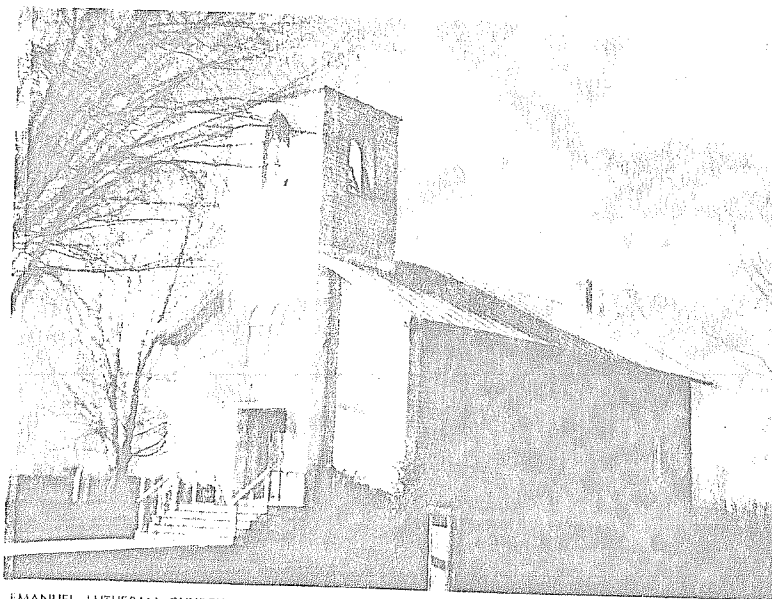


EMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH -- A STORY OF GOD'S GRACE

by

Michael Hintz



EMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Emanuel Lutheran Church - A Story of God's Grace

Emanuel Lutheran Church of Maple Creek would probably be passed off by most as just another small, country church. And I would say that "the most" would be right. The lists of ministerial acts over a 100 year period would certainly seem to prove this: 356 baptisms, 293 confirmations, 120 marriages, 149 burials, and 19,605 communed,¹ But the people of Maple Creek hold that little white church very dear in their hearts. Many of them are third and fourth generation members and came to know their Savior in it, just as their fathers, grandfathers, and greatgrandfathers did. I grew up in the Township of Maple Creek and I, too, am able to claim that heritage. And now as I look back, my thoughts are occupied with the way God has shed His grace on my family, neighbors and friends through the preaching of His pure Word for all these years. The unfolding of that story of grace is the matter we want to now take up. It is an exciting one, for many times we see how God was guiding the course of action, so that finally His people would hear the message of His love for over 100 years. And I might add that I have a special prayer of thanks. For as I have looked back into the early development of this congregation, I have discovered some crucial points which would have affected my life considerably had another course of action been taken.

The history of Emanuel is so closely woven with that of the establishment of Lutheranism in New London and the surrounding area, it is imperative for us to look back and see the influx of early Lutheranism into the region. Both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synod were involved. As early as the 1850's German Lutherans began migrating north out of Milwaukee. Pastor Ottamar Fuerbringer of

Freistadt kept close contact with these people and by 1856, Trinity Lutheran Church in Oshkosh was dedicated. Fuerbringer was one of the Saxon immigrants that came over with Martin Stephan. Later he became pastor at Trinity, Freistadt and played a very important role in bringing Lutheranism to Northeastern Wisconsin. The Trinity Church in Oshkosh became the mother church for the whole area and we will see that all Missouri Synod outreaches were channelled through this church. On March 1, 1857, Pastor Martin Stephan Jr. became the first resident pastor. From Trinity, he traveled to serve Belle Plaine, the Rat River area, and New London. He was probably the first Lutheran pastor to preach in New London, sometime in the spring of 1857.

Wisconsin Synod action was not far behind. Gottlieb Fachtmann arrived from Germany in 1857 and reported to President Muehlhauser. He was sent to the congregations in Richfield and Town Polk, Washington County. Pastor Fachtmann accepted, but with one provision, that his congregation permit him to make extensive missionary journeys. And that he did readily. Lester Lehmann, a local New London man, has done extensive research in the development of Lutheranism in the New London area. Concerning the first missionary journey of Fachtmann, he writes:



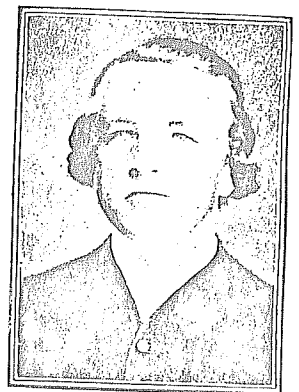
Pastor Gottlieb Fachtmann

His first major stop was Sheboygan, then proceeded to Plymouth, Chilton, New Holstein, and Calumet, from there he skirted the south shore of Lake Winnebago through Fond du Lac, and up to Neenah and Menasha. Here he remained a few days. His next stop was Young's Corner (Medina), remaining a few days. During his visitation, he preached, baptized, gave the Lord's Supper, and visited northward, heading for Hortonville, and then to New London.²

At this time an interesting development took place. Pastor Stephan of Trinity took a call to Fort Wayne, Indiana. During the vacancy other Missouri Pastors served it and its daughter outreaches. But these outlying areas were neglected during the long vacancy and people became anxious for spiritual leadership. This opened the door for the Wisconsin Synod. This is reflected in a letter that Fachtmann wrote to President Muehlhauser (dated: September 1, 1858--after his second visit to New London--early summer, 1858)

