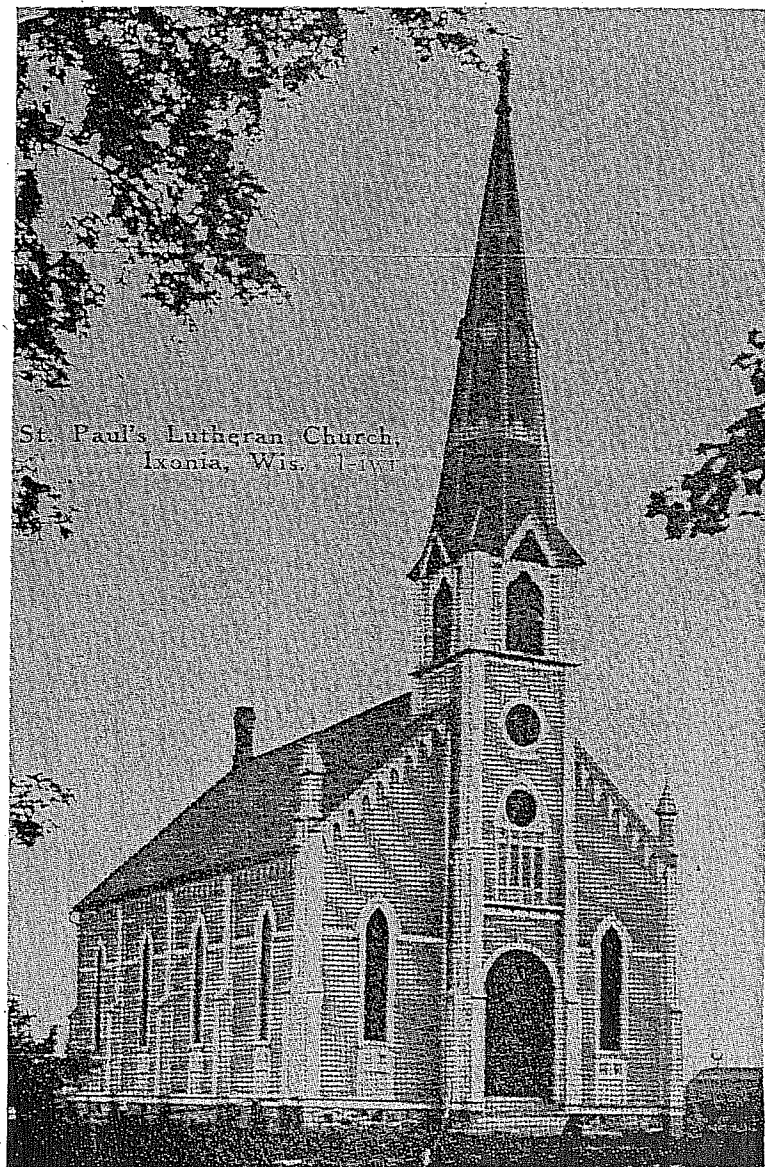


Flames Bring Ruin to Church near Ixonia

James G. Buske

Church History
Professor Brenner

April 22, 2002



Built in 1892 — Destroyed by Fire in 1926

*"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house
and the place where Thine honor dwelleth."*

—PSALM 26, 8

St. Paul's Ixonia has been blessed by God with a rich history that dates all the way back to 1849. I have included a copy of the church time line that records many of the major historical dates in this 153-year-old congregation. This time line includes the many building projects; the congregational split in 1866, to Norfolk Nebraska; the joining of the Wisconsin Synod in 1882; and many other highlights. I have also included a copy of the church history that was compiled for the 100-year anniversary, much of which Pastor Bernthall had written for the 75th Anniversary.

I choose to narrow my topic to one specific year that stands out in this 153-year history of God's grace. The year we will be focusing on is the year 1926. The year 1926, is a year that changed the image of St. Paul's, at least physically. It was on February 5, 1926 that the wood structure church burnt to the ground. But the dedicated members of St. Paul's would quickly rebuild God's house, their place of worship. Within eight months a new brick structure was erected and was nearly paid for at its dedication.

Some of this history is preserved in small paragraphs in church records and articles. What I thought would be interesting is to sit down and visit with some of the people who had witnessed this tragedy and triumph, first hand. Many who witnessed the fire have passed away, but there are a few that still bless God's church at Ixonia. One of these men is Walter Griebnow; a lifelong member at St. Paul's who can trace his Ixonia roots into the 1870's. At the time of the fire, Walter was in the fourth grade and remembers many of the details of that day and year. I gave Walter a copy of the church history from 100-year anniversary, a copy of the Watertown Newspaper article that described the fire, and also a list of questions that might be of help in remembering that day. What follows is a transcript of the interviews that I had with Walter.

What year were you born in?

I was born in June 3, 1916. The family doctor delivered all three of us, my older brother who was nine years older, Hilmer, and myself all three delivered in the home by old Doc Noack. He would come out by horse and buggy. The birth certificate reads my Dad's occupation as farmer, and my mother as housewife.

Where you baptized at St. Paul's? Who was the Pastor at this time?

Yes, I still have a copy of my birth certificate and also my baptismal certificate. They were so beautiful in those days. Pastor Bernthal baptized me, he came to Ixonia in I believe 1911.

When did your family join St. Paul's, Ixonia?

My grandparents came from Germany in 1875 or 1877, and settled in this area and became members of St. Paul's. My father was even confirmed there. My mother came from Lebanon. They eventually settled on this farmstead.

What was Ixonia like at this time?

It was small. Well, if you're talking about the teens, model T's were the automobile more than anything else. There still was a lot of horse and buggy. My dad bought his first car in 1916. It was one of those wind-them-up cars, boy were there a lot of broken arms in those days. Actually there was more business in Ixonia then, than there is now. There was a store, a machine shop, a lumber yard, a feed mill already had been started, which is a lot smaller than the one that is there now. We would just take a bag of oats down to the feed mill and have the oats ground and that was about it. My dad even bought a threshing machine from some salesman in Ixonia. I remember going and picking up the new threshing machine. It was brought to town on the tracks by a big steam engine. I remember the big puff of smoke as they were unloading it. There was a Hudson dealer and I also believe a Ford dealer. I believe there were more businesses there then than now. I even remember that there was a stockyard there. Fred Huebner was the dealer in livestock. The railroad ~~was~~ also brought in a lot of business to the town.

What was the school like at this time? Who was the principal?

I started school in first grade; there was no kindergarten at that time. I was six years old and started school in 1922. Many kids in those days went to Century Elm, which was a public school. This public school was located where our cemetery now is. Yes, it was a one-room public school located only a half-mile or so from where St. Paul's is. I went there because St. Paul's was filled that year. It was nice being in a one room school because my first week there I didn't know a lick of English, and children in the upper grades were so willing to help us littler ones out. I attended St. Paul's school the following year. The school day always started at nine o'clock; it was that way for many, many years. Even when I started high school it was still nine o'clock. The school day went till four everyday, if I remember right; and there was no day light savings time in those days. The late start would have given children to help out with the chores around the house. My dad never had us help with the morning chores though. In the morning during the winter when it was rough outside, dad would take the milk to Gopher Hill Cheese factory on the sled and I would get to ride along at 7:00 in the morning. I would get to school

around 7:30 on those mornings. By that time the principal, Ben Kalb would be there already starting the fire in the old wood stove. Mr. Kalb was the only teacher at the school and I remember that he would walk with a limp. There must have been something wrong with his leg. It (his limp) didn't bother us and it didn't seem to bother him. Anyways, so we got to sit there, as the school would start warming up. The boys had to carry the wood in, the girls did the sweeping up, and we even were in charge of bringing the water in.

How many students were in your class? How many in the school?

At that time, when I started, the school was full. I believe there were forty-four seats and they were all full. Your parents had to arrange in advance your coming to school so that you could attend there. If the school was full you went to Century Elm for a while until a seat would open up. The families that lived closest to St. Paul's never had to go to the public school, like Martin Melcher who lived so close to school. There were eight grades at the school and there were ten kids in my class. I remember my class being the largest one in the school.

At what age did confirmation start? Where were these classes held?

