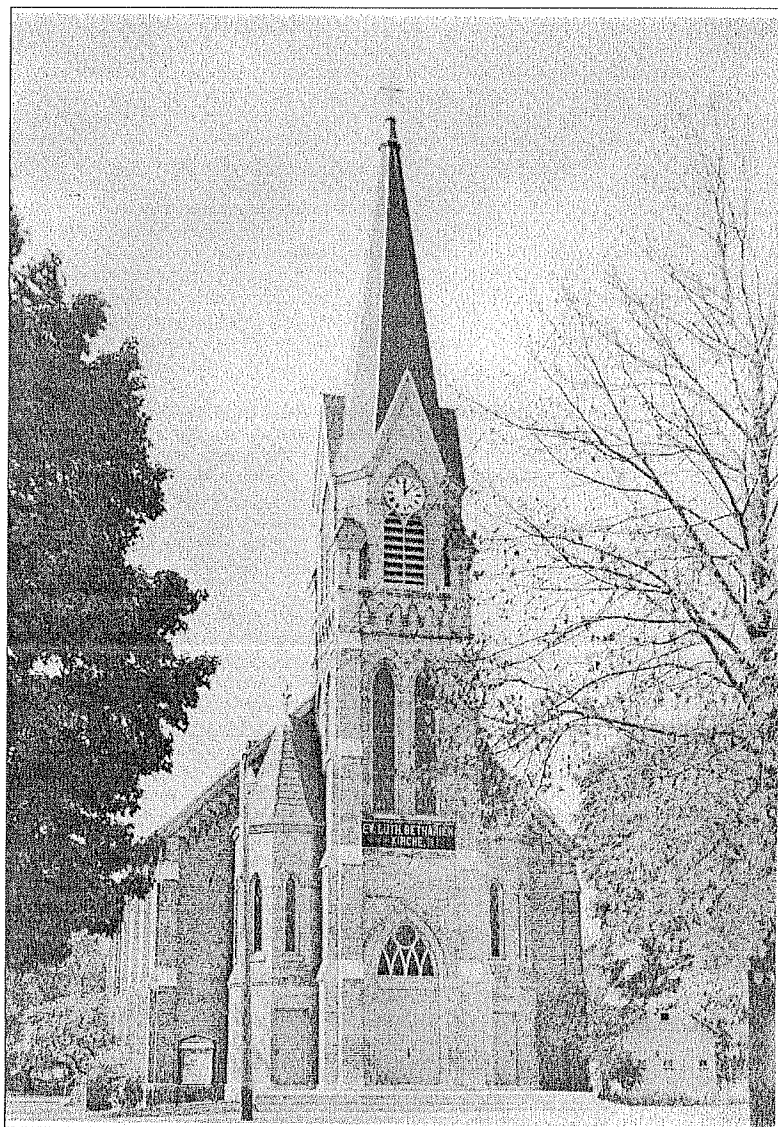


*The Voices That Have Impacted Bethany Congregation  
From 1908 Into The Third Millennium*



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May 1<sup>st</sup> 2001*

## **The Voices That Have Impacted Bethany Congregation from 1908 into the Third Millennium**

“During the 1840s there was trouble in Europe, especially in Germany, with overcrowding, leading to a shortage of land and jobs. In addition, the laws governing religion, established by King Friedrich Wilhelm III, prevented Lutherans from worshiping according to their beliefs. When word spread in Germany of the new land of freedom and opportunity, Germans began to arrive in America by the thousands, bringing with them their Lutheran faith. Some of these people found their way to Hustisford, WI, changing it to a largely German community”<sup>1</sup>

Due to the large immigration of German Lutherans, Bethany, known at the time as “Die Deutsche Ev. Lutherische St. Bethanien Gemeinde,” was organized in 1858. Bethany congregation grew steadily through the first fifty years of its existence, reaching a membership of about 1060 souls.

### ***Introduction***

Many church bodies have existed in or near the village of Hustisford, WI through the years. These church bodies included the Baptist (1855-1858), Methodist Episcopal (1857-1868), and the German Protestant Ev. Society (1857-1861). Because of poor membership these churches were not able to survive for very long. Today, there are only two churches in the small village of Hustisford, Bethany Ev. Lutheran Church and the Presbyterian Church. With her current membership close to 800 souls, Bethany is the dominant congregation in the small village of Hustisford. In the 1993 Bethany directory Pastor Bauer wrote, “If only these walls could talk! Imagine what they have heard over the years.” Indeed the walls of Die Deutsche Ev. Lutherische St. Bethanien Gemeinde have heard a multitude of voices over the years. Pastor Bauer wrote in the introduction of the 1993 directory:

“These walls have heard the voices of ten full-time pastors preaching the Word, speaking of sin and grace; voices of Godparents speaking on behalf of their Godchildren at baptism; voices of young people on their confirmation day, promising to remain faithful to Christ; voices of men and women speaking their marriage vows and declaring faithfulness to each other; voices to members comforting one another at the funeral service for a loved one; voices of young and old confessing sins, singing praises, and bringing prayers before God’s throne of grace. These walls have heard these voices in both German and English.”

These voices testify that Bethany congregation has had a rich German heritage since it was founded in 1858. Since the first fifty years of Bethany’s history (1858-1908) has already been covered in a paper written by Mark Rosenberg, this paper will primarily focus on the latter years of Bethany’s rich heritage. The thesis for this paper is to examine the voices that have impacted Bethany congregation in a significant way from 1908 into the third millennium.

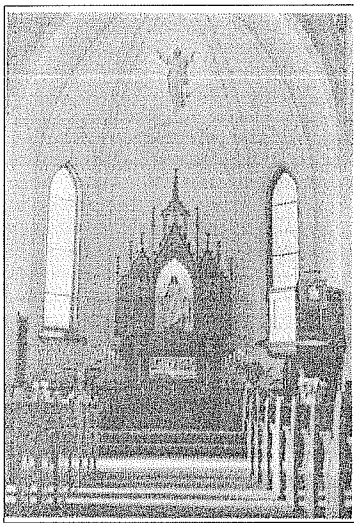
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<sup>1</sup> Celebrating Hustisford’s 150 Year Heritage, p. 23

### *The need for a new building at the end of the 19th Century*

Within the first fifty years of her history, Bethany experienced tremendous growth. Bethany experienced so much growth that her first buildings became inadequate for her rapidly growing membership. The founders of Bethany congregation desired to have a place for worship and so they used the material that they had, namely logs, to build their first place of worship in 1858. These early pioneers realized that it was not so much the material of the building which the Lord was interested in as the material found in his Word, namely sin and grace. Because these early pioneers saw the importance of sharing God's Word, they would take the next step to provide a sufficient place for worship when conditions and needs demanded it. By 1866 this small log style church was no longer able to fill the needs of the rapidly growing congregation. As a temporary solution Bethany purchased a white frame church building owned by the German Protestant Ev. Society on February 7th of 1866. This was a very important step for Bethany congregation. It was a step which contributed immensely to the continued growth of Bethany.

By the year 1891, however, it was apparent that this thirty year old building was becoming more and more inadequate to meet the needs of a still growing congregation. A committee was formed to examine the feasibility of repairing and remodeling the old log style building. The committee found that it would be better simply to start over and build a new worship facility. In December of 1891 a congregational majority vote favored building a new church and on June 18th of 1893 the cornerstone was laid.



Going into the 20th century, Bethany members had a new church in which to worship the true cornerstone of their Christian faith, namely Jesus Christ. Within these new church walls, people gathered to be encouraged in their faith, to confess their belief in the Triune God, to sing hymns of thanks and praise, to kneel at the Lord's table, to gather at the cross on Good Friday, and to rejoice over the empty tomb of Easter Sunday. For the next ninety-three years (plus) many voices would impact Bethany Lutheran Church in a significant way.

### *How Bethany's Pastors have impacted the congregation*

Obviously the voice that has effected Bethany congregation the most is the voice of God speaking through his Word. Bethany's pastors have played a key role in proclaiming that Word. All of Bethany's pastors have regarded God's Word to be inerrant and have proclaimed it as such. God has graciously preserved his Word at Bethany for the past one hundred forty-three years by providing Bethany congregation with faithful and dedicated pastors. These pastors have had the same faith, the same confession, and the same Savior. God used these pastors to comfort troubled souls, to win lost souls, and to encourage souls that were strong in their faith. Although a number of these souls never left the village of Hustisford, many others did. As a result, the blessings of Bethany spread even further. This is true

because even though these members left Bethany congregation, they took the truths that they learned there with them.

