

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
The Years of Controversy - 1922-1932

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In May 1986 I was assigned as a Vicar to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. After reading briefly about the congregation, I was under the impression that the congregation began in 1932 with Rev. Norbert Paustian. However, after talking to a number of members throughout the year, I learned that the congregation actually was incorporated in 1922. Nobody talked much about those first ten years, so I gathered that something must have happened during those years. My interest was peaked last year while talking to one of St. Matthew's members. She talked about a break-off group of the congregation. It was because of this and other things that I had heard about during the year that I decided to look into the history of St. Matthew's for my Church History paper.

The main sources for this paper are the Congregational Minutes of St. Matthew's from 1922 - 1932, various writings of people who are members of St. Matthew's today and articles from Faith-Life. The articles from Faith-Life, however, are often biased to the opinions of the writer. The greatest help in trying to figure out what happened during those years have been the Congregational Meeting Minutes of those years. I also do not intend in this paper to spend a lot of time on the controversy that started St. Matthew's, since this topic had been covered in a previous Church History paper by Arthur

Callies. I would like to look at what happened in the congregation during the years of 1922 - 1932. I will first look at the beginning of the congregation, then I will look briefly at some of the key events of the Protestant Controversy and how they affected St. Matthew's and then finally at what happened in the congregation during those years.

The Beginning Years

St. Matthew's began in 1922 after a split had occurred between this group and St. Paul's Lutheran church which was also located in Oconomowoc. In 1921 a controversy arose in St. Paul's in which an injunction was served against their pastor, W. P. Hass, prohibiting him from functioning as their pastor. The congregation lost this injunction order in court. "The next injunction order and the further court action at Waukesha in October 1921, which the pastor and teacher lost, naturally, after months of preparation for it on the part of St. Paul's." ¹ The case was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court in Madison. The Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the lower court and Pastor Hass lost his case. After this a number of members left the congregation with Pastor Hass to form St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. "After the decision of the Supreme Court at Madison in favor of an ungodly acting faction of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran congregation of Oconomowoc, Wis., who had the majority of said congregation in a number of dealings and especially in a meeting held October 27th, 1921, in which they ousted Rev. W. P. Hass and their teachers H. A. Jaeger and Edna Fritz without

proven causes, some members of said St. Paul's Church got together and called a meeting at the residence of Mr. E. Otto. Fifty-two members were present.² This meeting took place on April 19, 1922. In the Congregational Minutes of that meeting the following reasons were given for the separation from St. Paul's:

We separate for conscience sake. That which binds our conscience first and foremost is the utterly Unchristian procedure against our Pastor and Teacher in preferring and finally sustaining wholly unestablished, if not figmentary, charges against them, to wit: "Proven willful unfaithfulness in the performance of his office" (In Pastor's Case) and "Guilty of mishandling school monies coming into his custody" (In Teacher's Case); in discharging them upon such grounds; and ultimately in effecting their removal by invoking the civil summons against them, and this against the conscientious objections of a large minority.

And last but nowhere least, instead of giving heed to our conscientious objections, instead of penitently acknowledging before God and before those whom they had offended, that by such overt acts they had given grave offense to those within the church and to those without, instead of heeding the kindly, good, and brotherly advice and admonition of officials, pastors, and other members of that church body with which they were affiliated, heretofore, to wit, "The Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States", and have allied themselves and there actually and obviously identified themselves with a church body with which we have no pulpit and altar fellowship, with which we are not at one in spirit, yes, they have publicly identified themselves with the, to say the least, compromising principles and unionistic practices of that body, to wit, the Merger, by calling in as pastor, a ministerial member of that body, the U. L. C. in America. 3

Steps were now taken to organize into a new congregation. A constitution was now drawn up and adopted by the congregation on May 4, 1922. During that meeting the Trustees were also instructed to look for a site for the new congregation. On June 1, 1922, the final articles of the Constitution were adopted. Several other important resolutions were made at that meeting:

1. Resolved unanimously to incorporate under the laws of Wisconsin.
2. Resolved to apply for membership in the Synod of Wisconsin and other States.
3. Resolved to buy the Dr. Mueller barn if such can be done reasonably.
4. Resolved unanimously to call Rev. W. P. Hass as pastor of St. Matthew's Ev. Luth. Church . His salary to be \$1,200.00 a year payable in 12 months by installments.
5. Resolved unanimously to call Miss Edna Fritz as teacher of St. Matthew's school. The salary to be \$720.00 a year payable in 12 months by installments. 4

On July 8, 1922, Articles of Incorporation were filed in Waukesha for St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church. On July 9, 1922 the congregation resolved to build a permanent two room school. This school ended up having two large classrooms and one small classroom, and two large basement rooms for recreation. Herman A. Jaeger taught grades 5 through 8 and about half the classes for grade 9. Rev. Hass taught ninth grade Latin, History and Religion. Edna Fritz taught grades 1 through 4. On July 15 the congregation resolved to call H. A. Jaeger as first teacher of St. Matthew's school. His salary was \$900.00 a year payable in 12 monthly payments. It was also resolved during this meeting to purchase a portable chapel which had been at Camp McCoy from the Alexander Lumber Company. This chapel would remain on the property until it would be removed in 1951. The congregation would continue to grow in relative peace for the next five years.