Oh, we started instructions in seventh grade for two years, five days a week. We would meet in the church basement from nine until first recess. We meet for the morning with Pastor Bernthal, and then after recess, back across the street to the one room school. Mostly in the morning, most of the morning, everything was in German, boy that was a long time ago. I still have three language books, my German songbook, and my German composition book. I can't even read my own handwriting from back then; this one is from 1928. This composition book I guess was from both years, I guess I need to practice up. Here even is my old German Catechism, the one that I was taught in. Pastor Bernthal would come around the room right before class was over and take his pencil and make two marks in our catechism. A starting spot and the end spot. We were to go home and memorize everything between those two marks by the next day. We would memorize from dahr to dahr. Several passages everyday and certain verses from the hymnal each week. If we didn't we were in big trouble. Boy did we know our memory work!

In 1892 a new church was built to meet the growing needs of our church. What was this church like? Outside and inside?

I remember it but I don't. I was pretty young at that time. I remember a balcony running on both sides of the church. It looked like what St. Mark's in Watertown looks like now. They

have the same design, except St. Mark is much larger. I remember both in the old church and the new church that some had to pump the organ. Some one each week would volunteer and pump the organ for that Sunday, the organ pumper. I remember a gauge that told you if you had enough power or not. It would tell you how fast you would have to pump. If it was low you had to pump faster. I remember when the new church organ went in, Abel Melcher would play organ on Sundays, first sat down at the new organ ^{console} council and joked, because he wondered if it could play a good waltz. I think he even played one on it!

I know they did a lot of work to the church prior to 1924, as they got ready for the 75th Anniversary service. I read that they put in a new organ in 1914 (\$1850), and new stained glass windows (\$750) in 1922. I was so young; I would have been only seven or eight at this time. I remember that it was looking good before it burnt down. They had put a lot of time and work into making it look nice for the anniversary. But that's all I really remember.

On July 27, 1924, the Diamond Anniversary Service (75th) of the founding of St. Paul's was held. What if anything do you remember about that special day?

I have to admit that I cannot remember that day because I was so young, but I do remember the dedication of the cornerstone and also the church dedication in 1926.

Describe for a few minutes Pastor Bernthal?

He was strict! Boy was he strict! After confirmation though, I remember him coming up to my dad one Sunday in the car and telling him that I should go to Northwestern. He picked certain ones who he thought could make it through Northwestern. Tuition at Northwestern that year was \$80 a year. I didn't go, but he always picked out the kids he thought could make the grade. But what sticks out in my mind how strict and mean he was. He would give kids such a hard time. He had a tendency to pick out certain kids and families and be down right mean to them. He was just so domineering and that's what most likely brought him down. He didn't want anything to do with English services and was the one who led the charge in 1932, to vote down the addition of an English service by the vote of 23-24. At least that's what the history records the vote to be. There was lots of turmoil in the next years, partly because kids who had Pastor Bernthal were now sending their kids to him for instruction, and he was still being so mean. Pastor also had a very difficult time when the church voted to add an English service five years later in 1937. That led him to leave in 1938, I remember the last sermon he preached and as soon as he was done, he speeds away kicking up gravel. He couldn't wait to get out of Ixonia.

There were many other problems that occurred during his many years, but maybe it's better to leave that out. He was strict, a military style Pastor, but he served faithfully for many years.

Pastor Bernthal served three congregations for a while (St. Paul's Ixonia, St. Matthew Lebanon, St John's Ixonia). What was his schedule like? Did he preach at each place, each week?

I read in the church history and the records show that Pastor Bernthal was making \$1050 a year plus free firewood. I even remember hauling hay up into the barn for Pastor's horse. I even remember that every time he came to visit he would come with an empty bag and we would fill it up with oats for his horse. That must have been in the early years that Bernthal was at all three places. When I was in school, I don't recall him at St. John's anymore. Pastor Bernthal only had St. Paul's and St. Matthew's, Lebanon at that time. I remember him preaching once or maybe twice a month at St. Matthew's later in the afternoon, Sunday afternoon. The older people just wanted to keep that church going. When he didn't preach at St. Matthew's, many of their members came to St. Paul's to worship. Again that's where the confirmation in 1926 was held. That church was in need of some repair work and a coat of paint.

I know where St Paul's and St. John's are located, but where was St. Matthew's Lebanon located?

St. Matthew's was located at the corner of SC and what used to be called 109, but is now called highway R. It was right next to the cheese factory, about a half a block down the hill from there. This church was only a block away from Immanuel Lutheran Church. From Immanuel-- that's how our church started and also St. Matthew's and even a few others. I always heard that at least seven congregations broke off from that Lebanon church. All those breaks started because at first that church was Buffalo Synod. My grandpa Tietz was a member at St. Matthew's who broke off from Immanuel. I would say there were maybe ten, twelve elderly couples that belonged to St. Matthew's that lived around there. And these elderly couples wanted nothing to do with that Buffalo Synod church. They were strict Lutherans, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans.

The Fire of 1926 Memories

Two years after the Anniversary service and after all the improvements, something tragic happened. On February 5, 1926, the Church caught fire. Could you describe that day?

I believe I walked to school that day. It must have been a pretty descent day. I don't remember what day of the week it was, but I remember walking home that day, intent on telling my parents what happened because there were no phones or anything at that time. It happened in the afternoon. I remember being out at recess playing, so it must have been pretty nice out. I remember a small hole in the bell tower steeple, directly above the door that went into the church. I remember that we saw smoke coming out of that small hole while we were playing. I quick ran in to tell Mr. Kalb, and he came out and ran over to the church doors. I remember watching him open them, I don't think they were locked, and he just opened it and he just went back. And it threw him back on his back. The pressure from the fire and smoke blew him back. He didn't get hurt, but he could have. And opening the doors was just enough to get the fire really going. I remember the steam and smoke and fire coming out. I remember that lots of people started to come around. I remember there was a south wind, a strong south wind. I remember one man running around to the south end, and there were windows at that end, and he kicked one in trying to get some water on the fire because that's where he fire seemed to be the worse. When he did that, the south wind really got that fire burning. It really wouldn't have mattered. That church was going to burn to the ground.

The wind was so strong that day that the smoke and flames were blowing directly towards the school that was across the street. I don't remember it, but the church history that is written describes the school's roof being covered with a layer of snow which helped spare the school from burning down. That makes sense because I know there was great concern for the school going also. I remember the boys and the parents that were there going in and out of the school, taking everything they could out of the school. They took the four seat desks and flipped up the seats and pushed these desks out the windows, thinking the school was next. I remember hearing stories, that strong south wind blowing some of the ash and dust and pieces all the way to HYW CW. Teddy Schuett told me that story several times. It was funny that the school didn't go also.

I remember people being there, nearby farmers who were members came. I don't remember if anyone came by car or not. No one knew what to do or what to say. I remember

people standing and watching everyone was sad and frightened. It took only an hour or so for the whole thing to burn. I don't remember how many people came that day. I remember walking home to tell my parents. I don't know if my dad went that night or the next day to see it. I don't remember what I said or what my parents said when I told them. What could you really say? It was quite a day.

In those days there was no fire department, not that that would have helped save the church that day. But the article that you gave me from the Watertown paper mentioned a chemical company showing up to put out the blaze, but by the time they got there the building had already fallen. I don't remember a chemical company in Ixonia or what that means. Talking with Gilbert Braasch, he remembers a team of horses showing up with four men with a pump truck. One of those things where two men stood on each side pumping up and down so that water would shoot out the hose. Maybe that's what they called the chemical thing. Those details are confusing. I guess I can't answer what that was. I know there is a picture of this pump wagon on the wall in the dance hall at the Ixonia Fireman's Hall.

One other story I remember is that I remember the older boys joking about taking Pastor Bernthal's disciplining stick, boy he was mean with that thing, and the boys joked about throwing that stick into the fire. Ed Krueger, I believe was the one saying that. He might have been the one making that remark.

I remember that the fire was so hot that it even melted the church bell. It was up in the tower and came crashing down. One whole side of the bell was melted out of shape. I know that people even took pieces of that bell home with them to remember the fire. But they didn't take it home that day, because it was so hot!

There was no damage to the parsonage or the teacherage because of the fire, nor was there any damage to the pastor's barn or the principal's barn. You see they each had their own barn in those days for their horse and buggy and the like. I know that Mr. Kalb never had a horse, but he did have a hen house with a few chickens. I know this is out of place, but I remember the Mueller boys would ride to school in horse and buggy because they were the ones who lived the furthest away. And they kept the horse during the school day in Mr. Kalb's barn.