The pastor at Bethany during the time of Bethany's golden anniversary (1908) was Pastor William Huth. Pastor Huth served Bethany congregation from 1895 to 1911. He was one of the first pastors to deliver a sermon in the English language. It was during his ministry that the Ladies Aid started at Bethany in 1910. In April of the following year, Pastor Huth accepted a call to a professorship at Northwestern College in Watertown, WI. Pastor Huth was succeeded by Pastor August Kirchner. Pastor Kirchner served from 1911 to 1916. Pastor Kirchner was another pastor who preached a sermon in English. In order to do so, however, he had to seek permission from the congregation. Permission was granted for Pastor Kirchner to preach an English sermon for the Mission Festival in 1914. The following year, Pastor Kirchner experienced health problems and had to give up his work. To assist him, student Martin J. Nommensen was called in October of 1915. Unfortunately Pastor Kirchner never fully recovered and was taken to his heavenly home in January of 1916. Pastor Kirchner was one of two Bethany pastors to die while serving at Bethany. The members of Bethany at that time mourned the death of their beloved pastor by draping the whole church with black material for an entire month.

The next full-time pastor at Bethany was Pastor William Nommensen. Pastor W. Nommensen was from Grand Rapids, WI and he served faithfully at Bethany until 1919 at which time he took a call to Columbus, WI. Pastor W. Nommensen's successor was Pastor Herman Fleischer. Pastor Fleischer was from Lake Geneva, WI and he served faithfully at Bethany until 1925 at which time he assumed a professorship at Northwestern College. Pastor Fleischer's successor was Pastor Frederick Marohn who served from 1916 to 1943. It was during Pastor Marohn's ministry that a new Wangerin organ was purchased for \$5,700.<sup>2</sup>

Pastor Harry Schaar served as a vacancy pastor from 1943 to 1944. In 1944 Pastor Erdman P. Pankow accepted a call to Bethany. It was during Pastor Pankow's ministry that the transition from the German language to the English became apparent. It was also during Pastor Pankow's ministry that the Sunday School program began at Bethany. The Sunday School program started in 1955. After Pastor Pankow left in 1957, Bethany had another vacancy pastor for a brief period of time. That vacancy pastor was William F. Schink.

Pastor Erwin B. Froehlich is still fondly remembered by many Bethany members today. Pastor Froehlich served Bethany from 1957 to 1979. 1958 marked the centennial year for Bethany. Pastor Froehlich considered it a pure joy to arrive at Bethany at the dawn of her 100th year and to be able to reap the fruits that others before him had sown for 99 years.<sup>3</sup> At this time Bethany celebrated one hundred years of blessings by having three

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<sup>2</sup> This original organ still exists today despite many complaints about it being out of tune. Currently Bethany is discussing whether they should renovate the original organ in hopes of preserving it, or getting rid of it and replacing it with something else such as an electronic organ.

<sup>3</sup> God's Grace Through a Century, p. 10

special Sunday services throughout the month of May.<sup>4</sup> Pastor Froehlich also had to deal with the continuing debate between German and English services. It was once again apparent that English was winning out when Bethany adopted its new “English” name on June 16th of 1963. From this time on Die Deutsche Ev. Lutherische St. bethanien Gemeinde would be known as Bethany Ev. Lutheran Congregation. In 1975<sup>5</sup> the German / English controversy reached its end and there were no more regular German services. To accommodate the older German members who were unhappy about this decision, Pastor Froehlich held a mini-communion service that was entirely in German. This special mini-service was held directly after the second English service.

After Pastor Froehlich retired in 1979, Pastor John Graf of Sturgis, MI, accepted the call to serve as Bethany’s pastor. Pastor Graf is also warmly remembered in the hearts and minds of many Bethany members today. One thing that was recalled about Pastor Graf is how he discontinued the practice of ushering worshipers out before the distribution of the Lord’s Supper. This was a significant change for Bethany. Prior to this change members of Bethany were only receiving the Lord’s Supper once a month, but even then they could leave if they wanted to. The reason why worshipers were allowed to leave is because of the long standing belief that the Lord’s Supper was only required four times a year. Pastor Graf took the first step to correct this false belief and to give his members a proper understanding regarding the Lord’s Supper and the significance of it.<sup>6</sup>

Bethany’s present pastor is Pastor Timothy Bauer.<sup>7</sup> Pastor Bauer began his ministry at Bethany in 1990. Since Pastor Bauer came from smaller congregations, he learned to really appreciate and enjoy preaching to a larger group of people. Pastor Bauer has also enjoyed being able to serve a wide spectrum of people, from little to very old, and getting to know his members on a personal level. Pastor Bauer had this to say about his personal relationship with his members, “The longer I’m at a place like this, the harder it is to be detached. You really get wrapped up in the lives of the people and that I like and I really enjoy the amount of love that these people have shown and the support.” Although Pastor Bauer truly loves where he is at and the people that he serves, he does admit that it can be challenging to live up to the expectations of others at times. The challenges that Pastor Bauer

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<sup>4</sup> Although the numbers were down from the 1060 souls that God had made part of the congregation at the time of Bethany’s golden anniversary, the members of Bethany still gave thanks to God for preserving their congregation for the past 100 years.

<sup>5</sup> The year 1975 also marked the organization of Lutheran Girl Pioneers for Bethany. This is a program that is still being run today. Boy Pioneers wasn’t organized until three years later.

<sup>6</sup> Another fond memory of Pastor Graf’s ministry is the celebration of Bethany’s 125th anniversary in 1983. All members of the previous confirmation classes were invited to attend. Classes sat together in the church while members of the congregation had to sit in tents outside because of the large number in attendance.

<sup>7</sup> In August of 2000 Bethany called Mr. Jimmy Castillo to assist Pastor Bauer with shut-in visits, evangelism work, youth work and other ministry related work. Mr. Castillo has since regained his status as a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Castillo currently serves part time at two parishes; Bethany Lutheran in Hustisford and Peace Lutheran in Slinger, WI. Recently Pastor Castillo received two calls and is anticipating receiving a number of other calls.

has faced in his ministry has helped him to get back into the Word for a specific purpose, such as finding encouragement to endure trials and difficult times. In all of the challenges that Pastor Bauer has had to endure, he learned to put his faith and trust in the Lord and to know that the Lord is the one who is in control. A blessing for Pastor Bauer and the members of Bethany congregation has been the eleven vicars that they have been privileged to receive. Although the vicar program was already in place when Pastor Bauer arrived at Bethany in 1990, Pastor Bauer admits that the vicar program has greatly benefited Bethany congregation. Here is a list of all the vicars that have served at Bethany since 1989:

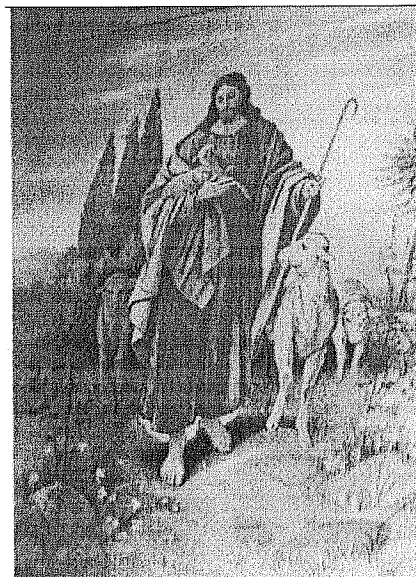
Mark Rosenberg (1989-1991)  
Brian Goens (1991-1992)  
Kevin Mau (1992-1993)  
David Malchow (1993-1994)  
Robert Romberg (1994-1995)  
Ryan Landwehr (1995-1996)

Paul Schuler (1996-1997)  
Joseph Miller (1997-1998)  
James Grabitske (1998-1999)  
Jamie Brei (1999-2000)  
Chris Raiford (2000-2001)

The vicar program has given Bethany members opportunities to encourage these men to continue in their studies and to see them grow in their abilities over the vicar year.<sup>8</sup>

#### *How the German / English Controversy has impacted the congregation*

A reoccurring theme in the “pastor section” of this paper was the problem that many of Bethany’s pastors were forced to deal with and that was whether to conduct Sunday services in German or in English. Since this German / English controversy was such a huge part of Bethany’s history, I’d like to address it in a little more detail now. It is understandable why many members, particularly the older ones, didn’t want to let go of having services in German. Not only was Bethany congregation founded by German Lutherans, but Lutheranism itself started among the Germans. These founding members preferred having services in German simply because they got more out of the services. As time went along, however, more people were coming to Bethany who were not of pure German stock. As a result more requests were made for English services. To deny these requests would mean that the English-speaking members of Bethany would leave and go to churches that had English services. For these English-speaking members, being able to hear a service in the English meant that they would have meaningful worship and receive full spiritual benefit from their worship. Although the first English sermon was delivered by Professor J. Koehler at Bethany’s dedication in 1893, it wasn’t until the beginning of the 20th century that



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<sup>8</sup> Recently the council’s recommendation to keep the vicar program at Bethany was passed by the voters. In addition to keeping the vicar program, the voters also approved the calling of a second pastor.

the shift from German to English became apparent.