The Protestant Conference

It is necessary for us to take a brief look at the beginnings of the Protestant Conference, since St. Matthew's would later become involved in this group. The spark that

ignited the Protestant movement was an incident at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin. On Friday, March 28, 1924, two tutors discovered a "thieving ring" among the students. They investigated the matter for the weekend, which was interrupted by a snowstorm on Saturday. On Monday morning, President Kowalke was informed. After the faculty discussed the matter, 8 boys were expelled, 8 were suspended until the following year and 11 were given lesser punishments. ⁶ The problem began when the Board overruled the faculty and overturned the expulsions and the other discipline actions of the faculty. This was a hard battle that left many hard feelings on both sides. Eventually, the faculty and the Board made peace, but the incident left its effects. There were those who sided with the faculty, and those who sided with the Board.

Another unrelated incident began at this time in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. This incident added more fuel to the fire that was burning. The trouble began in St. Paul's Lutheran Church with two female teachers, Miss Gerda Koch and Miss Elizabeth Reuter. They were disturbed about things that were happening in the congregation there. In 1924 and 1925, they "criticized their pastor, A. F. Nicolaus, and the congregation for certain 'sins' that prevailed there. Among these was the fashion of women to wear short dresses and bobbed hair, contrary to Paul's exhortation in I. Cor. 11. Also denounced was the trash and dance music sung by the choir which was going to sing in St. Paul's Church in Oconomowoc, which had broken with the

Wisconsin Synod and called a pastor from the Missouri Synod, with whom we were at that time in fellowship. Also condemned were the bazaars and suppers given by the Ladies Aid.⁷ They also accused Rev. Nicolaus of being a "false prophet". This stirred up trouble, so that finally the ladies didn't attend services and were encouraging others to do the same. The congregation was about to deal with these two teachers, when they disappeared. They ended up showing up on the faculty of the congregation at Marshfield, Wisconsin, who had called them after the director of DMLC recommended that they be called. The congregation at Ft. Atkinson objected to this. In the meantime the teachers had gone to teach in Wauwatosa and Milwaukee. This really upset St. Paul's, and they resigned from the Western Wisconsin District.

Finally, this whole matter came before the convention of the Western Wisconsin District at Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, in 1926. There they approved the action of the District Officials in regards to this case. On account of this action, 15 pastors and 2 lay people (of whom Pastor W. P. Hass was one) signed a document protesting the action of the District. This document was called the "Protestschreiben", from which the name "Protestants" was coined by Prof. A. Pieper. (See Appendix A) This case dragged on for several years. This case was one of several that showed the anti-Synod feeling that were growing. The event that really brought the "Protestant" group together was the Beitz Paper.

In the Fall of 1926, Pastor Beitz, pastor of the congregation at Rice Lake, Wisconsin, delivered a conference paper titled, "God's Message to us in Galatians: The Just shall Live by Faith." "While the paper mentions nothing of the "cases" which had been troubling Western Wisconsin, yet his liberal criticism of the pastors of our Synod and especially the professors at our Seminary was as disturbing to some as it was gleefully welcomed by others." District President Thurow asked the Seminary faculty for its reaction to the paper. Their reaction was perceived by some as persecution against Pastor Beitz. Pastor Beitz was now perceived by some as a martyr. He became the rallying point of many people who had become disgruntled with the Wisconsin Synod and their way of handling the cases. Among these people who sided with these Protestants, who had formed their own conference in 1927, was Rev. W. P. Hass of St. Matthew's, Oconomowoc.

The Years of Controversy

Pastor Hass' involvement in the Protestant Controversy did not come to light in St. Matthew's until 1927. On November 20, 1927, a special congregational meeting was held. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the buying of a new organ for the church. However, apparently during that meeting some questions were raised about the events that were going on in Synod at that time and about Hass' involvement in them. Pastor Hass did not address any of these issues then. It was later decided that these issues would be discussed in a congregational meeting

on December 4, 1927. "This special meeting was called for the purpose of discussing matters in regard to talk following out of a meeting held at Watertown by the Western Wisconsin District of the Synod of Wisconsin and other States." During this meeting, the discussion centered around the Beitz paper. It was then resolved "to get enough copies of the Beitz paper so that each member may have one and may read it, and later to have a meeting in regard to this." After this meeting, Ernst Rupnow, a member of St. Matthew's, informed District President Thurow of Hass' actions. On December 6, President Thurow wrote to Hass demanding a meeting with him on the next day. The meeting didn't take place until December 9, 1927. Not much was accomplished at this meeting. On December 13, Pastor Hass sent a letter to President Thurow. In that letter he made several points:

1. I felt sorry and deplored that I had signed with a group (the group in Beaver Dam) - I wish I had done my protesting, as I understand this term, personally and individually. It was an act of Lovelessness on my part.
2. I do not wish to subscribe to everything the girls said or did, I am not ready to condemn the girls and if the Synod at Beaver Dam did this and were aware of so doing, I shall not be a party to the excommunication. I shall disagree with them, my brethren, in this matter. 11

So, Hass was still supporting the Protestants. According to Hass, he received no reply to his letter.