I don't remember if the members cleaned up the mess or what. I would assume they cleaned it up, but I don't remember if my dad ever went. I know there was nothing but ashes

left. They must have gone over there with their wagons and shovels and forks and loaded that stuff up because there were no backhoes or anything like that back then.

I remember having church services in the school from that time on and even remember having that year's confirmation service at St. Matthew's in Lebanon.

Do you remember hearing ^{how} home the fire started?

The church history and the article you gave to me, records that it was some kind of chimney fire. I heard that the chimney stack from the wood burning stove might have been resting too close to the wall as it angled out of the building. I also heard that the confirmation girls might have made a mistake after confirmation class. You see it was their job to sweep up the confirmation room and the church each day after confirmation class. I heard that they may have sweep up and as they were putting the ashes into the wood stove a few sparks may have flew out that started the fire that afternoon. It may be better to go with the way the paper and the history say the fire started.

In only two days, they already had a new building committee elected to start the organization of the rebuilding project?

My uncle, Frank Greibnow was on that board, and they got right to work. I don't remember what they all did, but they sure got everything organized pretty quickly.

New church structure was to cost \$40,000. How much was \$40,000 dollars at that time? How did they raise the money?

I remember, I believe it was only a few weeks after the church burned down that after the Sunday services, which we had in the school building at the time, that Ed Krueger came up to my dad and said, 'How much do you wish to pledge or give?' I remember my dad responding quickly that he would give \$300. I know that's what he gave just like that, if he gave more for the building, I don't know. My dad was not as well to do as others in the congregation who would have been able to give more, like Ted Jaeger who was the richest man in our congregation at that time, I'm sure a \$1000 would have been a possibility for him. I guess that John Degner was the one who managed all the money for that. I just remember Ed Krueger standing in the back of the school each week asking each person what they were willing to give. Everybody was just so willing. I can't remember how many families there were, maybe a hundred, and they were almost all farmers. They were just so willing.

At the time of dedication of the new structure, they already had over \$32,000 collected and only had to borrow less than \$8000 for the new church? How was that possible so close to the depression?

Yes, that was a miracle and a blessing. We had all but a few thousand to go on the day of the church dedication. I'll guarantee that it was paid in full before that year ended. This all happened before the depression hit. The stock market crashed in twenty-nine, but it didn't hit us until the early 30's—30, 31, maybe 32. What a blessing of God to have God's house totally rebuilt and paid for before the depression hit. God's house was always taken care of first. People were so generous when it came to giving to the church building.

Even within my own lifetime, I have seen many building projects at St. Paul's. It seems as though everyone is there to lend a hand. Was that true in building the church in 1926?

It was the same contractor who had built Lebanon's church, Krassin. He was from Marshfield. And he made a boo-boo when he built our church. He used defective mortar, and we have been tuck pointing that church every since! If he had left over mud from one day, the next morning he would mix the old stuff into the new. There was just no strength in that mud because of that, he cheated us! There were no building codes in those days.

What I remember is that everything was contracted out. Our members did not help with the building. I think our members may have helped in bringing in the gravel for the building. They would take their horses and wagons and load up the gravel from the pits that were near Lebanon and cart it to the church. I do remember that and boy was there a lot of gravel. They built the church on the same location, as the one that burnt. They may have moved it back from the road a little, but it's still too close to the road. All the brick I believe came from Watertown brick yard. Watertown was know for the its brick yard's. The soil around Watertown was perfect for making brick. All of Watertown is made of brick. They brought the brick out by horse and wagon. I can't recall how many guys were working on building the new church; it must have been quite a crew because they built that large church so quickly.

Within three months of the fire, the church broke ground and laid the cornerstone. Do you remember that service? (Northwestern Band played, Pastor Sauer preached)

I don't remember this service very well. All I remember is that it was a warm, beautiful, sunny day, and we had an outdoor service.

On October 17th 1926, the new Church building that stands to this day was dedicated. What do you remember from that day? (WI Synod President Rev. Bergmann, Prof. Meyer, and Western WI District President Rev. Thurow are all present)

I remember the dedication Sunday; it was cold and rainy. And I remember that Otto Melcher came over with his cross mount Case (tractor) and they borrowed a small generator from town and they hooked that tractor up to the generator in the little shed behind the church and we had electricity for the services. After that weekend we were back to pumping the organ for power. I don't believe that the church was hooked up to electricity until 1929, or sometime around then. The church got power before my parents did in 1934.

I remember it as a wonderful day. There were three services and two meals. There was no ladies aid, but there were plenty of women to make the meal because there was more than enough for everybody. I have a copy of the service folder from that day; you can take that along and make a copy of it for your paper. If you want you can even tape it back together! There was a morning service, which President Bergmann preached at, this service was in German. Then there was an afternoon service which was held at 2:30 which Professor Meyer preached at, which also was in German. Then in the evening Pastor Thurow preached in English. This was an all day event! Boy were there people, people from everywhere! We went to all three services, it was an all day project, and there were so many kids there! I don't remember the meal, probably fried chicken, whatever it was, it was good. It was a beautiful day even though the weather was a nasty day.

Our records show that after the new church was built the members from St. Matthew's Lebanon joined St. Paul's Ixonia. How many joined?

It was after the new structure was built that the dozen or so families moved their church home from St. Matthew's in Lebanon to St. Paul's. Over time, that little church building in Lebanon deteriorated into nothing.

Closing Thoughts

After the interview with Walter Griebnow, I followed up on a few questions that were left unanswered or were still a bit unclear. I talked with Gilbert Braasch, Carl Degner, and Howard Wiedenhoef. Gilbert was in sixth grade at the time of the fire and helped Walter out with a few stories that he remembered. Carl was around the same age, but his family lived too far away for him to go to school there, but his family was a member at St. Paul's. Carl starting attending St.

Paul's school when he was in sixth grade and remembered many additional stories of St. Paul's. Howard Wiedenhoeft works for Ixonia Mutual Insurance Company and also added a few extra details that he was able to track down and explain.

There was a question as to what day of the week that the fire occurred. In researching back, the church fire occurred on a Friday afternoon. Since the fire was late on Friday afternoon into evening, not much salvage work or clean up could not be conducted until the next day.

When I talked to Carl Degner in a phone interview he gave me the following information: It was on Saturday as the members dug through the ashes, everything was a complete loss; the organ, the stain glass windows, the fixtures, the bell were all destroyed. They did however manage to salvage one item, Pastor Bernthal's desk. Pastor's office was located in a corner of the church basement and escaped the destruction. As a number of members were carrying out the desk one of the drawers fell out. Contained in the drawer was Pastor Bernthal's discipline stick. Carl Degner has heard from several different sources as he grew up that it was Ed Krueger who then picked up the stick and threw the stick into the ash and said, "That's where that belongs!"

Many people gathered on Saturday to put back into order the school, since the desks and books were removed the day before, in fear that the fire would also take the school. On that Saturday the school was also prepared to conduct services for the following day. Chairs were picked up from Watertown, most likely from Hafemeister funeral home, which was already in business at this time. This information was gathered from the article taken from the Watertown Newspaper and talking with different individuals at St. Paul's.

Another piece of information that I dug into was where the brick for building the church came from. As mentioned in the interview Walter believed that the brick came from Watertown. But when talking to my father, he reminded me that Watertown was known for its cream style brick. Which makes sense, since when you travel through Watertown all the buildings are cream colored. For example the buildings at Northwestern/LPS are a cream color. St. Paul's teacherage and parsonage are constructed with the cream Watertown brick. In researching, no one knew for sure where the brick came from. What they do know is that it is the exact same brick that was used in the building of Immanuel Lutheran (ELCA) in Lebanon prior to the construction of St. Paul's. Both Immanuel and St. Paul's had the same contractor, Mr. Krassin of Marshfield, WI. Mr. Krassin may have ordered the brick from Watertown, who may have

ordered it from some where else, or more likely that the materials came from a business that was from the Marshfield area.