Pastor August Kirchner had to seek permission to have an English sermon for a Mission Festival in August of 1914. In 1914 a new resolution allowed Pastor William Nommensen to have occasional English services, but only in the evening. In December of 1926 the congregation agreed to having both German and English services every second Sunday in the month. Because of this, it had become apparent that the transition from German to English services was in full swing. By the 1940s the language issue made its way into the school and congregational meetings as well. Beginning in 1944 German was no longer used in the school and beginning in 1946 all congregational meetings were recorded in English. By the 1950s demand for English services greatly increased. Because of this demand it was decided in 1955 to have the English service before the German service. As a result by 1957 the average attendance for the German service dropped to about 60. This number continued to decrease going into the 1960s. In 1964 there was a request to have two services in English each Sunday and less German services. After the time of Bethany's renovation in 1971, all Advent services were conducted only in English and by 1975 there were no more regular German services at Bethany.

Although there were no more regular German services held at Bethany after 1975, a remnant of the congregation still longed for German services. Many members retained a strong desire for German services because they had been raised in German speaking households. These members learned to pray in German and were confirmed in German. In order to accommodate for this remnant of old German worshipers, Pastor Froehlick held periodic short communion services in the German language after the regular English services. German services may have been discontinued from Bethany, but the strong German heritage of the congregation remains even today. Life long Bethany member, Mel Grulke, wrote about the value of growing up in a strong German family. He said, "Though both my parents have been deceased for a number of years, I am so thankful that they taught me my heritage and my religion in the language of my forefathers. Because of the many times I attended German church as a child, I can by memory still recite the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed in German."<sup>9</sup> This is only one of many personal testimonies that shows how strong the voice of Bethany's German heritage is. It is a great joy and blessing to see the amount of pride that many members of Bethany take in their German heritage.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mel Grulke, Forward in Christ Questionnaire

<sup>10</sup> Principal Bruce Braun said that German Lutherans can be proud of their German heritage because they are known for their hard work, but the number one reason is because a German by the name of Martin Luther was used by God to bring the church back to it's truth and purity and we base all of our teachings on God's Word because of the efforts of Martin Luther. Principal Bruce Braun feels strongly that if World War I and World War II hadn't taken place, then Hustisford would be more of a bilingual community because during those two wars it was very much frowned upon to speak the German language because the US was at war with Germany. A big contributing factor to the German language dying out was the discouragement that people received during this time. American citizens were encouraged to only speak English. As those who learned German as a child and studied the Bible in German died out, then the need for German services ended.

### *How the Church Council has impacted the congregation*

The goal of Bethany's council is to keep Bethany church running smoothly and in a God-pleasing way and to more and more reach out into the community so that more people can hear about God's Word. In order to carry out this goal, God-fearing and spiritually strong men of the congregation are asked to serve on various committees. It is important for these men to be well respected and trustworthy. These characteristics are necessary for committee men to possess because they are entrusted to help and care for the physical and spiritual concerns of the congregation. These men pledge before God's altar to carry out their responsibilities to the best of their ability. With the help of God, these men are also to cooperate and work in harmony with the pastor and the faculty of the school.

Bethany's council is made up of the chairman, the secretary, and the treasurer. In addition to these three offices, the council committee includes the chairman from Christian Education Committee (CEC), Property Maintenance Committee, Congregational Life Committee (CLC), Evangelism Committee, and Stewardship Committee. In the near future Bethany congregation hopes to form an Elders Committee. The chairman of the elders committee will also serve on the church council. The purpose of forming an elders committee is to lighten the work load of the evangelism committee. Currently the evangelism committee is responsible for regaining straying members and carrying out church discipline. In addition to this demanding task, the evangelism committee has also been responsible for doing outreach in the community. The problem that has existed up until this time is that the evangelism committee has been concentrating their efforts so much on church discipline that the outreach portion of their responsibilities has been neglected. To address this problem, once the elders committee is formed, they will take over the task of addressing delinquent members. This will free up the evangelism committee so that they can focus their efforts on outreach.<sup>11</sup>

Struggling with carrying out effective outreach hasn't been the only challenge for Bethany's councilmen. Perhaps one of the most difficult things that the council has had to deal with are all the personal issues that arise within the congregation. Although Bethany church is made up of Christians, there are times when some unchristian things are done that the council has to deal with.<sup>12</sup> Another challenge that Bethany's councilmen have

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<sup>11</sup> Bethany member and ex-council chairman, Lee Miller, thinks that having an elders committee in addition to a evangelism committee will be a real benefit to Bethany because he feels that up until now Bethany has really lacked in outreach and hasn't had a "backbone" when it comes to excommunicating and being strict with delinquent members. Another step that Bethany has taken to address the need to reach out to the community is passing the vote to call a second pastor. This particular pastor's goal will be to do outreach and to work with the youth.

<sup>12</sup> After a former principal of Bethany school left, it became apparent that he had stolen a number of things from the congregation. It also became apparent, as records were checked, that he had stolen money from mission funds and from the church safe, from offerings. Although it was a difficult decision to decide how to deal with this situation, it was decided that that this person's eternal salvation was most important. For this reason Bethany congregation decided not to prosecute, but rather to have people (pastor, circuit pastor, Christian counseling, etc.) work on his soul. It proved to be a difficult decision because a number of people wanted to see this man in jail.



faced are all the financial trials. In time, however, these financial worries were taken care of and helped to redirect the council members to the one who is in charge, namely the Lord of Lords. One example of how the Lord turned a financial strain into a spiritual blessing is the extensive renovation project that took place from 1991 to 1992. This renovation included repairing, fiberglassing, repainting, restenciling of the walls, stained glass window replacement, and new arch lighting. The cost for all of this was approximately \$121,300.<sup>13</sup> Bethany member, Lee Miller, was council chairman at that time and he still can recall how the Lord saw the council through this financial obstacle. Lee Miller had this to say:

“I can remember our treasurer being worried where the money was going to come from. The contractor came in and he needed \$43,000. An announcement was put in the bulletin and two weeks later the money was there. When he was half way through the project, he said that he needed another \$43,000 and that was there. When he got to the end, I think that we were about \$7,500 dollars short that we had to borrow from the time the project started basically until it was done. People supported it very well.”

Bethany's committee men and council members have truly benefited their church. The decisions that they have made, although difficult at times, impacted Bethany to a large degree. One example of a council decision that has recently impacted Bethany congregation was the decision to go ahead with the Parish Assistance program. Ever since it was decided by council early in the year 2000 to continue with the Parish Assistance program, Bethany members have been getting more involved with their congregation and have been showing a lot more interest in their church. In addition to this, Bethany has taken steps to determine what her mission statement is.<sup>14</sup> Having a clear and concise mission statement will give Bethany a sense of direction and allow Bethany to set additional, short-term goals as she strives to carryout her broader mission. May the Lord continue to use Parish Assistance to help Bethany congregation focus on the future and to take the necessary steps to get to where she wants to be.<sup>15</sup>

#### *How Christian Education has impacted the congregation*

Christian education has effected Bethany congregation from the very beginning. From the beginning Bethany's founders and pastors realized the importance and value of Christian education. Christian education was so important at Bethany that the 100th year centennial booklet reads, “The soul of education is the education

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<sup>13</sup> The 1993 Bethany directory, p. 8

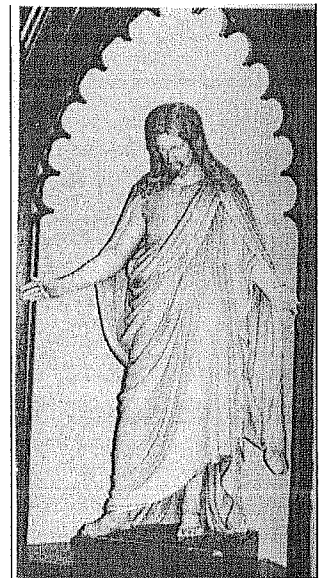
<sup>14</sup> Bethany's mission statement is currently being drawn up and so it cannot be included in this paper.