Synod officials met several times with Pastor Hass early in 1928. They tried to persuade him to retract his support of the Beitz paper, but he refused. On February 2, 1928, Pastor Hass wrote a letter to Pastor Siegler. In this letter, he clearly showed that he supported the Beitz paper:

1. But after a somewhat careful study of the Paper, I fail to see the chief accusations: 1. False doctrine with respect to law and Gospel and with respect to repentance; 2. Denying our Christianity; 3. Judging our hearts.
2. The Paper of Pastor Beitz has been for me also a solemn call to repentance to examine myself, to watch my every step in my life of sanctification and I cannot do otherwise but heed such a call, or should I willfully and stubbornly grieve the Holy Spirit of God? 12

Meanwhile things were heating up within St. Matthew's Congregation. On April 22, 1928, a congregational meeting was held. During this meeting Pastor Hass explained some of the happenings that was going on. While he was explaining, he was interrupted by William Kroll, a member of the congregation, who said to Pastor Hass, "You have done things in this congregation that the congregation knows nothing about." ¹³ This statement showed the unrest that was building within the congregation. On April 23, a secret meeting was held on the G. Timmel's farm, a member of St. Matthew's. Several other members were present along with Pres. Thurow, Pastor Kuhlow and Pastor Nommensen. During this meeting, they apparently suspended Pastor Hass. In the May 13 issue of the Northwestern Lutheran the following notice dated April 25 appeared:

Inasmuch as all attempts to carry out the resolution of Synod: That the officers of the District and the Theological Faculty deal further with Pastor Hass were frustrated through his continued opposition to the calling of a congregational meeting for this purpose, in utter disregard of the conscience of these members, who demanded such a meeting, the undersigned officers of the West Wisconsin District herewith publicly declare that brotherly relations between Pastor Hass and us are severed.

G. M. Thurow, President
O. F. Kuhlow, 1st Vice-President
Wm. Nommensen, 2nd Vice President 14

Things now began to happen in the congregation. On June 3,

1928, a congregational meeting was called for the purpose of allowing Pastor Hass an opportunity to lay his suspension notice before the congregation and to explain it. "Immediately upon the reading of the notice Mr. Ernst Rupnow made the motion that we vote on whether we stay with the Synod or with Rev. Hass. Much discussion was had on this motion from members who spoke for and asked for a careful handling of these matters, and brought out the point that they would not be able to express their wishes by voting on the motion as made; over against some members who insisted that the vote be taken at once." Much debate arose over this motion. Much of the discussion centered on whether or not the motion could be called as it was made. Rev. Hass offered to place all of the information that he had in regards to this matter before the congregation. He was prevented from doing this because he was continually interrupted by members. During the discussion, it was revealed that there had been a secret meeting held on Timmel's farm on April 23, 1928. This just added more fuel to the already burning blaze. Finally, it was declared that the motion was unconstitutional and could not be called. This resulted in the meeting going out of control. Since nothing else could be done, the meeting was adjourned.

On June 8, 1928, a number of members signed a petition in which they protested against the actions of the congregation at the meeting on June 3. (See Appendix B) The result of this petition was the formation of a break-off group of the congregation. This group would again return to the congregation

in 1932.

At this time, I would like to briefly discuss what little is known about this break-off group, which also is referred to as the "Community Hall" group. The following is part of a letter that I received from Mrs. Ramona Mohr, who is the daughter of Mr. Wm. F. Rupnow, who was very involved in all of this:

I was attending parochial school in 1927 and getting instructions from Pastor Hass. In February of 1928, I was very ill and didn't get back to school that year. Our "group" broke away from St. Matthew's during the summer, so I attended public school the following fall. Rev. Eggert (Kurt Eggert's father) came from Watertown, picked me up at the Highway and took me to Oconomowoc to Gustav Timmel's house. There he gave Gustav Timmel's son and me instructions twice a week. On July 14, 1929, the two of us were confirmed at the Community Hall.

Our "group" had services at the Community Hall for several years. Pastor Lorenz did serve as pastor for awhile, but we also had a lot of help from N.W.C. professors. As time wore on we lost quite a few members because "nothing was happening", so they became discouraged and joined other churches.

After several years the "Hass Group" was no longer able to meet the expense of maintaining the church and school, so they had to give up the property.

My dad (Wm. F. Rupnow) was very involved in all of this. Prof. Meyer of Thiensville (Mequon, now) told my dad, "We're going to get you the best graduate from College(?) and get you people started again." With the Lord's blessing, this became true when Pastor Paustian became our pastor.

With the Synod's financial aid, becoming a Mission Church and reorganizing, we were able to get the property back.

After this, many of the members who had stayed with the "Hass Group", came back to our side. The dedicated "handful" to Hass held services in private homes for a number of years. 16

Now let's return to the part of the congregation that remained with Pastor Hass. On July 15, 1928, the congregation met to discuss the petition that had been signed by a number of the members dated June 8. There the Church Council appointed a

committee to deal with those members who had signed the petition. The congregation continued to favor the cause of the Protestants. On October 14, 1928, the congregation moved to hold a Mission Festival and to call 2 or 3 of the Protestant pastors to preach.