My father, James Buske Sr., serves on the Board of Trustees and he is the one working with the different contractors trying to solve the leaking that has been occurring in the mortar. In talking with my father, the various contractors believe that some of the leaking comes from the short cuts that the builders took. It could have been the left over mortar that was used from day to day as Walter had suggested. My dad had also heard the weak mortar might stem from a poor job of washing the gravel before the mortar was mixed at the job site.

I also followed up on one last bit of information that was included in the newspaper article, which led to two more important facts. The question was to what the chemical company was that was referred to in the article. In digging, my father found an article in the *Heritage of Ixonia*, which is the history of Ixonia, Wisconsin compiled by Alida and Carl Jaeger for the 150 Anniversary of the town of Ixonia, which was celebrated in 1996. The authors of the book are also members at St. Paul's Ixonia. On page 56 of this history there is an article describing Ixonia Mutual Insurance Company, which was started in 1882. In this article it mentions,

“In 1925 the company purchased the chemical fire fighting outfit for the village of Ixonia from American La France for \$356.25. Otto Schott and R.J. Schwefel were the caretakers of the equipment. St. Paul's Lutheran church of Ixonia burned on February 5, 1926. Total fire loss included the church at \$2,250, organ \$750, church fixtures \$350, dwelling \$15. In 1929 the members voted to buy the necessary ladders, axes and buckets for the chemical fire fighting outfit.”

The chemical company that is mentioned in the newspaper article was a small chemical outfit that the Ixonia Mutual Insurance Company had purchased to fight fires in the absence of a fire department. This chemical outfit was indeed horse drawn and was a pumping cart that Gilbert Braasch remembers showing up after the fire had completely destroyed the church. This outfit was less than a year old and would have been no match for such a large blaze. I talked with Howard Wiedenhoef, a member of St. Paul's and the current operator of Ixonia Mutual Insurance Company. He told me that the chemical outfit was nothing more than a four man pumping station with the addition of a man who would add a chemical substance to the water which was believed to help slow fires. The chemical was similar to baking soda. It is interesting

that at the time of the fire, this fire-fighting branch of the Insurance Company still had no ladders, axes or buckets.

When I talked to Howard Wiedenhoeft about the chemical outfit, he was able to track down the original Insurance policy that the church had taken out. The \$7500 policy covered the school, parsonage, teacherage, and also the church and its contents. This policy for these buildings was taken out on February 17, 1922. The policy was written for a five-year coverage with the five-year premium totaling \$132.75. Howard pointed out to me that the three church trustees who signed the fire settlement document were also directors on Ixonia Mutual at the time of the fire. A copy of the original policy that was recorded in the books at Ixonia Mutual, a copy of the original church fire settlement, and a memo from Howard Wiedenhoeft are also attached to this document.

This project led me to see how valuable good church records are and how valuable these memories are for all generations. For instance, an original copy of the dedication service is priceless. There was not even a copy of this document found in any of the church records. In talking with, and interviewing many members of St. Paul's, it has brought back some very treasured memories about a time that was almost forgotten. There is talk to keep better track of the past materials of St. Paul's, keep better track of future items, and even give many people the opportunity to share and somehow store these valuable memories that our parents and grandparents have stored in their minds. I pray that the enthusiasm that this paper has created and the many church history goals they have set will one day become a reality for future generations. May God continue to richly bless this congregation and its many members.

James G. Buske
April 22, 2002

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

According to the knowledge of the Committee there never was a complete history of our congregation printed. Since the congregation is one hundred years old, the danger is now that some of the interesting historical facts have been lost and forgotten. We have, however, tried to gather as much information as we could find from various sources.

In this task we were especially assisted by the brief history of the congregation written by the Reverend Dr. J. Bernthal at the time of the Diamond Jubilee of the congregation.

The Anniversary Booklet Committee wishes to thank Pastor Bernthal and all individual members who helped the Committee gather historical facts and submitted the pictures included in this booklet.

It is our sincere hope that this booklet may lead all its readers to realize what manifold blessings, both spiritual and temporal, the Lord in His grace and mercy has bestowed upon our congregation during the 100 years of its existence.

The Committee

**HISTORY OF
ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION
IXONIA, WISCONSIN**

Rulers and kings have throughout all ages sought unity of worship in their subjects in order to unify the empire. For example, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, fearing that worship of different gods would create a divided empire, commanded all his subjects to worship the image which he had erected. He was determined to have a people loyal to one government, honoring one king, and worshipping one and the same god.

Such, no doubt, were also the intentions of German emperors. The church was divided into two main camps. One consisted of those adhering to the pure Scriptural doctrine as taught by Luther, the other consisted of those adhering to the doctrines of Calvin and Zwingli.

As early as 1613, Elector John Sigismund of Brandenburg tried to effect a union between these two Protestant churches in his domain. His successors pursued the same policy. Both sides were to make concessions to bring about this union. In 1817, on the occasion of the celebration of the third centenary of the Reformation, the foundation for such a union was then actually laid. This union was called the Evangelical Church of Prussia. In this union the Lutheran and Reformed bodies were to be united under a common church government. Services were to be similar, but each party might retain its own confession of faith.

However, not all Lutherans joined this union. Many remained faithful to their confession and organized separate Lutheran congregations. No sooner had these Lutherans taken their stand than the fiery trials of their faith and confession began.

Firmly indoctrinated in God's Word, these Christians knew: "We ought to obey God rather than men". (Acts 5, 29). Therefore they refused to obey the decree of the emperor and Church Council. As a result they were forced to leave Germany and find a haven of religious freedom.

They had heard that such a haven of religious freedom could be found in America. Consequently many left Germany and sailed for America.

The voyage took weeks and months instead of the few hours or days that it takes today. Some of those who sought religious freedom never reached our shores, but by the grace of God many did. Among those who were led to this land of ours, were the founders of St. Paul's Congregation.

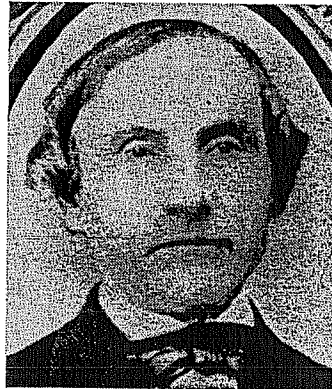
One group of about 150 Lutherans left the port of Hamburg, on June 20, 1843, and after a stormy voyage of seven weeks reached New York. From here they went to Buffalo, and again boarded a ship for Milwaukee, arriving there on September 6th. About six weeks later another group, under the leadership of Pastor Kindermann, arrived in Wisconsin. Some of these people settled in Kirchain, Washington County. Others settled in the townships of Lebanon and Ixonia.

These sturdy pioneers found in America a haven of religious freedom, but not a haven of religious peace. The controversy which had split the Lutheran Church in the homeland also raged here. So almost immediately a split occurred in the infant congregation. The more liberal group followed Pastor Kindermann and joined the Buffalo Synod. The majority, however, remained faithful to the Lutheran Confession. As a result this group was left without a pastor for a whole year. Then they called candidate L. Geyer, who became the first resident pastor.

During the early years many disputes arose in that first congregation. One of these disputes caused a number of families to leave the congregation and prompted them to establish a new congregation late in July of 1849.

This is the beginning of St. Paul's congregation.

The first pastor called to minister unto the spiritual needs of this new congregation was Pastor John Hoeckendorf, who had served as a junior officer in the German army. The first services were conducted in the home of a Mr. Braasch, but often the members met in the home of sick members in order that they, too, might enjoy the spiritual ministrations. Among the founders of this congregation were the following: Fred Wagner, Hermann Braasch, Gottlieb Roehrke, Martin Raasch, Martin Dames, Christian Huebner, Carl Jaeger, William Degner, Fred Braasch, Jno. Braasch, Carl Braasch, Carl Winter, Fred Lucas, Henry Ludwig, Fred Neumann and Louis Neumann.



Pastor J. Hoeckendorf
1849 - 1866

Until 1850, services were conducted in the homes. It was then decided to erect a church. With willing hearts and eager hands they felled the trees and hewed the logs, and within a short time the log church was finished.

These founders realized the incalculable value of a Christian Day school, and therefore immediately started a school in the church building. The pastor served as teacher.