<sup>15</sup> Bethany members are currently working with Parish Assistance to plan out the next eight years of Bethany in detail and even more years in the future where they would like to see their congregation. Bethany's number one goal for the future, at this stage, is to eventually get everyone in the congregation into a Bible class of some kind. The Parish Assistance task-force realizes that if they can get the adult spiritual growth to take off at Bethany and have friendship evangelism, then Bethany will start to grow. To accomplish this goal, the task-force hopes to recruit 20 to 40 individuals. These individuals would then be trained in how to do evangelism, how to make hospital visits, how to invite people to church, and how to follow up on these things. In addition to these things, these individuals would be trained in leading a Bible study.

of the soul.” This phrase has had real practical value throughout the history of all Lutheran Christian Day Schools in the WELS. Even Martin Luther stressed the importance of Christian education when he wrote, “For the Church’s sake we must maintain Christian schools, for God preserves the Church through schools, and schools are the conservatories of the Church.” Scripture also puts a heavy emphasis on Christian education. It says, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Bethany’s founders took this passage of Scripture seriously and saw in it the importance for establishing a Christian Day School.<sup>16</sup>

Because of Bethany’s immense growth in numbers during the first fifty years of her history, it became apparent that the original school, which had been in existence since 1868, needed to be replaced. In order to address the need of increased enrollment, a vote was taken in 1909 to build a new school for an estimated \$10,000. History repeated itself beginning in 1960. In the fall of 1960 increased enrollment necessitated the calling of a fourth teacher, and forced the kindergarten and instruction classes to move to the school basement. It was in January of 1962 that the architect R.C. Thern was chosen to build the new school. The new school and the calling of a fifth teacher accommodated for the continued growth in enrollment. The total cost of the school was \$151,555. By 1973 a full-time kindergarten became available and by 1980 a pre-school was started.

Throughout her history, Bethany school has had many faithful and dedicated teachers, each contributing specific gifts and talents. Although the number of teachers and their individual achievements are too many to cover in this paper, all the teachers of Bethany’s history have had a common mindset and taught in a common voice as far as their teachings are concerned.<sup>17</sup> The teachings of Bethany’s faithful instructors are still effecting the hearts and



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<sup>16</sup> Principle Bruce Braun said that Bethany’s forefathers had the foresight to say that it was not too much money to build the first school and there were many blessings from that. There are people in eternal life because of that school and the people had the foresight to realize that school needed to be replaced even though the money wasn’t there and it took a number of years to pay off the school. Bethany has received many blessings from the children that went through that school to become solid members here and in other congregations.

<sup>17</sup> Although what has been taught at Bethany has never changed, the methods used in teaching have changed considerably. Bethany members Marles Pieper, Deloras Mueller, Lenora Brendemuehl, Darlene Miller, and Shirley Lichtenberg all remember how strict their teachers were. Because of the strictness of their teachers (such as Mrs. Theil and Mr. Bartsch), these ladies admit that they really behaved in class. As a result they learned a lot. Although I’m sure that Bethany’s teachers today are not as strict as they were in the 1950s, the quality of education that Bethany students receive is still outstanding. Many Bethany students reported having an easy time during the first couple years of high school. They contribute this to the exceptional education that they received at Bethany. A large percentage of Bethany students end up graduating at the top of their class in high school and many of these students graduate with honors. An improvement that has taken place at Bethany since the 1950s is the classroom structure. Marles Pieper remembers there

minds of Bethany's children today.<sup>18</sup> But these teachings are not to be heard only in the school. Not forgetting about the role that Christian parents play in the education of their children, Pastor Erwin B. Froehlich wrote:

"We of Bethany are grateful that we have this consecrated staff to help us care for the souls of our children. We purposely say "help" us care for. For we as parents are to remember that our children's souls are primarily and all the way through *our* concern and responsibility. This devoted staff is helping us by their application of God's Word in their religious courses, and (now this is so significantly important), applying that word also to their other subjects. Thus all the way through they are giving our children food for their soul, and make their education not this-world-centered, or merely body-centered, but, as God their Savior wants it - Christ-centered. That alone can make them better citizens of their respective communities; better yet, full-fledged citizens of heaven."<sup>19</sup>

Bethany's present Christian Day School has been standing for thirty-nine years. During these years the Word of God has been freely taught, centering on the gospel of Jesus Christ. All along Christian parents have been assisted and encouraged in their responsibilities to bring their children up in the knowledge and fear of the Lord.<sup>20</sup> By the faithful efforts of both teachers and parents, the souls of many children have been made conscious of their sinfulness and their desperate need for forgiveness. It was at Bethany Lutheran School that these children learned of their Savior and the forgiveness that he freely gives to all people. It was at Bethany Lutheran School that these children learned what it meant to show appreciation and to give thanks to God for all that he had done for them. As a result many voices are still giving God glory and praise today.

*"Christian Education doesn't cost, it pays!"*

*Pastor Bauer*

### ***How the Choir has impacted the congregation***

One way that Bethany's children grow up to give God glory and praise is by joining the senior choir.

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being eight classes per room in the old school. Darlene Miller remembers there being four classes per room just prior to 1955. Beginning in about 1955 or 1956, students received more personal attention when there were two classes per instructor.

The class format at Bethany has changed once again this year (2000/2001). Since certain teachers at Bethany have a subject that they specialize in, they are departmentalizing. What this means is that teachers will teach their specialized subject (such as math or social studies) to more than just his or her home-room students. For example, Mr. Lindemann specializes in social studies and so he teaches social studies to his 5th and 6th grade home-room as well as to the 7th and 8th graders. While Mr. Lindemann is teaching social studies to the 7th and 8th graders, Principle Braun teaches his specialized subject of math to the 5th and 6th graders.

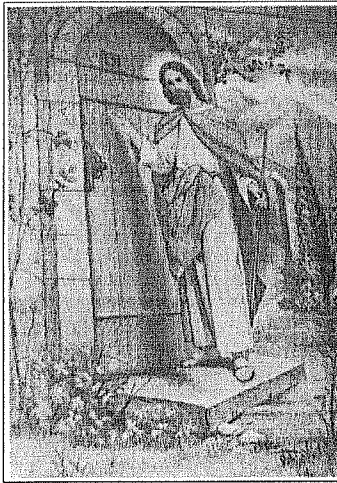
<sup>18</sup> Pastor Bauer says that one thing that makes Bethany School unique today is the fact that almost all of Bethany's members, that have grade school aged children at home, send their children to Bethany School. The percentage of parents that send their children to Bethany is really outstanding in comparison to other Christian Day Schools.

<sup>19</sup> God's Grace Through A Century, p. 24

<sup>20</sup> Principle Bruce Braun regularly stresses that parents have family devotions. Parish Planning stresses the need to teach parents how to be Christian parents (such as praying with their children, reading Bible stories with their children, and singing hymns with their children)

Since September of 1870, Bethany choir members have been making their voices heard. Pastor Erwin B. Froehlich wrote about the Bethany's choir, "The special intent of our choir is to enhance the public divine services through the singing of spiritual hymns for several voices."<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately Bethany's choir disbanded after 1890 and wasn't started back up again until sometime during Pastor Huth's ministry.

Through the years since its reorganization, the voices of Bethany's choir have been replaced by the voices of succeeding generations. All of Bethany's choir members used their gifts of singing to glorify God and to



enhance public worship services, weddings, and funerals. In addition to the adult choir, Bethany also has a junior choir and a hand-bell choir.<sup>22</sup> It has been reported by a number of Bethany members how much they truly appreciate hearing all of Bethany's choirs perform. Pastor Bauer has even commented on a number of occasions about how impressed he is by the singing that occurs at Bethany in general.<sup>23</sup> This testimony is only a small indication of how truly blessed Bethany congregation has been with gifted voices. God has used all of these voices to bring glory and honor to his name. Whether it was through classical selections, contemporary selections, or through Christian selections put to African-style melodies, Bethany's choir has grown in popularity and has helped to get members

of Bethany excited about their Lord.<sup>24</sup> May the Lord continue to use such talented voices in bringing him praise.

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<sup>21</sup> God's Grace Through A Century, p. 29

<sup>22</sup> This year Principal Braun has opened the senior choir to 7th and 8th graders and has received an encouraging response. High school students that belong to Bethany are also encouraged to participate in the senior choir. 5th and 6th graders have to attend junior choir, but it is optional for the 7th and 8th graders. 3rd and 4th graders sometimes join the junior choir and they occasional sing on their own in church. Kindergarten through 2nd grade also sing in church, but this is not a formal choir. There are two hand bell choirs: a youth hand bell choir and an adult hand bell choir. The hand bell choirs have always been warmly received by the congregation.

<sup>23</sup> Out of the seven congregations that Principal Braun (also the choir director at Bethany) has been a part of, he says that Bethany has the most enthusiasm for singing praises to the Lord out of any church he has ever been in. Since Principal Braun has been choir director (1998-2001), the choir has grown from approximately 18 to about 45 members today.