Also during this period of time, the members, who had signed the petition of June 8, 1928, had contacted an attorney in Oconomowoc in regards to their property rights in the congregation. They were asking to receive back the money that they had given towards the church property. On February 18, 1929, the congregation responded by letter. A part of the letter is as follows:

Summing up, in short, we have this:

Your clients, in a signed petition, have demanded the money due them under the Property rights clause and the Committee, acting for the congregation, has agreed to honor this demand--NO DISPUTE HERE.

In order for the committee to settle these claims they should have a statement of the amounts claimed. None have been presented to date and therefore cannot have been disputed--NO DISPUTE HERE.

This committee had a report prepared by the Church treasurer, at the request of you and your clients and has agreed to honor receipts, or other bonafide records of payment which may not be included in the report. No such receipts or records have been presented, therefore could not very well have been disputed--NO DISPUTE HERE. 17

Gustav Timmel also had entered a Preematory Writ of Mandamus in the Circuit Court for the purpose of organizing a Board of Arbitration to determine the property rights of those who had signed the petition. Both of these actions were discussed at the congregational meeting on April 21, 1929.

Discontentment continued to grow in the congregation that remained at St. Matthew's. There were some that wanted Rev.

Hass to resign. This issue finally came up to the congregation at a congregational meeting on October 4, 1929. There it was resolved to have a special congregational meeting on Nov. 10, 1929, to act upon the resignation of Rev. Hass. Rev. Hass had apparently told the congregation many times in the past that his resignation was always before. A special announcement was sent out to the congregation encouraging them to attend. After much discussion at that meeting, a vote was finally called on whether to accept Pastor Hass' resignation. "The result of the ballot was a total of 50 votes cast, 33 voting no, 15 voting yes, 2 voting blank." ¹⁸ Therefore, Pastor Hass still remained pastor of St. Matthew's congregation.

1930 brought a number of dramatic changes to the congregation. On March 28, 1930, Gustav Timmel filed a complaint in the Circuit Court in Waukesha to have Pastor Hass removed as pastor from St. Matthew's. (See Appendix C) On April 6, the summons was read to the congregation. A special congregational meeting was called on April 27, 1930 to look at this summons of Gustav Timmel. At that meeting, Pastor Hass replied to the summons. (See Appendix D) In that reply, Pastor Hass laid his resignation before the congregation again. Before the congregation acted on the resignation, it made a motion to support Pastor Hass against the complaints of the summons. The congregation then voted on Pastor Hass' resignation. This time the motion carried. The congregation had accepted the resignation of Pastor Hass. They then moved to have "reading" services for the time being. After this Gustav Timmel attempted

to get the congregation back together with the slogan, "Let us
get together and forgive and forget." ¹⁹ This was discussed at the
congregational meeting on May 18, 1930. It decided that this
would be very difficult to do, but at least they were willing to
meet with those who had opposed Pastor Hass.

Apparently, Gustav Timmel proposed at the congregation
meeting on June 8, 1930, to call a new pastor from the Wisconsin
Synod. However, it was moved "that we do not grant the request
of Mr. Gustav Timmel and others to call a Wisconsin Synod pastor
in good standing, but that we pay them 50% of what they have
paid into our treasury for building purposes, and pay them
according to the order in which each one promised to accept this
offer starting with Mr. William Rupnow." ²⁰ The sentiment of the
congregation still laid with the Protestants and against the
Synod. This feeling was clearly displayed at the congregational
meeting on July 6, 1930. It was moved at this meeting:

To send an official letter to the Ev. Luth. Synod of
Wisconsin and other States informing them that we, The Ev.
Lutheran St. Matthew's Congregation of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
hereby sever our relations completely and fully now and for
all future time with the above named Synod in protest
against the official, semi-, and unofficial persecution of
our fellow Christians, and in protest against the lying,
untruthful, misleading, and slanderous statements made
against those whom we consider our brothers. Particularly,
do we protest emphatically, sincerely and vehemently
against the case of Rev. W. P. Hass, our former pastor, and
also in the case of our school teacher, H. A. Jaeger. The
letter is to be made up by the Council and read to the
congregation before sending same. This motion was carried
unanimously. 21

On August 31, 1930, a request was made by the group that had
left St. Matthew's to use the church building for worship
services when the congregation was not using it. That request

was denied by the congregation. Also during this time, even though Pastor Hass was no longer pastor of St. Matthew's, he would come to the services and interrupt them by making comments. This caused more problems within the congregation. Finally, ²² people even started to stay away from the reading services. Conditions were getting worse within the congregation.

A special congregational meeting was called on February 8, 1931, "to decide the following question, 'Does our present ²³ condition warrant the calling of a pastor?'" During that meeting it was decided to settle the matter of paying off the 50% before the congregation would call another pastor. A special collection committee was selected to go to the current members to collect funds to pay off those who had signed the petition.