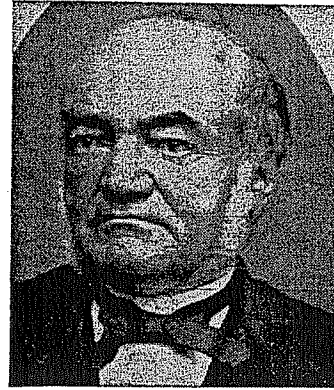
Built In 1860

The arrival of more immigrants and the increase of population in this territory swelled the membership to such an extent that it was necessary in 1860, to build a larger church of gravel, clay and lime.

Five years later, in 1865, the territory around the church was settled to such an extent that the children of the founders were forced to leave home to seek new territory. This, however, was not pleasing to the fathers of our congregation. They wanted their children to stay near home and with the church. Since this was becoming impossible here they decided to move West. Pastor Hoeckendorf had relatives near West Point, Nebraska. From these they learned that there was still much territory left in that state. A delegation consisting of Braasch, Wagner and Jesmer was sent to Nebraska to gather first hand information. The report which they brought back was so pleasing that on May 23, 1866, a number of families left Ixonia. Those families who left at that time were the following: H. Braasch, J. Braasch, J. Buett, F. Boche, W. Boche, J. Bernhardt, F. Dedermann, W. Fischer, Ch. Haase, Fr. Haase, Ferd. Haase, K. Hille, J. Kaun, W. Klug, Aug. Lentz, K. Machmueller, K. Nienow, M. Raasch, G. Roehrke, W. Reichow, W. Seifert, K. Uecker, A. Wachter, H. Wachter, J. Wichert, K. Wichmann; G. Winter and K. Winter; also these single persons: W. Braasch, F. Hoeckendorf, A. Melcher, A. Nienow, A. Raasch, and F. Wichmann. They arrived near Norfolk, Nebraska, on July 12, 1866, and there they founded a new congregation, also named St. Paul's.

Pastor Hoeckendorf remained in Ixonia until October of that year, and then he also left Ixonia to become pastor of the daughter congregation. He served the Norfolk congregation until the time of his death in 1877.

The departure of Pastor Hoeckendorf left the mother congregation without a pastor. The congregation then called Pastor Alex Lange, who served the congregation until he retired from the ministry in 1877. During the vacancy the congregation was served by Professor A. Ernst of Watertown, Wisconsin. Up until this time congregational matters had been carried out in a very legalistic way. Prof. A. Ernst, however, taught the congregation how to carry out affairs of church in a true evangelical way. It was also at this time that the congregation officially adopted the name "St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, Town of Ixonia, Jefferson County, Wisconsin."



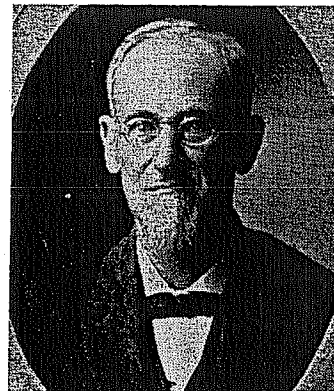
REV. ALEX LANGE
1866 - 1877



REV. A. SIEGLER
1878 - 1882

Early in 1878, the congregation extended a call to Pastor A. F. Siegler, who was serving the Lord at that time in Indian Creek, Wis. He accepted the call and served as pastor and teacher until 1882, when he accepted a call to Columbus, Wis. It was during his pastorate that Mr. Aug. Jaeger donated the one-half acre of land on the condition that a new school be built on that property. Also at this time St. Matthew's and St. John's congregation asked to be served by the pastor of St. Paul's congregation. It is interesting to note that St. John's congregation paid \$130.00 toward the salary of the pastor and St. Paul's and St. Matthew's \$460.00 and provided the pastor with firewood.

Pastor Siegler's successor was Pastor Ph. Brenner. Pastor Brenner served the congregation for only five years; but they were five eventful years. During these years the first teacher was called, the Wisconsin Synod Hymnal was introduced, the congregation joined the Wisconsin Synod in 1882, and upon the plea of the pastor the congregation decided to build a teacherage. Pastor Brenner served the congregation until August, 1887, when he accepted a call to Reedsville, Wisconsin.



REV. PH. BRENNER
1882 - 1887



REV. P. CH. ROECK
1887 - 1894

owned by Mr. Herbert Degner. In 1905, this property was sold to the highest bidder for \$1925.00, and the present parsonage was built. In the Spring of 1907, Pastor Haase accepted a call to Randolph, Wisconsin.

The congregation then extended a call to Candidate Fred Kammholz, a graduate of Springfield Seminary. Pastor Kaminholz served the congregation until March of 1911.

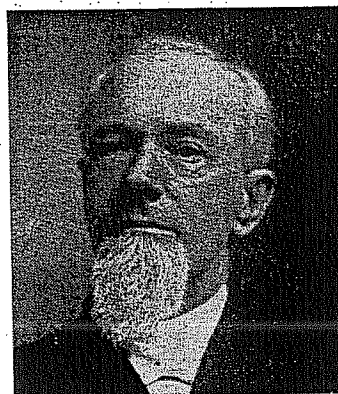
He was succeeded by Pastor J. B. Bernthal of Oakwood, Wisconsin, who was installed by Dr. Hoermann on May 7, 1911. During Pastor Bernthal's pastorate many improvements were made in the church. A new organ was installed at a cost of \$1850.00 in 1914. Other repairs were made in the parsonage and in the teacherage, and,



REV. F. KAMMHOLZ
1907 - 1911

Upon the recommendation of Pastor Bading, President of the Synod, the congregation then extended a call to Pastor P. Christian Roeck, of Morrisonville, Wisconsin. The church which had been built in 1860, had become too small and was in need of repairs. In 1892, it was decided to build a new church, a wooden structure with a high tower and a bell. The bell was to weigh no more than 1500 pounds. Pastor Roeck served the congregation until his death in 1894. In memory of Pastor Roeck the three congregations erected the monument which still marks his grave in our cemetery.

Pastor Julius Haase of Fort Atkinson was called to succeed Pastor Roeck in 1894. Until 1905, the parsonage was located directly west of the church on the property which is now

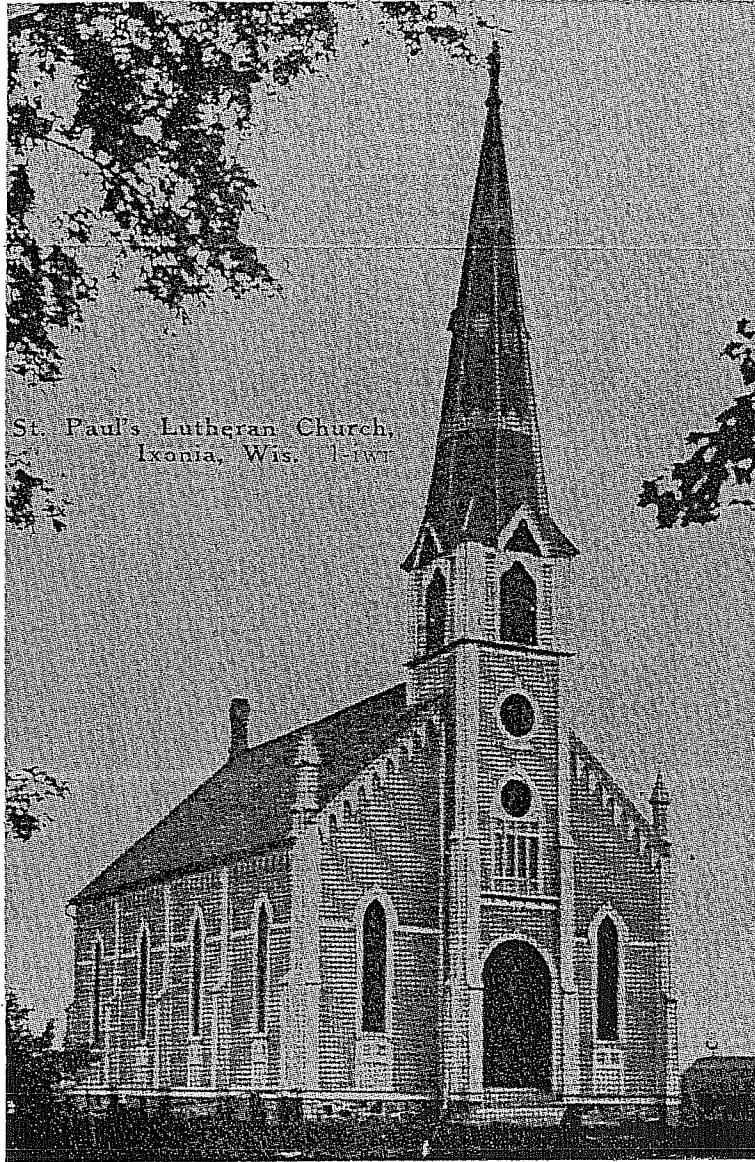


REV. JULIUS HAASE
1894 - 1907

in general, all the buildings were repaired and painted.