<sup>24</sup> When Principal Braun first took over the choir, he was faced with the challenge of the older members of the choir not wanting to change. These members, that had been in choir for many years, wanted to do music out of the files that they already knew. Principal Braun realized that the choir would not grow if they stuck to the songs that they had always done because they hadn't grown. In fact, the choir kept getting smaller. To address this problem, Principal Braun gave many personal invitations to join choir and encouraged his choir members to do the same. Once people realized that the choir was doing some exciting music. The choir has grown each year since. The greatest experience that Principal Braun has had during his years as choir director is seeing his students join senior choir and show enthusiasm about it and want to stay in it. He appreciates seeing how he has helped pass a love for singing praises to God on to his students. Principle Braun's goal is to get as many people in choir as possible.

*"Whenever I start anywhere, at any school, I always ask that the Holy Spirit bless my work because I realize that I'm a sinful person and that I'm nothing without God. I feel that any success that I've had is not because of me or my talent, but it is because the Lord is blessing my work."*

*Bruce Braun, Bethany's choir director*

### ***How the Ladies Aid has impacted the congregation***

The many voices heard in Bethany's Ladies Aid has played a valuable part in the history of the congregation. Ladies Aid started at Bethany in 1910 and has worked toward addressing many needs of the congregation. According to the constitution of the Ladies Aid, its purpose is to work for the kingdom of God both inside and outside of Bethany. One way in which Bethany's Ladies Aid has strived to achieve this important goal is by practicing acts of love and charity, especially toward the needy of the congregation.

The Ladies Aid has proven to be yet one more confessional voice ringing out from Bethany's walls since it was organized in 1910. Since the first meeting, Bethany's ladies have worked hard at contributing their time, talents, and varied experiences for the benefit of the church and her members. Bethany members that served in both World Wars truly benefited from the generosity and thoughtfulness of the Ladies Aid. During World War I the Ladies Aid responded to the Red Cross request for volunteers to make clothing for the men in service. In order to accomplish this important task the Ladies Aid met and worked with the help of Mrs. Max Radloff. Mrs. Radloff was assisted by Amanda (Siefert) Bartsch. During World War II the Ladies Aid responded to the call for help again by sending packages and copies of the *Northwestern Lutheran Magazine* to the men in service. In 1952 and 1953 the Ladies Aid sent Christmas gifts to all the men of the congregation that were serving in the Korean war. The Ladies Aid responded to many other pleas for help throughout the years as well. As a result gifts of aid and support have been sent all over the world; such as Russia, India, Germany, and Africa. In order to support such projects, the Ladies Aid held a variety of fund raisers.

In addition to sending gifts of aid to those in need, the Ladies Aid has not forgotten its primary objective, namely to assist in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Ladies Aid of Bethany congregation has carried out this goal in a couple of different ways. First of all, every year they send donations to home and world missions. The money that is sent to these various missions is used to support the work of the gospel ministry being done there. Although the members of the Ladies Aid often don't see what this money accomplishes, they trust that the real thing of value is God's Word. It is only the power of the gospel that changes lives. That is what these dedicated ladies are helping to spread through their generous donations. Secondly, the Ladies Aid feels that it can carry out the churches mission by setting a good example. When people in the community or from other churches see the work that the Ladies Aid at Bethany is doing, a very positive message is sent. When asked what

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\*Lenora Brendemuehl had been a part of Bethany's choir for 60 years before retiring last year.

motivated them to join the Ladies Aid, all the members that I talked to responded essentially the same way.<sup>25</sup> They all felt that it was one way that they could serve their Lord. Serving the Lord by helping and serving others is what the Ladies Aid is all about. The faithful service that is done by the Ladies Aid both in the church and in the community has greatly impacted the history of Bethany congregation, not to mention the lives of others.

One place where the good example of Bethany's Ladies Aid can be seen is at the funeral luncheons it prepares for bereaved family members. Funeral luncheons provided by the Ladies Aid became a regular thing during the first decades of the organization. In addition to funeral luncheons, the Ladies Aid also prepares and serves meals for confirmations, weddings, and graduations. These meals provided valuable opportunities for socializing and fellowship through the years. Besides providing meals, beginning in the late 1950s the Ladies Aid has enjoyed attending annual events such as tours and outings. No matter what these dedicated women were involved in, they continually set a good example by making God's Word a focal point of their organization. It has always been a custom for the Ladies Aid to have either the pastor or the vicar present a devotion and prayer before every meeting.

The ladies of Bethany congregation have touched the lives of many people over the years. They have assisted people in their time of need, comforted people during periods of bereavement, visited with shut-ins, and made considerable donations to the church and community. A recent accomplishment of the ladies of Bethany congregation was the mission to the children in Mexico. This wonderful effort was started and organized by Mrs. Barb Margelofsky. Beginning in September of 1999 a number of ladies met at the home of Marles Pieper. During the course of the next year these dedicated ladies made quilts, purchased shoes and school supplies, and enjoyed rich fellowship with one another. By winter of the following year these items were transported to Mexico and delivered to countless families that were in real need. Although not all of the ladies who were involved in this project were members of the Ladies Aid, they all serve as an example of what the Lord can accomplish through his faithful servants.<sup>26</sup> The Lord has truly blessed the work of the Ladies Aid by making their voices heard within Bethany's walls and allowing them to reach far beyond them. May the Lord continue to richly bless this important work.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I interviewed Marles Pieper, Deloras Mueller, Lenora Brendemuehl, Darlene Miller, and Shirley Lichtenberg.

<sup>26</sup> See article entitled "A stitch in time" in the addenda

<sup>27</sup> The Ladies Aid met in the school gymnasium until the basement of the church was finished in June of 1980. Meeting in the school gymnasium proved to be a challenge for the Ladies Aid as they battled the cold during winter months. Probably the most challenging thing that the Ladies Aid has faced, especially recently, is finding willing ladies to serve as officers. Equally as challenging is getting younger members of Bethany to join the Ladies Aid. Currently there are few members of the Ladies Aid under the age of 55.

### *Conclusion*

Between the many pastors, committee members, teachers, principals, students, choir members, Ladies Aid members, and lay members in general, Bethany Church and School have been greatly impacted.<sup>28</sup> The voices of all of these people and organizations have made been heard from 1908 into the third millennium, and even before then. So that the readers of this paper can have the opportunity to also read about the many voices that impacted the first fifty years of Bethany's history, I included a copy of Mark Rosenberg's paper entitled, "Bethany Lutheran Church, Hustisford, Wisconsin: the first 50 years 1858-1908." I hope that the work I have put into this paper will be beneficial to all those who read it. During the researching process, I learned how truly blessed Bethany congregation is. Bethany is only one of many congregations that has been faithful to the inerrant Word of God for over a century. During that time, God used Bethany Church and School to bring many people to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The tremendous growth in the history of the congregation testifies to the truth that Isaiah wrote about in chapter 55 of his book. Isaiah wrote, **"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it"** (v. 11). By working closely with Parish Assistance and staying in the Word, Bethany congregation is currently taking steps to remain faithful to the great commission of Matthew 28. May the Lord use the voices of future generations to impact Bethany congregation, as he did the first 143 years of Bethany's history. To God be the Glory. Amen!

"I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Spirit by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it."

*Martin Luther*

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<sup>28</sup> This paper would not be complete without mentioning a favorite memory of every person that I had a chance to talk to. In the summer of 2000 Bethany congregation pulled together in an inspiring way to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Wisconsin Synod. The theme was (and still is) "Forward in Christ" and to celebrate this milestone, Bethany had an old-fashioned outdoor service with a picnic afterwards. Many members (including the vicar that year) dressed up in old-fashioned clothes. Many old German dishes were brought for the huge pot luck picnic and only real plates and silverware were used. The entire length of the school hallway was lined with tables and every one of them was filled with food. In fact, there wasn't enough room for all the food. There was a pie judging contest and a beard growing contest (Vicar Brei won for the longest beard!). Old and young alike enjoyed horse-drawn wagon rides. Many old-fashioned games were available to play and the children had a blast making home made ice cream. The archives committee worked really hard setting up a display of Bethany's history in the church basement. The timeline of both Bethany's history and the history of the WELS was very impressive. Church fellowship was at its peak on that day and it is a day that will be remembered by many Bethany members as well as nonmembers.

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Unknown author. Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church Hustisford, Wisconsin: 125th Anniversary. A booklet that was written in celebration of Bethany Lutheran Church's 125 year heritage.