At the congregational meeting on July 19, 1931, the story of St. Matthew's takes an interesting turn. It was now decided to call a pastor for the congregation. It was unanimously moved to call a pastor from the Protestants. Then it was moved "to call Rev. W. P. Hass as pastor of our congregation. The vote was taken by ballot. There were nineteen votes cast. Out of the nineteen, thirteen were for Rev. W. P. Hass and six were ²⁴ against him." Pastor Hass did not respond to this call for some time.

H. A. Jaeger's resignation was now accepted at the congregational meeting on September 13, 1931. Jaeger no longer agreed with what was going on in the congregation. His resignation also caused a problem for the school. There was

no one to teach in the school any more, since the other teacher had earlier resigned to get married. The congregation was now forced to close the school.

During this whole period of time, Pastor Hass had never responded to the call that the congregation had issued him. Questions were now beginning to be raised as to whether or not this call was even valid since the vote had not been unanimous. This issue was discussed at a meeting on October 4, 1931. Nothing was decided at this meeting because disorder broke out in the meeting and nothing more could be accomplished then.

This question of the validity of the call to Pastor Hass was further discussed at a congregational meeting on November 15, 1931. During this meeting, a motion was made to rescind the motion of July 19, 1931, which called Rev. Hass to be St. Matthew's pastor. The argument used was the fact that the call had not been an unanimous vote. This motion brought further heated discussion. Finally, the man, who had made the original motion to call Rev. Hass, made a motion to rescind his motion of July 19. This motion was called and carried by a vote of 24-11. So, once again Pastor Hass was no longer the pastor of St. Matthew's. After this motion, a motion was made to rejoin the Wisconsin Synod. This motion was now carried by a vote of 20-10. It was also during this meeting that the "Community Hall" group was granted permission to use the chapel of St. Matthew's when
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St. Matthew's congregation was not holding their services.

On November 27, 1931, the Church Council met to discuss the resolution of the congregation to rejoin the Wisconsin Synod.

They recommended to the congregation that they appoint a committee to meet with Synod officials to work out their differences. After much discussion at the next congregational meeting on December 7, 1931, the motion was finally made to allow the Council to make arrangements for a meeting between Synod officials, Rev. Hass and representatives from the Protestants. This motion was carried.

At the congregational meeting on January 17, 1932, there was much discussion on the upcoming meeting with Synod officials. Finally, a motion was made as to the purpose of the meeting. "The purpose of the meeting is to be a statement of facts, by both parties, on the differences in the existing controversy, especially the grievances of our congregation against the Wisconsin Synod. This motion was seconded and carried." It is interesting to see the purpose that was decided upon at this meeting, because at the meeting itself, which was set for February 9, much time would be spent arguing about the purpose of the meeting.

The day for the big meeting finally arrived. Present for the Synod were Prof. A. Pieper, Prof. Meyer, Rev. Lorenz, Rev. Sauer and Rev. Fleisher. Present for the Protestants were Rev. Hass, Rev. Karl Koehler, Rev. Hensel and Rev. Zimmerman. Even though the purpose had been clearly laid out at the last meeting, there must have been some misunderstanding and confusion. For the majority of the meeting was spent on arguing over the purpose of the meeting. First, some suggested that the congregation should hear the Protestants' view on

the Beitz paper, and then hear the Synod's view on that paper, since this is what the controversy hinged on. Then some wanted it to be an airing of grievances and a statement of facts on the case by both parties in connection with their historical development. Then some wanted the suspensions of the Pastor and the teacher discussed. Into all of this confusion, Prof. Pieper added that he thought the purpose of the meeting was to "give a statement of certain facts and especially certain facts of the Beitz paper." ²⁷ This brought on more heated discussion. Finally, Prof. Pieper said that "if they wished to rehash all that stuff, then he might as well go home as his time was too costly for that, and he couldn't drive at night." ²⁸ Pieper felt that the Synod officials should voice their side of the Beitz paper and that the Protestants should voice their side, and then the congregation should decide for themselves on which side they wished to be. During the following discussion, Rev. Hass tried to speak. He was interrupted by some who said that he was no longer their pastor and should not be speaking. Hass responded by saying that was true, but he was still making calls for the congregation and doing funerals for them. This just further showed the messed up situation the congregation had been in. Then some ladies who were there said that "they didn't want to hear any more of the fight, but wanted to be left alone, and wanted a Synod minister and peace." ²⁹ Finally, after some more arguing, the meeting was adjourned.

At the Church Council meeting on Feb. 26, 1932, the motion was made to recommend to the congregation that they call a

minister from the Wisconsin Synod. After some discussion at the next congregational meeting on March 6, 1932, the congregation accepted the recommendation of the Council to call a minister from the Wisconsin Synod. It was then moved that until that happened, they would ask for help from N.W.C professors for preaching on Sunday morning. This motion was accepted.

In the Proceedings of Western Wisconsin District Convention which met in La Crosse, Wisconsin on June 20-23, 1932, the following notices are printed:

We are glad to learn that the St. Matthew's Congregation at Oconomowoc is willing to return to the Synod.