In 1915, St. John's Congregation of South Ixonia, which up to this time had been served by pastors of St. Paul's, became self-supporting and called its own pastor.

In 1922, new art glass windows were installed in the church, the interior of the church was decorated at a cost of \$750.00, and the whole exterior of the church was repainted in preparation for the Diamond Jubilee of the congregation. This event was observed on the 27th of July, 1924. The guest speakers for this occasion were three former pastors of the congregation: Pastors Siegler, Haase and Kammholz.



Built in 1892 — Destroyed by Fire in 1926

*"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house
and the place where Thine honor dwelleth."*

—PSALM 26, 8



REV. J. BERNTHAL
1911 - 1938

On the 5th of February, 1926, about 2:30 in the afternoon a great tragedy struck the congregation. The frame church, only recently remodeled and redecorated, was completely destroyed by a flash fire. Many recall the heart-breaking incident; but the congregation did not become disheartened. On the 7th of February, the congregation decided to erect a new church of brick with a seating capacity of no less than 350. A building committee consisting of Emil Melcher, Wm. Wiedenhoeff, R. Schwefel, H. Kuester and F. Griebenow was elected. The contract was let out to Mr. Krassin of Marshfield, Wisconsin. Three months later the cornerstone of the new edifice was laid. On this occasion Pastor C. Sauer of South Ixonia preached the sermon, and the Northwestern College band provided the appropriate music.

Anxiously the members of St. Paul's looked forward to that day when the congregation could move into its new house of worship. This happy day came on the 17th of October, 1926. On that day the new church was dedicated to the service of God. The dedicatory sermons were preached by Rev. E. Bergmann, President of the Wisconsin Synod, Prof. J. Meyer, and Rev. G. Thurow, President of the Western Wisconsin District. The total cost of the new edifice amounted to \$40,182.68. At the time of the dedication all except \$7624.99 had been paid. About this time the St. Matthew congregation at Lebanon, which had been served by the pastor and teacher of St. Paul's congregation, decided to join our congregation.

In 1929 the congregation observed the 50th anniversary of its founding. The speakers for this occasion were Pastor Carl Siegler of Bangor, Wisconsin, and Pastor Walter Haase of Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

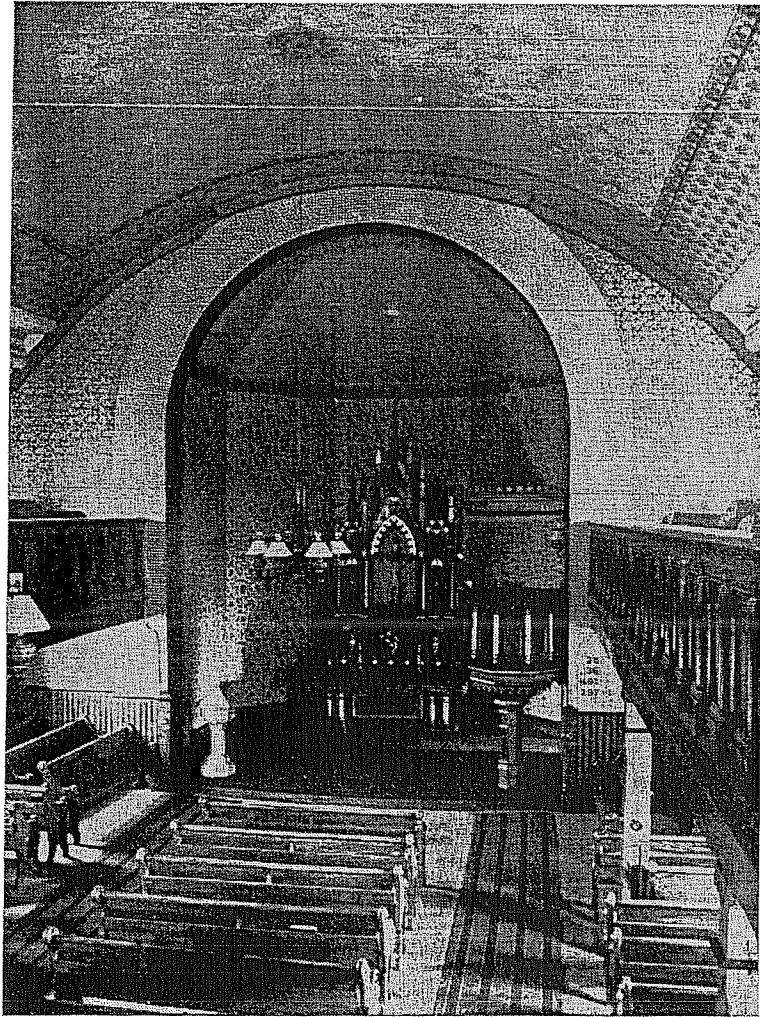
Early in 1932 the question of English services was brought up in the congregation. However, it was voted down 23 to 24. That matter was again brought up in 1937, and then it was decided to have services in both languages.

In June of 1938, Pastor Bernthal asked to be released, after having served the congregation for 27 years. The congregation granted him the release.

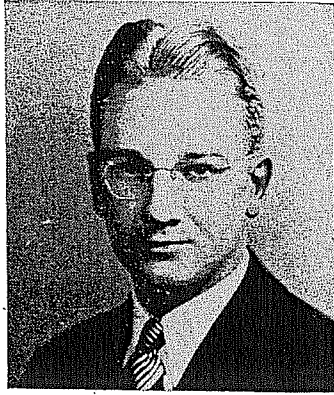
His successor, Pastor R. C. Hillemann, was installed as pastor of the congregation on August 28, 1938, and served the congregation until January 24, 1943. During his pastorate the constitution which had served the congregation for many years was revised and printed in both German and English. In January of 1943, Pastor Hillemann accepted a call to Norwalk, Wisconsin.



REV. R. C. HILLEMANN
1938 - 1943



Interior View of the Frame Church



REV. E. SCHROEDER
1943 - 1945

Professor E. Wendland served as vacancy pastor until Pastor E. Schroeder of Woodville, Wisconsin, was installed on May 9, 1943. During this vacancy extensive repairs were made on both teacherage and parsonage. Pastor Schroeder's stay was but a short one, for in October of 1944, he received a call to serve as professor and librarian at Northwestern College. The congregation after much deliberation reluctantly granted him his release.

Pastor Schroeder continued to serve the congregation until January 21, 1945, when the present pastor, O. A. Pagels, was installed.



REV. O. A. PAGELS
1945 -

In preparation for the centennial celebration extensive repairs and improvements were made both in the church and in the school. The church was waterproofed, decorated and painted, and storm glass was installed on all windows in the auditorium. The school was also completely remodeled. The total cost of the whole project amounted to nearly \$12000.00.

Today as we look back with great joy upon the 100 years of grace bestowed upon the congregation by our God; we pray that the God of all grace may continue to be with us as He was with our fathers and awaken in us the same love and desire for Him and for His Word which they possessed. For His Word is the power unto Salvation to everyone that believeth.

STATISTICAL REPORT

At present the congregation numbers about 150 families and part families, 400 souls, with 290 communicants and 125 voting members.

The following ministrations are recorded in the records:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Baptisms | 1186 |
| Confirmations | 556 |
| Marriages | 227 |
| Burials | 265 |
| Communion Guests | 41849 |

HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOL

The Lord tells us in Ephesians 6, 4: "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Our forefathers knew this. They themselves had experienced the joy and happiness of having been brought up in the Word of God and they wanted their children and children's children to share those blessings with them. Therefore, as soon as the first church was built, a school was opened in 1850. According to the records our school is the second oldest in the Wisconsin Synod, the oldest being the school in Kirchayn, Wisconsin.