The 1993 Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church Directory

## **PEOPLE INTERVIEWED**

Pastor Timothy Bauer : for information on the church, school, and his ministry  
Lee Miller: for information on the church council and other committees  
Bruce Braun: for information on the school and choir

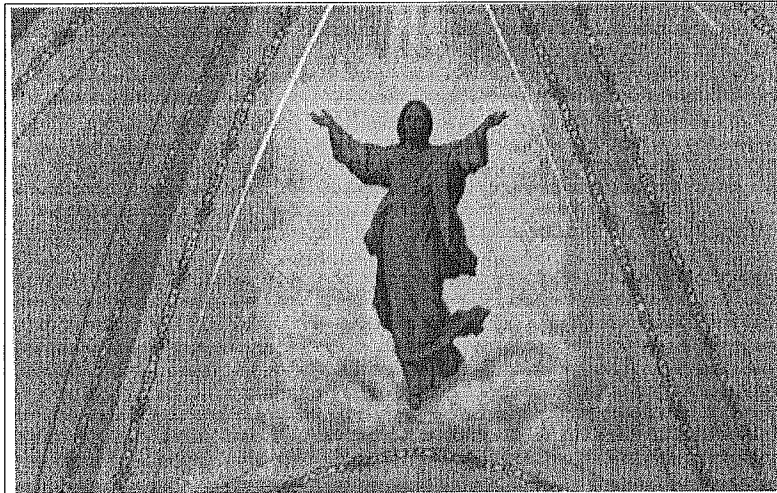
Marles Pieper  
Deloras Mueller for information on the Ladies Aid and memories  
Lenora Brendemuehl of the old school  
Darlene Miller  
Shirley Lichtenberg

Mary Kuehl for information on the history of the church and school  
Evelyn Luepke and their memories and experiences  
Erna Schultz

\* I'd like to thank all of the individuals mentioned above. Their insights, memories, and experiences helped to add a lot of life to this paper.

\* Although I didn't gain a whole lot of insight for this paper by doing this, I also spent hours going through a number of minor resources from Bethany's Archives Committee such as old documents, minutes, bulletins, etc.





## **Addenda**

### ***How Bethany Congregation has impacted the life of Melvin Grulke***

I have been a lifelong member of Bethany Congregation as was my father. His father and grandfather were also lifetime members of Bethany from the time they immigrated to America from Pommern, Germany in 1880.

When I was a child growing up, church services at Bethany were conducted each Sunday in two languages. The early service was in English with the second service being held entirely in the German language. Because my family strongly retained its German heritage, I was required to attend services the majority of the time, which were conducted in German. Since both German and English were spoken at home, I grew up to become quite fluent in both languages. However, I hated the fact that I had to attend German church services and be forced to speak this language because none of my schoolmates spoke it, and it was quite an embarrassment for me since it was considered very "old-fashioned."

When I attended church as a child with my parents, I of course was required to sit with my mother who sat on the right side in church where all the other women sat. Most of the men sat downstairs on the left side, although my father usually sat upstairs with some of the other men. Although I wanted to sit upstairs with my father, I was told I could not sit there with him until I was at least ten years old because "the Bible said so." The wives at that time were of course not allowed to partake of communion with their husbands either. After I was old enough, I was allowed to sit upstairs with Dad. It was then that I was introduced to the practice at Bethany of facing the organ to say a brief prayer upon entering the upstairs in church via the spiral staircase.

I recall my confirmation very well and remember that Sunday being such a relief compared to the previous Sunday's examination day which all the confirmands so very much dreaded. The thought of verbally answering Bible questions for two hours in front of the entire congregation was extremely frightening.

I continued my reluctance to admit my knowledge of the German language all through grade school, and in fact through high school. It wasn't until after I returned home from a three year stint in the military that I realized that having been made to learn German was not really a "curse," but was really a blessing, and was something I should not be ashamed of.

After these German services were discontinued at Bethany, Pastor Graf held periodic short communion services in the German language after the regular English services. I now attended many of these services willingly with my parents. Though both my parents have been deceased for a number of years, I am so thankful

that they taught me my heritage and my religion in the language of my forefathers. Because of the many times I attended German church as a child, I can by memory still recite the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed in German.

I attended Bethany Lutheran School from kindergarten through eighth grade in the old two story brick schoolhouse which was located just south of the church in the area which is now the church parking lot. During my first few years of grade school, there were no indoor bathrooms at Bethany, however the outhouse which stood between the church and school at the west end of the present parking lot seemed to serve the needs of the students quite well. This outdoor toilet was divided into two sides, with the girls owning the left or south side and the boys owning the right or north side. Back then a trip to the bathroom was usually very brief with students returning quickly to the school. During the middle of my grade school years, the basement of the school was cemented, and this lower level was remodeled to house a lunch room (no kitchen) and two bathrooms (with flush toilets). Incidentally, the outhouse which then became obsolete, for many years later stood on a hill on the Norman Nehls farm and served as a shelter in winter for sheep and heifers. Since there was no gymnasium, there were no organized athletics and no school plays or a school band. During the early years of grade school, the highlight of the year was Christmas Eve services. In those days before PCs and video games, receiving that big bag of candy and treats created so much excitement and appreciation.

In the later years, the church picnic was the big event of the year. For me it was primarily because it gave the older boys a chance to actually play a competitive game of softball by playing against the adults in the annual father-son game. Those dads certainly could hit the ball a long way when I was in 6th grade (or so it seemed)! The Bethany church picnics then were actually quite a community event with attendance not being limited to congregational members only. The beer-stand was always very popular and the evening concert by Irving DeWitz's Hustisford Concertina Club was an annual event which was awaited with much anticipation. There was a "fish pond" and games for the kids as well as other entertainment for the adults. I remember all the dads wanting a chance to throw baseballs at the "nigger babies," and I believe bowling was at one time also set up outside for the adults.

The only other sports I can remember was playing basketball on the blacktop "court" which was located between the church and the school. Two wooden backboards with rusty hoops with no nets helped the recesses go by so quickly back then.

I was a member of the Bethany church choir at various times after graduating from Bethany. I recall belonging to the choir while in high school although high school basketball games seemed to conflict quite a bit with choir rehearsals.

All three of our children were baptized at Bethany by Pastor Froehlich. These events were a happy occasion and were spiritually very rewarding. Our children of course also attended Bethany school through eighth grade. We had a nine passenger station wagon in those days and the many trips to basketball games far away with a carload of youngsters were fun and very exciting. A car full of ten or eleven fifth and sixth graders was nothing unusual, and a seat belt for each person was not even given a second thought.

I served on the school board and the church council for a number of years. Council meetings at the time the addition to the narthex was considered were always very lengthy. Bringing a sandwich for a late night snack was mentioned on occasion by the hard working farmers who were members of the council.

The school board Christmas parties at members' homes and the decorating of the Christmas tree by the council remain as pleasant memories.

The Bethany Lutheran Girls Pioneer program was started at Bethany in 1975. My wife Sharon was one of the original leaders and organizers, and the leaders and their families became quite a close knit group at that time. Weekend camping trips for the Girl Pioneers group quickly became very popular during the summer months.

One event that occurred at Bethany particularly stands out as a very pleasant memory for our family. Our son David was married at Bethany Church on September 11, 1993. Eighty-three years before, to the day, - September 11, 1910, David's maternal great-grandparents Oscar and Martha Rose were also married at Bethany. Pastor Bauer made reference to it during his wedding sermon, and in fact listed names of the groomsmen and bridesmaids which were taken from church records.



## A stitch in time

People are saved one soul at a time.

That's what Barb Margelofsky and Marles Pieper, members at Bethany, Hustisford, Wis., learned while working on a mission to help needy families in remote villages of Mexico.

The project began in spring 1999 after a showing of *WELS Connection* that featured WELS Mission to the Children, a program out of Tucson, Ariz., that provides for the spiritual and physical needs of people in northern Mexican villages.

Margelofsky contacted Gene Durfey, coordinator of the program. She found out that the people Mission to the Children were serving were eager to hear God's Word, but they were also cold and hungry.

With the support of Bethany's church council, Margelofsky called a meeting to see what members could do to help. The response was overwhelming. The group decided they could make quilts. Pieper volunteered her home as a place where the members could do that work.

Everyone got involved—some came weekly to make quilts, some whenever they could make it. Some helped locate supplies or donated funds. School children collected school supplies to fill the school bags made by the volunteers. Church organizations gathered new-mother and baby items.

Using a donation from Aid Association for Lutherans, the group shipped the supplies to Tucson in time for Christmas.

But the effort didn't stop there. That was just the beginning of a mission of love that resulted in a second, this-time personal, delivery of 300 quilts, 274 pairs of shoes, 112 school bags filled with supplies, 26 new-mom bags, 26 baby diaper bags filled with supplies, 15 diaper bags, sports equipment, school supplies, children's Spanish language story books, toys, jewelry, vitamins, and Bible study lessons.



Barb Margelofsky (right) organized a mission project of love at Bethany, Hustisford, Wis. Marles Pieper (left) donated the use of her basement for the ongoing project. Jamie Brie (center) served as vicar at Bethany in 1999-2000.

Making the quilts and getting supplies together were only half the challenge. When Margelofsky checked prices on renting a truck, paying the insurance, and travel costs, she found it would cost at least \$2,000 just to get the items to Tucson.