Oconomowoc, Wis., Mission Board.--On the strength of Central Conference, the District two years ago appealed to the Mission Board to place a pastor there for the sake of those who remained faithful to us. The Board at first engaged Rev. W. Herwig, Wauwatosa, Wis., to do preliminary work. President Nommensen and your chairman conferred with our people and employed Pastor Lorenz of Watertown, Wis., to serve them. He was compensated \$30.00 a month for such work. The congregation sent \$25.00 a month to the Mission Board. Now the congregation is such that St. Matthew's is one again and resolved to call a pastor of our Synod. They are trying their utmost to become self-sustaining at once. Your Mission Board, however, is of the opinion that in spite of being held to retrench, a reasonable subsidy would be in place here for a short time. Prospects are that the congregation will have have between 40 and 45 members to begin with.

We pray the Lord to continue to bless our mission work.

Respectfully submitted by your Mission Board,

Rev. Julius W. Bergholz, Chairman.

Mr. Adolf Toepel, Secretary.

Rev. Wm. Fischer

Rev. E. Walther

Mr. George Isenberg 30

On September 1, 1932, Graduate Norbert Paustian began his work at St. Matthew's as their pastor. St. Matthew's contined to grow under his guidance until the Lord called him to himself in 1977. After that time, the congregation called Rev. Kent

Schroeder, who is the congregation's current pastor.

These first ten years of St. Matthew's history were filled with much controversy. It was a very difficult time for the congregation. It is easy to see why the congregation did not wish to look back after this but to look forward. Yet, the Lord was with this congregation guiding and directing things so that it to would be brought back to him. Throughout the years following this beginning, the Lord has richly blessed this congregation, and may he continue to do so in the future.

Appendix A

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Protestschreiben

Dear Brethern,

1. We cannot assent to the report of the committee, because the committee did not have the task of passing judgment on the girls, but rather to give a judgment on whether the notice of the officials at the stated time was appropriate and justified, since the proceedings had not yet come to a conclusion.
2. This notice contained no stated accusation and had to serve, therefore, to give free rein (Spielraum) to all sorts of suspicions and to undercut confidence on all sides.
3. Our position toward the entire Fort Atkinson case is this: we consider that the case is only one part of several broader (Hohere) questions. We are ready at the proper time to deal with the basic principles, in order to make earnest attempt to attain true unity.
4. And we invite the Fort Atkinson congregation to re-enter the Synod in order to take part in this attempt also.

Adolf Zeisler
O. Hensel
J.H. Abelmann
W. Motzkus
W.K. Bodamer
Robt. E. Ave-Lallemen
Paul Lutzke
W.F. Beitz

S. Probst
E.E. Sauer
H.W. Koch
O. Kehrberg
M.A. Zimmermann
W.P. Hass
E. Abelmann
Fred W. Krohn (pts. 1&2)
G.A. Krasin (pts. 1&2)

Appendix B

Petition of June 8, 1928

We the undersigned members of the Ev. Luth. St. Matthew's Congregation hereby protest against the unbrotherly acts of the fellow-members of our congregation, who have in the past refused to give to other members of the congregation certain rights and privileges to which all members should be entitled to under the rules and constitution of our church as well as under the dictates of Christian Brotherhood; and in support of this protest we specifically refer to the actions of those members at the meeting of the congregation held on April 22, 1928, at which time members of the Synod were present at the invitation of certain members of the congregation. Said members of the Synod being so invited to the meeting for the purpose of receiveing their advice and counsel in regard to differences, which had arisen in the congregation.

And we further protest against the action of those members of our congregation who, after the members of the Synod had withdrawn from the meeting, then refused to invite the members of the Synod in the name of the congregation to a subsequent meeting so that the members of the congregation might have the benefit of their advice and counsel.

We also protest against the action taken at the meeting of the congregation held of June 3, 1928 in this: that these members of the congregation refused to have a motion voted upon, which motion was made for the purpose of determining which members of the congregation would remain loyal in their support to the Synod and which members refused to follow the Synod and would support Pastor Hass.

We respectfully represent that the actions above referred to are in substance of such unchristianlike actions that we can no longer remain as members of said congregation as long as Rev. Hass functions as pastor of this congregation and we respectfully petition and ask that our property rights in said congregation be determined and that a division of the property of said congregation be made in accordance with the rules and terms of the constitution governing such matters. We respectfully ask action from you within 30 days from date of deliverance of this petition.

Dated: At Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, This 8th day of June, A.D. 1928.

The petition was signed by 86 members.

Appendix C

33

Exerpt of the Summons of
Gustav Timmel
Circuit Court, Waukesha County
March 28, 1928

That the defendant, W.P. Hass, as pastor of said congregation, has failed to comply with the provisions of said constitution and by-laws and has for a period of more than a year persisted in adhering to a false doctrine and has refused and neglected to follow the articles of faith and teachings as provided for in said constitution and by-laws.

That by reason thereof the said defendant has violated the trust imposed upon him as pastor of said congregation and that the property of said congregation is being used for purposes other than the trust imposed thereon.

