

**A History of Calvary Ev. Lutheran Church
Thiensville, Wisconsin**

1943-1951

Years of Grace in God's Kingdom

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Grandparents like to remember the days of the past when gas was 25 cents a gallon, when a dress could be purchased for a few dollars, and when towns were still small enough for everyone to know everybody. Younger generations, however, like to look toward the days of the future accompanied by a "pedal to the metal" mentality -- a "Let's get going!" attitude.

I invite you to don the mindset of a grandparent as you read this church history paper. Step back fifty years and remember a time period between 1943 and 1951. Explore these eight years of history within Calvary Ev. Lutheran Church in Thiensville, WI and you will discover a young, energetic, independent- thinking congregation with a "let's get going" attitude! As you travel through these years, you will see the struggles and burdens of a youthful congregation. But more importantly, you will see **1943-1951: Years of Grace in God's Kingdom**".

As part of my original research, I entered 258 pages of the original, handwritten congregational and council minutes into computer word processor files. These minutes were from the congregational and council meetings that took place from January 10, 1943 to July 8, 1951. All facts and quotations were specifically derived from these historical resources and served as the basis of this report.

GOD'S GRACE IN CALLED WORKERS

In the first decade of Calvary's history from 1931-1941, two pastors served this

mission congregation. The second of the two, Pastor Martin Albrecht, would continue to work until receiving a call to Doctor Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. He was granted his release from Calvary to D.M.L.C. on August 2, 1943.¹ Prof. Schaller becomes the vacancy Pastor.² On September 8th, the Holy Spirit guided Calvary's small flock to call a young pastor by the name of Armin Schuetze as their third shepherd. Upon his acceptance, Pastor Schuetze would faithfully guide the Thiensville flock until receiving a call in the late summer of 1947 as professor of Latin and German to Mobridge Academy in Mobridge, South Dakota.³ Prof. Schaller stated that Pastor Schuetze should stay because "he is a good example for the student body of the Seminary to follow (Sermon etc)"⁴ However, the Lord directed Pastor Schuetze to accept the call. He preached his farewell sermon on January 4, 1948⁵ and departed shortly after for South Dakota. Prof. Reim became the vacancy pastor during this time and received assistance in teaching confirmation, Bible, and catechism classes from Seminary students.⁶ Notable pastors which were included on the call lists as provided by District President Voss were Otto Heier of Jamestown N.D., John^{F.}Brenner ~~X~~ of Pewaukee, and Richard Gensmer of Coloma, Mich.⁷ A call was extended to Rev. Koeninger (at that time at a mission congregation in Ann Arbor, MI) in December of 1947 but returned. In February, Rev. Howard Birkholz of Carrington, N.D. was called but he also returned it in March. For the third time, a call was extended, this time to Pastor W. Wegner of Moline, Ill. For the third time, Calvary received received a "no" answer. The unusual measure was taken at this point to return the call to Pastor Wegner again for his reconsideration.⁸

Prof Reim remarked at a congregational meeting that perhaps the Lord in his own way

was chastizing Calvary by withholding a Pastor from them.⁹ Finally, the Lord in his grace, directed Pastor R. Goede to accept the pastorship in Thiensville. He would remain the Pastor for the remainder of the time period that we are examining.

GOD'S GRACE IN FINANCES

One of the striking and fascinating features of looking back in time is to compare the finances of a past age with their approximates today. For example, renting an adequate-sized house today would approximately be in the neighborhood of \$800-900 a month. Renting a parsonage for the pastor and his family in Thiensville was \$40 a month. Today, a substitute teacher is paid around \$50.00. In 1949, it was "raised" to \$4.00.¹⁰ While Calvary Ev. Lutheran Church of 1995 has a budget of over \$500,00, the Calvary Ev. Lutheran Church of 1948 made do with the below budget:¹¹

Rent -----	\$600.00 + 120.00	Care of Grounds --	150.00
Fuel -----	350.00 + 100.00	Sub. Pastors --	40.00
Gas -----	37.00	Telephone --	35.00
Light & Power --	150.00	Floral Dec. --	10.00
Janitor's Supplies --	50.00	Miscellaneous --	50.00
" Salary --	125.00	Salaries --	1922.00
Stationery --	55.00	Pastor --	2220.00
School Supplies --	150.00	Teachers --	2500.00
Xmas Expense --	75.00		

Bldg Repairs -- 150.00

Like any mission congregation, Calvary's finances were tight. Especially of financial concern was the subsidy given to them by synod for operational expenses -- one of the highest subsidies in the synod.¹² Therefore, Calvary made every effort to reduce their subsidy. By 1949, the subsidy had been cut by \$65.00 a month to \$250.00 a month.