Margelofsky confesses, "I had asked God to point me in the right direction. I was becoming anxious. I told my family I was going to ask God to drop a truck in our driveway."

She shared her concerns at quilting, and one member said she would talk to a trucker she knew. He offered to haul the items at a minimal fee, but once he realized the urgent need, he donated the entire trucking.

"Tears filled my eyes and I knew that with God nothing is impossible," Margelofsky says.

After the supplies and quilts arrived in Tucson, arrangements were made to transport the supplies to the Mexican villages. Pieper and Margelofsky joined a delegation of WELS Kingdom Workers and pastors in Tucson for the final leg of the

journey, which included traveling a road that was little more than a pair of ruts carving a jagged path through the Sonoran Desert.

When the vans arrived at Atil they were greeted by more than 70 women and children. Following a church service the delegation presented the villagers with the boxes of quilts and supplies. Margelofsky says, "Marles and I were able to give the quilts that our church had made to families we thought we would never see."

After another service at Saric, it was time to head back. The entire adventure for both Pieper and Margelofsky renewed their spirits and enthusiasm. In fact, they are already at work back in Hustisford, with a growing number of volunteers who are making more quilts for families in need.

With each stitch they make on the quilts they are reminded of the work missionaries face every day. People are not helped one nation at a time. They are reached one soul at a time.

*Gloria Hafemeister*

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, HUSTISFORD

THE FIRST 50 YEARS 1858-1908

Mark Rosenberg

May 27, 1992

Senior Church History

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library

11831 W. Seminary Drive. 65W

Mequon, Wisconsin

The fact that there is a Lutheran church in Hustisford, Wisconsin should not surprise anyone. If you take a Sunday drive to any part of Wisconsin you can find a Lutheran congregation in almost any area. This is especially true in the area between Watertown, Fond Du Lac, and Milwaukee. There are Lutheran churches everywhere you look. Church life was a vital part of life in the 1800's so many of the communities grew up around the churches. Church provided opportunities for people to get together, share experiences, practice Christian love with one another, and hear God's Word - preferably in German. The Word brought people together and gave them strength to overcome many of the problems they faced in daily life. That Word was a treasure the people cherished and Lutherans in the Hustisford area have been fed with the precious word of truth for almost 135 years. From it's small beginnings Bethany Lutheran Church grew to be a congregation of more than 1000 souls by the time they celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1908. These were 50 years filled with blessings from God and 50 years that were enjoyed only by the grace of God.

"From its earliest beginnings the Hustisford area seems to have had a good representation of German families, some of whom had left Germany in protest to Frederick William's forcing the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches to combine. Seeking a place of religious freedom some of them most likely made Hustisford their home." Since many left Germany because of their deep love for the Word of truth, they continued to give worship a primary position in their lives.

The first Lutherans coming to the Hustisford area found no Lutheran pastors here. "The first missionary activity among the German people in the town of Hustisford was carried on by the Methodists near the end of the 1840's. They, however, won over only a few families, because many of their prospects had fixed convictions of their own regarding the true doctrines and the purity of Scriptures."

Hustisford has seen a variety of churches: Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, Congregational, Bethany Lutheran, German Protestant, Episcopal Society, Union Church, Grace Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Zion Lutheran. Only two have survived the test of time. Bethany which was founded in 1858 and the Presbyterian Church founded in 1923.

Bethany is actually an offshoot from a Lutheran Church which was started in Town Hubbard. In 1857 the church in Hubbard split and a part of the Hubbard congregation formed Bethany Lutheran Ev. Lutheran Congregation. It seems that in the early years the members of Bethany were very cautious about becoming part of any specific synod. The split from the Town of Hubbard Church may have been caused by a pastor <sup>(Gamer?)</sup> who wanted his congregation to become part of the Missouri Synod. Not all were in favor so a split occurred

The early years were not easy for the group that started worshipping just west of Hustisford. This group built a small church out of the most common material of the day. They built themselves a church out of logs which had been supplied from the trees that a tornado brought down a year earlier. I have

no record of how many members made up this original body, but within a year there were 30 families who were worshipping together in Hustisford. The group that organized into Bethany soon found themselves without a pastor. Their first pastor G. Schwanz served them only a few months before leaving in September of 1858 to serve a Moravian Church. Within a month God had answered their prayers for a pastor when Fredrich Hass agreed to shepherd the small flock in Hustisford. He had formerly been a school teacher in Watertown, but served in Hustisford as both pastor and teacher.

Reading portions of Pastor Haas' journal leave you with the impression that Fredrich was a man who left all things in God's hands. As was customary for most Lutheran pastors in the 1800's Pastor Hass had come over from Germany. In the writings he left behind he described some of the experiences he and his family encountered on their voyage to America. When he was informed that 40 persons had died the last time the ship had made the journey to America he spoke a prayer to Jesus asking for God's help and protection. Time and time again during the journey he went to his Lord in prayer and also looked to God's Word for needed assurance. Pastor Hass was a man who knew the value of relying on God. He wore his faith on his sleeve which may have not been an easy task when you consider his surroundings. He made this addition about the ship's crew. "The ships crew is very rough and without religion. We have hopes with God's help soon to land on the other side. Help us Lord and have mercy on us." When the ship finally reached America Mr.

Hass gave all glory to God, saying "God be praised. If thou givest us so many blessings on earth, what a wonderful place heaven must be."

Soon after Pastor Hass arrived the church experienced another setback. In 1859 a group broke away from Bethany and formed St. Michael's Lutheran Church. St. Michael's continues to exist today situated about 3 miles NE of Hustisford. So in its early years Bethany had many difficulties to overcome, but with God's help they continued onward, not thwarted by the problems they had been through.

Pastor Hass found himself extremely busy serving in his new field of work. God had blessed the work of Pastor Hass by bringing additional souls into his care. When he applied for membership into the Wisconsin Synod Pastor Hass wrote the following words about his work: "When I arrived the congregation consisted of about 30 families. At present there are two congregations, because some of the more distant members felt that it would be more convenient if they built a second church in their vicinity. Thus since Nov. 20, 1859, we have two churches. The second congregation has the same number of families. Then a third group organized five miles from here, there being ten families. They have services every three to four weeks, until now in a farmer's house. Church attendance in general is good. The daily life of the congregation is outwardly honorable and respectable. Here and there you will find strong active Christians."

Strong Christians they were but also very cautious. Though



Pastor Hass applied for membership into the Wisconsin Synod in 1860 the congregation did not make the same move. Still remembering the past experiences they had been through they needed time before they would make such a commitment. Pastor Hass adds this remark in his application to Synod. "Although my congregation will never forget what great harm was done to them that a preacher and his Synod could cause them to break up to such a point as to even selling their church, I hope that my congregation will outlive this and will be taken in by a Synod, whose head is the Lord Jesus."

Pastor Hass only served in Hustisford for four years before the Lord called him to proclaim the precious gospel in the area around La Crosse. So in 1862 Bethany was again in need of a pastor and they found him in the person of Phil. Wetzel. He had also been a teacher previously and could even be the teacher that was responsible for Pastor Hass coming to America from Germany. In his journal Pastor Hass mentions a Teacher Wetzel from Watertown whose letters he had read. These letters played an important part in him deciding to leave Germany. If this is the same Wetzel then it is not without possibility that Pastor Hass may have recommended Pastor Wetzel as his replacement.

During his years of ministry Bethany continued to experience growth so by 1866 the congregation needed a larger place of worship so they looked to the village and found a white framed church building that had belonged to the German Protestant Ev. Society, but now was not in use. So they decided to move from the country and purchase the white frame church as their 2nd

House of God. This move would eventually contribute immensely to the growth of Bethany.

Pastor Wetzel served for 5 years but in 1867 he was no longer able to carry out the responsibilities of his ministry so he resigned as pastor of Bethany. "Then Bethany appealed to the Wisconsin Synod to supply her with a pastor. Synod gladly complied with the request, recommending Pastor Phillip C. Koehler, who at the time due to ill health had resigned his pastorate at Manitowoc, but was now again ready to assume duties in a more healthful area. He took charge of the church and school in July 1867." On June 1, 1868 the congregation was incorporated under the name, Die Deutsche Ev. Lutherische St. Bethanien Gemeinde, agreeing to the constitution that Pastor Koehler had drawn up.

In one of his letters he states, "The congregation at the time was a small group of families, a few over thirty in number. What I saw and heard of Hustisford at the time was of such nature that one would have reason to despair, and I myself had very little hope that a congregation worthy of note could be gathered and exist at this place. Yet I had accepted the call in God's name, and I had also decided in God's name to hold out here as long as possible, and to carry out the duties of my office after all. Thus I was permitted soon to experience that God was with us, and that my labor in church and school was not in vain."