That because of the wrongful acts of the defendant this plaintiff and a number of other members of said congregation have been obligated to remain away from the services conducted in the property belonging to said congregation for the reason that such services conducted were contrary to the teachings and faith adopted by said congregation and contrary to the purposes for which the congregation was organized.

This action is brought by the plaintiff in behalf of himself and all other members of said congregation who desire to join herein for the purpose of having said defendant, W.P. Hass, removed as pastor of said congregation and for the purpose of determining the property rights of this plaintiff, and all others who desire to join herein, in the property owned by said congregation.

WHEREFORE, plaintiff demands judgment that the defendant, W.P. Hass, be removed as pastor of said congregation and that the property rights of this plaintiff and all others, who may join herein, in the property owned by said congregation be determined and for such other relief as may be just and equitable, together with the costs and disbursements of this action.

SHANNON & CRONIN, ATTORNEYS for plaintiff

State of Wisconsin, County of Waukesha:

Gustav Timmel being first duly sworn on oath deposes and says that he is the plaintiff in the above entitled action, and that he has read the foregoing complaint, knows the contents thereof, and that the same is true to his own knowledge except as to matters therein stated on information and belief, and as to those matters he believes to be true.

Gustav Timmel

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 28th day of March, A.D. 1930.

Lucille E. Lewis

Notary Public, Waukesha County, Wis.

State of Wisconsin: Circuit Court: Waukesha County:
Gustav Timmel, Plaintiff vs. W.P. Hass, Defendant

Appendix D

Defendant's Answer to Summons and Complaint of
Gustav Timmel, Plaintiff.

Served March 29, 1930. 34

Aside from the fact that my health really forbids, aside from the circumstance that I lack the necessary funds to carry this matter to a finish in the civil courts--- and I have not the heart to call you, the present St. Matthew's group, for further financial support---, aside from this, I am of the opinion that for me it would be tantamount to blasphemy to make an attempt even to defend myself in the present court action forced upon me by the opponents--- who have thereby again firmly secured their place here and before the throne of God, too, unless they publicly withdraw and make restitution--- over against the charges which are so obviously false, so utterly reckless of the truth; then, too, it would, no doubt, tend to take the edge off my preachment these many years, inasmuch as taking up the cudgels might in all likelihood give the appearance (especially to such as have not yet looked into these matters of controversy) as though I were tenaciously and obstinately hanging on to the pastorate, not to say my job, in this congregation, therefore, the manly attitude in this present matter would be, seems to me, not to take up the court cudgels but rather to keep silence and let silence speak a very distinctive and forcible language for once.

At this juncture, however, my fellow-believers, I have somewhat to say unto you, the present St. Matthew's group, to you who have continued with me in my temptations thus far, namely, that I am deeply aware of my own contributing to the judgment, under which we all are, insomuch as my faith, my prayers, my every Christian conduct has not been, what it should have been, has not been of such character and caliber to avert this further judgment and I also to God do here publicly confess, that I am receiveing the due reward of my deeds, of my sins.

Still I am not award of having persisted in adhering to a false doctrine and as far as I can remember nobody heretofore ever claimed to have reason to accuse me on that account. I am not aware of having deviated from the Confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. I again state here publicly, as far as I have learned to know these Confessional Writings, I have underwritten them once and do so again herewith. My dear fellow-believers, this reproaching us with false doctrine on the part of our adversaries will after twenty-five years of Church History stand revealed as a farce, to say the least. No, not the persistant adherence to a false doctrine has been my failing over against my adversaries in the Wisconsin Synod (this is merely an apparent motive, which is not at all new in Church History), but not upholding the synodical machine, not joining in with the shout: "My Synod, right or wrong, but always my Synod", rebelling and protesting against a long train of abuses, of injuries, injustices, lovelessness, and usurpations following

in the wake of, if not exactly synchronous with the rejecting of the Wauwatosa Theology in the Wisconsin Synod at large and which if persisted in--- and Synod apparently has no Bugle-call sounding retreat--- will certainly involve us all in a most terrible catastrophe. At least no amount of kicking against the pricks and denying our spiritual bankruptcy will avert the final judgment.

Over against my opponents and all who are guilty of this action either directly or indirectly, whether conscious of it or not, I emphatically deny the vulgar charges of which they have finally delivered themselves and thus sealed their fate unless they retract ere it is too late to retract.

I deny that I have failed to comply with the provisions of St. Matthew's Constitution and by-laws; I deny that I have for a period of more than a year persisted in adhering to a false doctrine and have refused and neglected to follow the Articles of Faith and teachings as provided for in St. Matthew's Constitution and by-laws; I deny that I have violated the trust imposed upon me as pastor of St. Matthew's.

Finally, over against my opponents I emphatically aver, they are not able to produce a scintilla of evidence that I am guilty of anything either in word or life, and therefore they should beware, these rabid defensores fidei!