By the end of the decade, serious thought towards building a parsonage gave way to concrete action. Although discussion about building a parsonage had already begun in 1948¹³, approval was finally given by the congregation to allow the Building Committee to spend up to \$12,000 for the building materials¹⁴. The final result? Our present day parsonage is located next door to the present day church.

A used pipe organ was almost purchased in the same year that the plans were being drawn up for the parsonage. But the \$1,000 approximate cost of purchase, disassembly, and transportation did not pass approval.¹⁵ Why not? Perhaps the discussion of ~~yet~~^a different congregational purchase at the same time lends help in understanding the outcome. To help the crowding situation of the grade school at this time, the church council looked into the possibility of buying a vacant school building called Mapleview. The cost of purchasing the building and lot was \$6,000.00. The cost of moving the building about \$1,600.00 plus an additional cost of \$1,000.00 for cutting the utility cables.¹⁶ However, the project was never approved, yet would ultimately be accomplished when the final decision to build the current school building and gym (before the additional was added) was given.

GOD'S GRACE IN WORSHIP

1943-1951 were definitely years of God's grace in regards to church life.

Calvary took time to celebrate the first 15 years of their existence with a special day of thanksgiving on November 10, 1946. The former two pastors, Pastors Westendorf and Albrecht, were asked to be the speakers at the 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. services.¹⁷ While the past years of God's grace were remembered, changes were taking place in worship:

1. A youth group was started by Pastor Albrecht.¹⁸
2. The first guest book was purchased for the church in 1944.¹⁹
3. Advent services began in 1944.²⁰
4. Mixed communion was "recommended" and finally became a reality in 1946.²¹
5. ~~A~~ Junior and senior ~~B~~ Bible classes were started by Pastor Schuetze.
6. The singing of the introits was introduced and received an enthusiastic response from the congregation.²²
7. Pastor Goede began a monthly church paper at his own expense.²³
8. The first double Sunday service was held on March 12, 1950 (October-May).²⁴

A conscientious effort to reach out to the community and a steady growth in worship methodology display the development of a congregation by God's grace.

GOD'S GRACE IN EDUCATION

"Due to increased enrollments in certain grades more books will have to be purchased."²⁵ Such a statement as recorded in the School Report of the minutes of a 1943 voters meeting mark a pleasant problem for the Calvary Ev. Lutheran School. In 1941, the enrollment stood at thirty-nine children.²⁶ By 1945, enrollment had increased to sixty pupils, taught by two teachers, one for the lower grades and one for the upper grades..²⁷ In fact, the overall growth of the congregation to over 180 souls and average Sunday attendance of 119 demonstrated the growth of Calvary's congregation.

Therefore, this question was asked by the church council, "When shall or when can we plan to build?"²⁸ That question would unfortunately be asked with no apparent answer for the remainder of that decade. In May of 1945, an architect was hired to draw up blue prints for a school building.²⁹ A couple months later, he returned with a new school building plan. However, since the Synod was subsidizing Calvary as a mission congregation, it could not sanction an expenditure of that amount nor could it lend out the \$20,000 needed for construction.³⁰ The question of building a school along with a parsonage came up again less than a year later. Prof Schuetze's^{'5} response is recorded by the following statement: **"We have two needs: a school and a parsonage, and our greater need is a school; we can always rent a parsonage but not a school."**³¹

Consequently, the final outcome of the ballot was: 21 yes and 4 no.

A building committee was established, but its initial quest to obtain a building permit was turned down.³² However plans continued, albeit slowly, to somehow remodel or expand the current church facility to include an additional school room. But for the time being, space was made for the coming school year of 1946-47 by turning the church proper into a classroom during the week with volunteers coming in before the Sunday service to return the pews to a worship setting,³³ This situation would continue for the remainder of the decade.

Although plans for a new school building were slow in coming, the development of a kindergarten was not. A kindergarten was established in the spring of 1948³⁴ with a total of 6 children enrolled.

One other event that merits attention during these years revolved around the pastor shortage of the late 1940's. Because of the lack of WELS pastors, Southeastern Wisconsin District President Dahlke proposed joining Trinity, West Mequon and Calvary, Thiensville under one pastor.³⁵ A joint meeting of Calvary's church council and Trinity's church council took place on June 8, 1949 to discuss the possibility. Financial terms and even times of services were proposed. But at Calvary's subsequent voter's meeting a few days later revealed no desire to merge but to remain independent since it was "not in the best interest for Calvary at [this] particular time."³⁶

Though 1943-1951 were not beginning years of Calvary history but merely a continuation; though they did not produce any earth-changing events which would affect local or national history for centuries to come, they were still important years. They reflect the power of the Holy Spirit working through events, individuals, and his

church as a whole. They reflect a young congregation struggling with the pains of growth and the pains of sin. Most importantly, they reflect a God of grace, working in and through a small congregation for the furthering of the gospel in his kingdom.