

ZEBAOOTH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH- GIFT OF THE LORD OF
HOSTS

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The question has often been asked, "What's in a name"? Many who are deliberating on what to name an infant are faced with the perplexing question, "What does this name really mean"? Even when inanimate objects are named, there is a special significance to it's name. To many casual observers, the name "Zebaoth" would seem insignificant to them. But as we will see in this paper, Zebaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church is not just a meaningless name. It is a name which has special significance for all who have entered this monumental edifice to worship our Savior Jesus Christ.

Zebaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church derives it's name from the Hebrew Old Testament name "יהוה" . The name "יהוה" (Zebaoth), which the NIV translates "Lord Almighty", and the RSV translates, "Lord of Hosts", has an even deeper significance for us as we consider the history of Zebaoth. The name "יהוה" in Old Testament usage may denote the duration of time spent in God's army. Clearly, the connotation of "יהוה" in the O.T. can imply tireless, strenuous service from a servant. This is the usage in Job in 7:1. "Does not man have

hard service on earth" Are not his days like those of hired man." This name "Zebaoth" is quite appropriate, because, as we will see, the planning and tireless service required to build and maintain this church has been anything but easy.

Zebaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church, organized in May of 1917, was formed by combining two missions at that time. One of the missions was the Elias Mission, which had its roots from 11th and Finn Place. The Elias Mission had been organized only a few years prior to 1917. The other mission was the Good Hope Mission, which was located at 6th and Melvina (originally Mill Street). The name which the congregation chose was from Psalm 84:1 "How lovely is your dwelling place, O "Lord of Hosts". (Zebaoth)

The beginnings for this church could be described as being tenuous. Professor Herman Meyer served the congregation originally. Then a call was extended to Pastor Arthur Tacke who was serving missions in Nebraska at the time. On July 29, 1917, having accepted the call, Tacke was installed and was among the 22 in attendance on that eventful day.

The property and surroundings of the assembly was quite lowly. The property was described as being without streets or sidewalks. The small chapel did not have the so called

"necessities" of today. There was no water. Gas and electricity were not a part of the chapel. Instead of the prodigious effervescent lights which some churches maintain today, this chapel used a gasoline lantern and some store lamps so others could see. To be sure, the chapel could hardly be called ornate. Yet, despite glittering outward beauty, it's original worshippers were privileged to hear as Pastor Meyer's sermon text St. Paul's message to the Romans in Chapter 1:16.

Years later, the congregation recognized the future needs of the church, and bought property which would increase it's size to 162 X 120 feet. By the grace of the "Lord of Hosts", the membership continued to grow until Zebaoth was able to become self-supporting in 1926. But this was hardly the end of the growth. The need for more space was glaringly apparent for it's members, so they had to decide what course to take. The escalating attendance permitted it's members to vote unanimously to build a new church. This vote took place on September 9, 1930. The cost would not be insignificant. The estimate was made at 85,000. Nineteen days later, the groundbreaking commenced, and on December 14th the cornerstone was laid.

On the pages of the Milwaukee Sentinel on October 26, 1931, the headline read, "Church Begins it's Dedication".

This was no small event, as the Sentinel explained, "The congregation of Zebaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church dedicated it's new edifice recently with five services. There were morning and evening English services, and German services in the morning and afternoon...This congregation has grown from 16 voting members in 1917 to 140 at the present time."

During the building of Zebaoth Evangelical Church, one major obstacle threatened it's continuance. Halfway into the building of the church, the firm which served as trustee for the bond issue went into bankruptcy. This may not seem to be such a threatening deterrent to the continuation of Zebaoth, but the loss incurred was \$32,500.00. A multitude of factors, including the higher cost to build than originally estimated threw it's members into a debt of \$120,000.00. To say the least, the future seemed bleak. Making their financial matters worse was the fact that the country was involved with the great depression at that time.

But the Lord of Hosts was not idle during this trying time for this church. He caused one man to step forward at the right time. When the time came to refinance the bond issue, no help was in sight from the firms who normally would finance churches. The risk was too great. Or so they thought. At just the right time, the Lord sent a man by the

name of G.R. Eckhardt, of the firm Eckhardt-Peterson in St.Louis Missouri. He offered to refinance the church. The Lord of Hosts had acted to preserve Zebaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Truly, the Lord has blessed the members of Zebaoth over the years. There were some in 1917 who never could have dreamed that someday Zebaoth could be debt free. Finally, that monumental day came on October 22,1961, as it's members celebrated the Lord's blessings to them in at the mortgage burning ceremony.

The Lord has continued to bless the members of Zebaoth in the form of many gifts. Despite the sagging attendance in the mid sixties- (a result of the race riots where many white members of Zebaoth fled to the suburbs), the attendance has recently begun to ascend. The evangelism program has bore fruit recently, and the future of the members of Zebaoth, under Pastor David Moore, seems bright. All of these blessings truly are from the hand of a most gracious God who guards and extends His church on earth to the glory of His name- The Lord of Hosts.