And now it will be up to you, St. Matthew's group, to bring this home to them in word and deed to help them, if that be possible, to see the error of their ways, for their sake and for yours ere it is too late, for otherwise Evil's chickens will certainly come home to roost. And in order to make this preaching truly effective and then, too, I at once admit, to let my adversaries have all rope to do as much wrong as they have a mind to, as long as they are bent on mischief anyway--- to be sure, to me that is the very acme of ungodliness, when bitter enemies of the truth, who otherwise trifle with convictions, suddenly and zealously pose as defensores fidei--- I again stand ready to and do so herewith tender you, St. Matthew's group, my resignation and ask of you to accept the same. Yours to let Jehovah redeem Israel in His own way, not mine, not ours. Luke 24:21.

Sincerely,
W.P. Hass

Oconomowoc, Wis.
April 27, 1930

Appendix E

Brief Chronology of St. Matthew's

1922

- April 19 - First meeting of St. Matthew's.
- June 1 - St. Matthew's officially calls Rev. Hass and Edna Fritz.
- July 8 - Articles of Incorporation filed.
- July 9 - Resolved to build school.
- July 15 - St. Matthew's officially calls H.A. Jaeger and purchase of portable chapel.

1924

- March 28 - Incidents at N.W.C.

1924/1925

- Incidents at St. Paul's, Ft. Atkinson.

1926

- June 16-22 - W.W. District Conv. at Beaver Dam and "Protestschreiben" written.
- Sept. - Beitz paper delivered at Schofield.

1927

- Dec. 4 - Beitz paper discussed at St. Matthew's.
- Dec. 9 - Hass meets with Pres. Thurow.

1928

- April 22 - Cong. meeting.
- April 23 - Secret meeting with Pres. Thurow.
- May 13 - Hass' suspension notice appears in the NWL.
- June 3 - Hass to explain suspension before congregation.
- June 8 - Petition signed by some members protesting.
- July 15 - Petition discussed at Cong. meeting.

1929

- Feb. 18 - Letter from St. Matthew's to attorney of signers of petition of June 8.
- April 21 - Letter discussed.
- Oct. 4 - Set meeting to act on Hass' resignation.
- Nov. 10 - Cong. does not accept Hass' resignation.

1930

- March 28 - Summons of Gustav Timmel.
April 27 - Summons discussed in the Cong. meeting.
- Cong. moves to support Rev. Hass.
- Cong. accepts Rev. Hass' resignation.
July 6 - Motion passed to sever relations with the Wisconsin Synod.

1931

- July 19 - Cong. calls Rev. Hass as pastor.
Sept. 13 - Accept H.A. Jaeger's resignation.
Nov. 15 - Rev. Hass' call rescinded by the cong.
- Motion passed to rejoin the Wisconsin Synod.

1932

- Jan 17 - Cong. decides to have meeting with Synod officials.
Feb. 9 - Meeting with Synod and Protestant reps.
March 6 - Cong. moves to call pastor from the Wisconsin Synod.
Sept. 1 - Rev. Paustian begins work at St. Matthew's.

Endnotes

- 1 W.P. Hass, "Adieu to St. Matthew's", Faith-Life Supplement, April 1932, p. 1.
- 2 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, April 19, 1922, p. 1.
- 3 Ibid., p. 2-3.
- 4 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, June 1, 1922, p. 12-13.
- 5 Elizabeth (Jaeger) Lind, "Personal Recollections", July 18, 1981, p. 3.
- 6 John Meyer, "The Historical Background which led to the Formation of the Protestant Conference." Essay, 1976, p. 2.
- 7 Ibid., p. 4.
- 8 Ibid., p. 6.
- 9 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, December 4, 1927, p. 66.
- 10 Ibid., p. 67.
- 11 W.P. Hass, op. cit., p. 10.
- 12 Ibid., p.11.
- 13 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, April 22, 1928, p. 72.
- 14 "Suspension", The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 15, No. 10 (May 13, 1928), p. 159.
- 15 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, June 3, 1928, p. 76.
- 16 Ramona Mohr, Personal letter, March 24, 1988, p. 1-3.
- 17 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, April 21, 1929, p. 90.
- 18 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, Nov. 10, 1929, p. 99.
- 19 Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, May 18, 1930, p. 109.

- 20
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, June 8, 1930, p. 110.
- 21
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, July 6, 1930, p. 112.
- 22
Lind, op. cit., p. 4.
- 23
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, Feb. 8, 1931, p. 119.
- 24
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, July 19, 1931, p. 124.
- 25
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, Nov. 15, 1931, p. 134-135.
- 26
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, Jan 17, 1932, p. 145.
- 27
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, Feb. 9, 1932, p. 149.
- 28
Ibid., p. 150.
- 29
Ibid., p. 154.
- 30
"Proceedings of the Western Wisconsin District Convention", La Crosse, Wis., June 20-23, 1932, p. 22, 29-30.
- 31
Mark A Jeske, "A Half Century of Faith-Life: An analysis of the Circumstances Surrounding the Formation of the Protes'tant Conference," Essay, April 22, 1978, p. 38.
- 32
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, July 15, 1928, p. 81.
- 33
"What Will This Lead to?", Faith-Life, Vol. III, No. 7/8, 1930, p. 15-16.
- 34
Minutes of St. Matthew's of Oconomowoc Congregational meeting, April 27, 1930, p. 107.

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