For a number of years classes were conducted in the log church. Then in September 1880 Mr. August Jaeger donated the one-half acre of land with the understanding that a new school be built on this property. The congregation accepted the gift and decided to erect a new schoolhouse and, if possible, to complete it before the beginning of the next school term. This was accomplished. The old schoolhouse was sold to Mr. Wm. Weide for \$20.00 and the old benches were sold to Mr. Carl Bergmann for \$1.50.

Until this time the pastor served also as teacher. In May 1882, the congregation decided to call the first teacher. He was to teach for five months of the year in the District School and the remaining seven months in the church school. The call was accepted by teacher D. J. Vogel. Forty-two children were enrolled in the school at this time.

In 1884 St. Matthew's congregation requested that the teacher also serve as their teacher. This request was granted and for many years the teacher traveled back and forth between the two schools.

Teacher Vogel served the congregation until July 17, 1887. His successor was teacher H. Gruel, who served the congregation until April of 1889 when he accepted a call to West Bend, Wisconsin.

Upon the recommendation of Prof. Ernst, the congregation then called Pastor A. W. Vogt. Pastor Vogt served as teacher until July, 1893. From June of 1894, Pastor C. Roeck served as pastor and teacher. From the Fall of 1894 until May of 1898, Mrs. C. Roeck was in charge of the school. To assist her in the work she engaged the teachers Roeck, Kuhn, and Wichert.

In May, 1898, the congregation extended a permanent call to teacher A. Roeck. Mr. Roeck served our congregation and also St. John's of South Ixonia until 1901.

His successor was Teacher Ed. Dobbartz. He, being very musically inclined, organized a band, which played on numerous occasions to the enjoyment of all. On July 11, 1911 Teacher Dobbartz accepted a call to another school.



St. Paul's Christian Day School

The congregation then called Teacher J. Harmening, of Lake Mills, Wisconsin. The congregation requested 1) that both the German and English language be used in the school, 2) that at the end of the school year a public examination take place, 3) that members of the congregation be permitted to visit school at any time in order to see what progress was being made, and 4) that the teacher in the absence of the pastor conduct "Lesegottesdienst." Teacher Harmening served the congregation until 1917.

A Call was then extended to Teacher Ben Kalb, Burnett, Wisconsin. Teacher Kalb served the congregation until the Lord called His faithful servant home on October 9, 1936.

During this vacancy teacher Groth of Watertown and Mrs. A. Meicher taught in the school. In April 1937, Teacher Victor Lehmann of Madison, Wisconsin, was called. In 1946 - 1947, extensive repairs were made in the school. The old partition that divided the hall and classroom was torn down, the old woodstove was replaced by a new automatic oil heater, a basement was dug, and toilet facilities and water were installed. In the Spring of 1948, Teacher Lehmann accepted a call to Neillsville, Wisconsin.

His successor is the present teacher, Mr. H. O. Fehlauer, who was installed August 15, 1948.

Throughout the history of the school the enrollment has always been above 30 children. The present infant membership of the congregation will bring the enrollment up to 60 in 1951, God willing. This year 41 children, a 100% membership, attended the school.

Looking back upon the history of our church and school we find that the congregation has been richly rewarded for establishing and maintaining the Christian Day School. From it it has received a continuous supply of well indoctrinated members, Lutherans in faith and practice, to whom the church means so much. It has even been rewarded in this, that it has furnished other congregations with well-grounded pastors and teachers who received their first training in our school. Of those who did, we have Pastor Alvin Degner, teachers Arnold Straché, Alex Jaeger, John Jaeger, Paul Schwartz and Orville Degner. Mr. William Winter is now attending our Lutheran Theological Seminary at Thiensville, Wisconsin.

In addition to native sons of the congregation many former pastors' and teachers' sons and daughters who entered the service of the Lord received their early training in our school.

May the school-spirit of the fathers dwell in the hearts of the children, so that our school may continue to be an endless service of blessing for the congregation and the church at large.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Statistics

- 1849 Founding of the congregation.
- 1850 Erection of the first church building, a log building, also used for school.
- 1860 Erection of the second church building.
- 1866 Migration of a large number to Nebraska.
- 1877 Present name of the congregation adopted.
- 1880 First school building erected, on land donated by August Jaeger.
- 1882 First resident teacher called. Enrollment numbered 42 children.
Teacherage erected.
Congregation joined the Wisconsin Synod.
- 1892 Erection of a frame church building.
- 1905 Construction of present parsonage.
- 1911 Beginning of the use of the English and German language in school.
- 1914 New organ installed in frame church at a cost of \$1850.00.
- 1922 Frame church remodeled, redecorated and art glass windows installed.
- 1924 Diamond Jubilee observance.
- 1926 February 5th frame church destroyed by fire.
Present church dedicated on October 17th.
Building cost \$40,183.00.
- 1929 80th Anniversary observance.
- 1937 First service in the English language.
- 1938 Jr. Bible Class organized by Rev. Hillemann.
- 1943 Completion of the revised constitution printed in both German & English.
- 1946 One room school building enlarged and a basement dug out.
- 1948 Present church building decorated and improved.
- 1949 Centennial observance on July 30 and 31.
- 1950 One-room addition to the school erected.
Cemetery Fund established for perpetual care.
- 1953 Sr. Bible Class began.
- 1959 1st Meeting of Ladies' Aid Society.
- 1960 Two additional rooms added to the school and a gymnasium.
- 1961 Dedication of the new addition and the 110th anniversary of our school.
Northwestern Lutheran mailed to home of all members.
- 1962 Fire damage to the teacherage.
- 1963 Beginning of 2 services on Sunday.
- 1964 Observance of the congregations 115th anniversary.
- 1964 The loss of Pastor Otto Pagels to his eternal home.
- 1965 The Lord protected our church from tornado damage on Palm Sunday.
Began using envelope system for offering.
Permanent marker to identify cemetery placed at its entrance.
Restrooms were installed in church.
Entrance built up to sacristy.
400 evergreen seedlings planted by 7th and 8th grade boys.
- 1966 A new upper room added to the teacherage.
Confirmation date was changed from Palm Sunday to 3rd Sunday in May.
Beginning of school band program.
Built garage for parsonage.

- 1967 Joined Lakeside Lutheran Federation.
- 1968 Lutheran Pioneers organized.
Discontinuation of German Services.
- 1971 PTO organized.
- 1973 Enclosed the entry to the church, added a driveway canopy, meeting and storage rooms in the basement.
- 1974 Observance of the congregations 125th anniversary.
- 1975 Built a new garage for the teacherage.
- 1976 Redecorated the church and installed carpeting overall.
- 1977 Scholarship Fund Established.
- 1978 First Kindergarten Class.
- 1979 Balcony seating replaced and railing added.
- 1981 Sand blasting and painting exterior of parsonage and teacherage.
- 1981 Hot lunch program offered once a week.
- 1982 Ceiling fans installed in the church.
- 1983 Completion of all classrooms receiving new styled desks.
- 1984 New ceiling tile and lighting system installed in church basement and basement floor refinished.
- 1985 The loss of Pastor G.B. Frank to this eternal home.
Beginning of Sunday School Classes.
New heating systems installed in parsonage and teacherage.
Bible class conducted between services.
The first issue of the monthly newsletter (Epistle) mailed to all the members of the congregation.
Offering two children services on Christmas Eve.
- 1986 New chair lift installed.
- 1987 An acre of land for each, the cemetery and school property, donated by Lorenz and Albin Jaeger.
Beginning the use of individual cups for communion and the continuation of the common cup.
New lighting system and ceiling fans installed in school.
- 1988 Adoption of revised constitution and by-laws.
Confirmation change to 1st Sunday in May.
First Easter Sunrise service and breakfast.
Cut down hill between church and school as a safety factor and resurfaced the road.
Hiring the position of a part-time school and church secretary.
First advent services held at St. Paul's.
- 1989 Celebration of the congregation's 140th anniversary.
Refurbished the organ from funds collected by donations and offerings (special anniversary drive).
An Eternal Flame was donated and installed in the church.
- 1991 A photo display rack installed in church.
East tower lowered and completed.
- 1993 West tower lowered and the bell removed permanently.
Carpeting donated to replace the old in the church entrance.
All teachers had to be certified.
New hymnals were introduced.
Natural gas line installed to the church, school, parsonage and teacherage.
- 1994 Voted to build a new school.

PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED ST. PAUL'S CONGREGATION

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1849 - 1866 J. Hoeckendorf | 1911 - 1938 J.B. Bernthal |
| 1866 - 1877 Alex Lange | 1938 - 1943 R.C. Hilleman |
| 1877 - 1882 A.F. Siegler | 1943 - 1945 Erwin Schroeder |
| 1882 - 1887 Ph. Brenner | 1945 - 1964 Otto A. Pagels |
| 1887 - 1894 Christian Roeck | 1966 - 1985 G.B. Frank |
| 1894 - 1907 Julius Haase | 1985 - Kenneth Ewerdt |
| 1907 - 1911 Fred Kammholz | |

TEACHERS WHO HAVE SERVED ST. PAUL'S CONGREGATION

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1883 - 1887 D.J. Vogel | 1950 - 1955 Marie Koppelman |
| 1887 - 1889 H. Gruel | 1955 - 1958 Sharon Rux |
| 1889 - 1893 A.W. Vogt | 1958 - 1961 Margaret Knittle |
| 1893 - 1894 Christian Roeck | 1958 - 1960 Hedwig Zerjav |
| 1894 - 1898 Mrs. C. Roeck | 1960 - 1962 Kathy Netzel |
| 1898 - 1901 Mr. A. Roeck | 1961 - 1968 Hedwig Zerjav |
| 1901 - 1911 Ed Dobratz | 1962 - 1986 Lois Sell |
| 1911 - 1917 J. Harmening | 1968 - 1969 Cheryl Olm |
| 1917 - 1936 Benjamin Kalb | 1969 - 1977 Hedwig Zerjav |
| 1936 - 1937 G.C. Groth | 1970 - 1972 Myron Kell |
| 1937 - 1948 Victor Lehmann | 1972 - 1974 Ruby Reich |
| 1948 - 1951 Herman Fehlauer | 1974 - 1976 Emanuel Seelman |
| 1951 - 1952 William Birshing | 1976 - Ruth Dahlberg |
| 1952 - 1956 Leslie Kehl | 1977 - 1982 Barbara Lehman |
| 1956 - 1986 Edwin Sell | 1982 - 1988 Linda Mickelson |
| 1986 - Fred Pahmeier | 1984 - Doran Fischer |
| | 1986 - 1992 Christina Westendorf |
| | 1988 - 1993 Stacey Lehner |
| | 1992 - 1994 Denise Hecht |
| | 1993 - Jeanne Kionka |

Brothers and Sisters of the Congregation that have graduated from our Lutheran Seminary and Teachers Colleges.

Pastors

Alvin Degner
Percy Damrow
Richard Pagels
Steven Degner
William Winter
Joel Frank
Charles Degner
Joel Jaeger
Ross Else

Teachers

Arnold Strache
Alex Jaeger
John Jaeger
Orville Degner
Paul Schwartz
Margret Degner (Schubring)
Joanne Zerjav (Olson)

Teachers (cont)

Alex Damrow
Ione Jaeger (Ibeling)
Thomas Bobrofsky
Bonnie Duddeck (Thurrow)
Karen Degner (Livingston)
Diane Calbaum (McGovern)
Sharon Lettow (Buedler)
Barbara Bobrofsky (Mantey)
Nancy Wiedenhoef (Schmoller)
Deborah Melcher (Schramm)
Linda Ebert (Mickelson)
John Nass
Karen Sell (Plamann)
Renee Else (Reichel)
Carolie Kolbow
James Schmidt
Kristin Schmidt (Pappenfuss)

Flames Bring Ruin to Church near Ixonia

Article printed in the Watertown Newspaper¹

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, about one mile north of Ixonia, of which the Reverend J.B. Bernthal is pastor, was completely destroyed by fire. Which swept through Friday afternoon. The fire was discovered at 2:00, and one hour later the structure was completely in ruins. Not an article in the building was saved. The fire started in the confirmation room and is believed to have been caused by a defective chimney.

The church was a frame structure and once the flames gained headway, it was doomed. The heat during the fire melted the 1500-pound bell and broke windows in the parochial school across the street from the church. The school building was saved because of heavy snow on its roof, although the flames reached the structure. The parsonage a short distance from the church was also threatened for a time.

The heat broke windows in the church; and the south wind, which was blowing at the time, added to the fire after the windows had broken. The building was then in flames on all sides and the heavy smoke rolled out the windows and doors, making it impossible to enter the place to save fixtures and articles.

The fire and dense smoke attracted a great throng, but the people were helpless and saw the building before them crash and burn to ruin.

The chemical company from the village of Ixonia was called to the scene. But when they arrived they could do nothing but devote their attention and energy to saving the parsonage and school.

A member of the congregation was in the city today getting chairs so that services may be held in the school Sunday.

The amount of the loss will reach about \$3,500 it was said. Included in this is a \$3,000 organ.

¹ An article found in the confirmation/church history display in the narthex of St. Paul's Church
No date was given but most likely an article printed on Saturday February 6, 1926.

MEMO FROM HOWARD WIEDENHOEFT

TO: Jim Buske

04/16/02

Re: St. Paul's Church Fire

These are the only records that Ixonia Mutual has on the church fire. The policy that insured the church was taken out on Feb 17, 1922. It was written for five years and had \$7,500 of property insured. I assume that this included the church, pipe organ, church fixtures, school and the two dwellings. The five-year premium was \$132.75.

Page 174 is the loss report for the fire. The church, pipe organ and church fixtures most likely were totally destroyed and the amount paid was what they were insured for. You will note that the church's trustees also signed the loss report who by the way were also directors of Ixonia Mutual at the time of the fire.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 920-261-6616.



Howard Wiedenhoef
Manager
Ixonia Mutual Insurance Company

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| 11 | 73 | Max Bauer | 1.00 | 6725 | 6725 | Oct 17 | 1926 | |
| | | <i>Younger to Robert H. Holt of S.</i> | | | | | | |
| 17 | 74 | Edgar Hoff | 1.00 | 2950 | 2950 | Oct 17 | 1926 | |
| 17 | 75 | Charles Ebert Jr | 1.00 | 3050 | 3050 | Oct 17 | 1926 | |
| 27 | 76 | Rainbolt Turner | 1.00 | 600 | 900 | Oct 17 | 1926 | |
| 27 | 77 | Omar Kueber | 1.00 | 1300 | 1950 | Oct 27 | 1926 | |
| Nov 2 | 78 | William Eppler | 1.00 | 6700 | 6700 | Nov 2 | 1926 | |
| 29 | 79 | Albert Saiger | 1.00 | 3700 | 3700 | Nov 29 | 1926 | |
| 4 | 80 | Wayne Kreman | 1.00 | 5450 1950 7400 | 5205 1925 7130 | Nov 4 | 1926 | |
| Dec 10 | 81 | Theodore W. Mayer | 1.00 | 1600 | 1600 | Dec 10 | 1926 | |
| 13 | 82 | Alex Degner | 1.00 | 6450 | 6450 | Dec 13 | 1926 | |
| 13 | 83 | Ed. L. Pugh | 1.00 | 4800 | 4800 | Dec 13 | 1926 | |
| 29 | 84 | German Luth School Ass. | 1.00 | 250 | 625 | Dec 29 | 1926 | |
| 20 | 85 | John A Jaeger | 1.00 | 8525 | 8525 | Dec 20 | 1926 | |
| 27 | 86 | Edwin Bartel | 1.00 | 5075 | 5075 | Dec 27 | 1926 | |
| 29 | 87 | Rudolph Degner | 1.00 | 2425 | 2425 | Dec 29 | 1926 | |
| 1927 | | | | 73275 | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----|--------------------------|------|----------|-------|--------|------|
| <u>January Names Insured</u> | | | | | | | |
| Jan 30 | 88 | Edward Bauerke | 1.00 | 475 | 475 | Jan 20 | 1927 |
| Feb 18 | 89 | August Fisher | 1.00 | 4900 | 4900 | Feb 18 | 1927 |
| 17 | 90 | St Paul Lutheran Society | 1.00 | 7500 | 13275 | Feb 17 | 1927 |
| | | | | \$112875 | | | |

