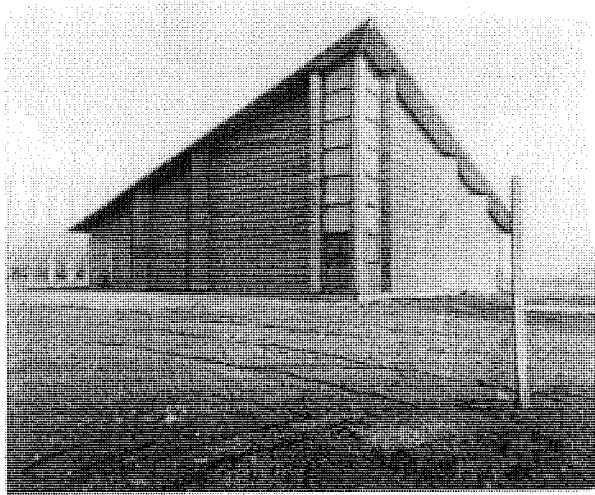
Ground Breaking with Pastor Heins

Appendix H



Worship at the SDSU Dairy Building

Appendix I



Dedication of the Original Church

Appendix J



Medary Avenue Parsonage

Appendix K



Oslo Lutheran Church

Appendix L



Ground-Breaking for Edition on August 1, 1990

Appendix M



Straight-line wind damage in the June, 1990

Appendix N



Worship at Boswick's in the University Mall

Appendix O



Dedication of the New Edition