"In Dec. 1870 Pastor Koehler was permitted to serve the newly-founded congregation at Woodland and at the close of 1873

he began to gather and serve a congregation at Juneau. When he was requested to serve two additional congregations, Bethany called Johann Koehler, a son, as his assistant. This arrangement continued until 1881, when the son accepted a call to Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

In 1884 Pastor Koehler was forced by ill health to request his release from serving Bethany any longer. It was granted in March. But upon reconsideration at the next meeting she preferred to grant his<sup>m</sup> a four-month leave of recuperation. During this time his son, Chris, of Hubbard, served as pastor."

During the Koehler years the congregation experienced tremendous growth. It was during his ministry that Bethany had so many students attending school that they had to call a full time teacher to carry out the responsibilities of instructing the children. The congregation had increased so much in size that by 1891 the 2nd place of worship was no longer able to house the congregation. The members had to decide between remodeling or building from scratch. It was decided they would build a brand new house of worship, but would delay the project for at least two years.

In 1893 they began and completed the project. The massive structure was erected at a cost of \$11,637. Almost 100 years later the interior was renovated at a cost of almost \$150,000. "The dedication of the new church was a joyful celebration, a day to give thanks to the Triune God for the tremendous blessings he had showered upon them. The speakers for the occasion were Pastors Chris Koehler, G. Bergemann and Prof.

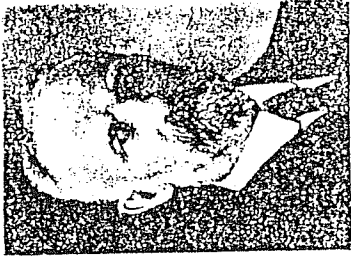
Joh. Koehler." The first English sermon ever preached in Bethany Lutheran Church was delivered that evening by the future professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, J.P. Koehler. German, however, continued to be the primary language into the 40's and German services were still regularly conducted into the 1980's.

Pastor Koehler's ministry in the new building was rather short for he died in August of 1895 after contracting blood poisoning. "His successor was Pastor William Huth of Green Bay, who served from 1895-1911. During his time here Bethany built a new parsonage and celebrated her 50th anniversary. In 1911 he accepted a call to Northwestern College."

When Bethany observed their 50th Anniversary of the congregation there were 1060 souls that God had made part of their body. What great evidence they had seen of the grace of God that he would bring about such a miracle of growth in a community that many of his servants doubted would ever give rise to such a family of believers. The Word of God is what God says it is "the Word of life." The Word that creates life in hearts that are dead and makes sinners alive to serve the God of their salvation. I marvel at how a community of less than 800 residents can be home to a congregation of nearly 1000 souls still today. The only reason is by God's grace. Bethany Lutheran Church has seen many advances since 1908, but the important things have remained the same. The members still cling to Jesus as their most precious treasure and they continue to let his Word guide their lives.



FREDRICK W. HASS  
1858 - 1862

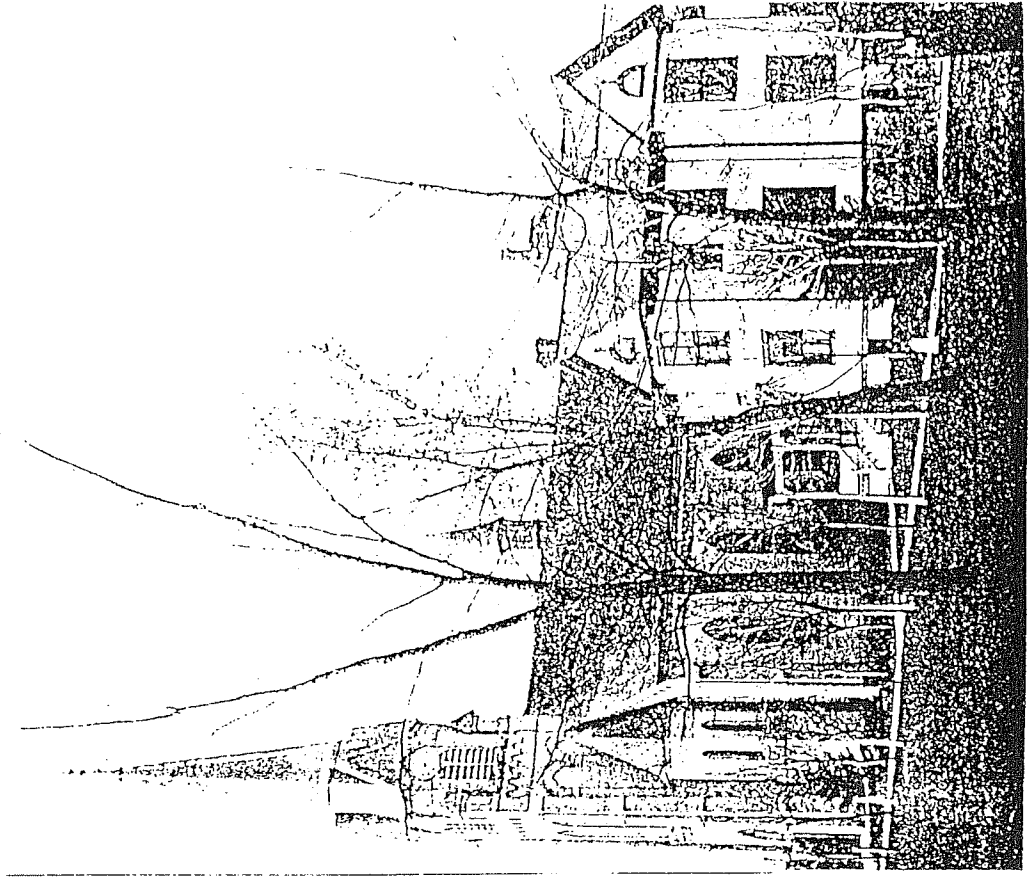
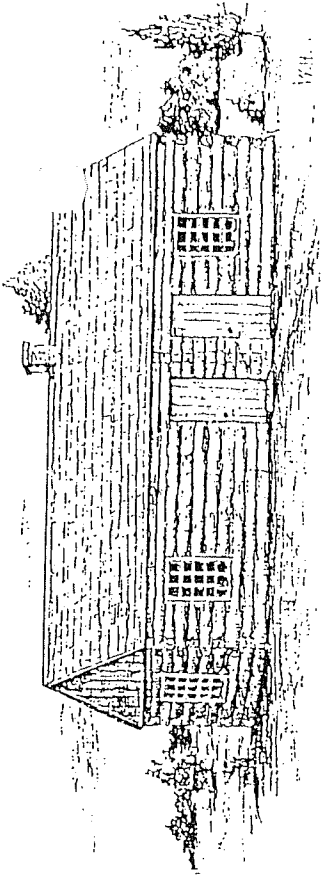


WILLIAM HUTH  
1895 - 1911

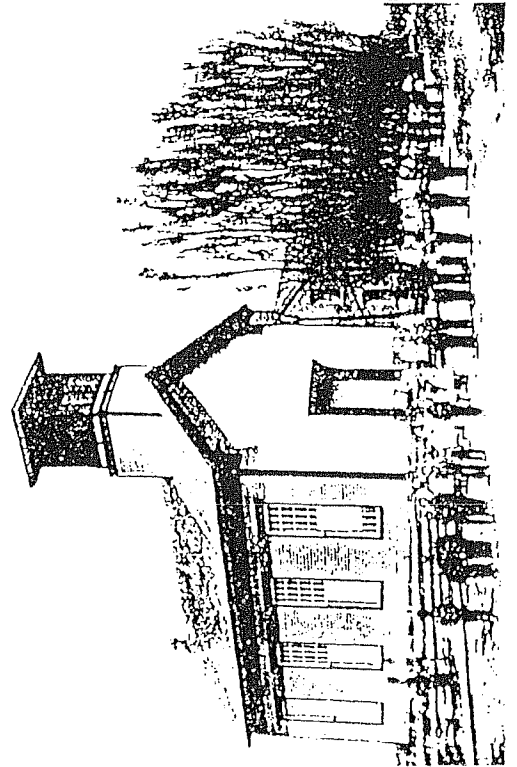


PHILLIP KOEHLER  
1857 - 1895

Bethany's Church 1858-1866



Bethany's Church 1893-Present



Bethany's Church 1866-1893

The portions which were quoted in this paper were from two sources. One source were excerpts from a journal that Pastor Hass had kept. Some of his relatives translated different portions and gave a copy of the translation to Bethany Lutheran Church in 1991. Every time I quoted Pastor Hass I referred to it as a quote.

The other quotes were taken from Bethany's 100th Anniversary Booklet from 1958. The pages referred to in the paper were pages 8-10.