This last week seems to have been the most blessed of all; I journeyed from Oshkosh along the Red River and the Wolf River, twice preached near Hardenville, once in Menashee and once yesterday, Monday, at Neenah, everywhere, and especially in New London and near Hardenville, I found a hearty desire and great hunger for the Word of God. There is a great, extensive field of work opening here for one and even two preachers of our Synod. At New London on the Wolf River, whence two steamers from Oshkosh on Lake Winnebago ply daily taking a day to get there, there are 30 Lutheran families, mostly Prussian, from Pommern, and Mecklenburger.³

Arriving on the scene to help Fachtmann was Pastor Carl Friedrich Waldt. He was called to Neenah and Menasha, but did extensive work in the Hortonville, Dale, and New London area. At the same time Missouri's ranks were relieved when Pastor Friedreich Ruhland accepted the call to Trinity in Oshkosh. On June 5, 1859 he was ordained and installed as pastor. From Trinity he made trips to those areas where Missouri had worked, especially to New London.



Rev. Carl Friedrich Waldt

With the coming of Ruhland, this set the stage for a head to head confrontation of Missouri and Wisconsin. Fachtmann and Ruhland

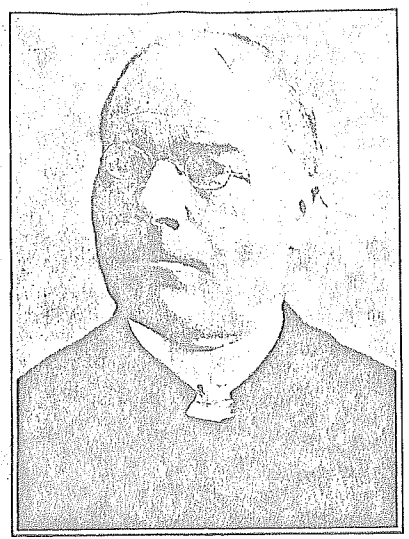
had a heated battle. The result was that many of the congregations were split up. Many Missouri congregations lost members to Wisconsin. Two are important for our purposes here. The Missouri congregation in New London was St. Johns. It was organized in June of 1859. But due to this confrontation, they lost half of their members. This occurred in late 1859 or early 1860. That had to be a tough time for the members of St. Johns. But Pastor Ruhland continued to visit and guide them. By June 1860 they had their own building, the first Lutheran church in New London. But it also became the principle church of a parish and as a result they were assigned a resident pastor. Johannes Lauritzen was installed August 4, 1872.

Before 1869 we don't know where those people who severed from St. Johns worshipped. Pastor Waldt gathered the congregation and in 1869 they incorporated as St. Paul's Church. When Pastor Waldt accepted another call in 1870, he was replaced by Pastor August Wiese. He was called away from this life shortly thereafter. An epidemic of small pox broke out and he contracted it. From "God With Us, 1893-1968" there is this account:

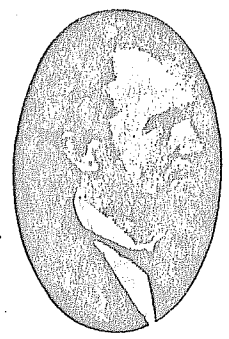
On ascension Day 1870, Pastor Wiese made a call on one of the members of one of his congregations. When he stepped into the house, he found the man seriously ill with small pox. Later in the day the Pastor became very sick. He too had small pox. He died two days later. He is buried in the Church Cemetery at Zittau.⁴

For the next four years it is uncertain who served the congregation. But in June of 1874, Traugott Gensike accepted the call. He served until 1880, when he accepted a call to Dodge County, Wisconsin. Pastor Albert Kluge was then called and installed on

September 19, 1880.



Pastor Traugott Gensike



Pastor Albert Kluge

Another result of the confrontation between Missouri and Wisconsin took place south of New London in the Rat River area.

Lester Lehmann explains:

The Missouri Synod had already suffered their second setback in their confrontation with the Wisconsin Synod. The first one, of course, was at New London where the St. John's Congregation lost half of its membership. Here, down in the Rat River area, the Immanuel Congregation formerly composed of more than a 100 members, also suffered heavy loss of membership...Twenty-three heads of families organized the St. Peter's Congregation in Section #18 only one mile east of the Immanuel Church... The North half of the Immanuel Congregation, Missouri Synod, decided to build a church and parsonage. This Congregation became known as "Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church U.A.C."

John Beyer became its pastor as he was installed on dedication day: September 8, 1861. Pastor Beyer is important as he was probably the first to do work in the Maple Creek area. But his work was cut short as Zion's Centennial booklet reads:

In 1870 great anxiety and sorrow spread over the whole district. A severe epidemic of "black" pox broke out. Many became infected; many died. Also the beloved Pastor Beyer contracted the disease and passed away on July 9, 1870 at the age of 45.⁶

Pastor J.L. Daib was installed on December 17, 1870 filling the vacancy caused by the death of Pastor Beyer. The Zion congregation was instrumental in the birth of the Emanuel congregation in Maple Creek, and a smaller congregation in North Liberty called St. Peters, a congregation which later became associated with Emanuel.

All of the foregoing is necessary to give us the proper background for the early history of the Emanuel congregation in Maple Creek. This congregation developed out of the struggle between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synod in the area. Pastors from each Synod did extensive mission work in any area where German Lutherans were settled. So there developed many small groups within very close distances. Emanuel was just one of these. We will see that there were three others which played an important role in the first 50 years of Emanuel. For after a time, Emanuel and three other small congregations joined in a quad-parish. One of them I mentioned above: St. Peters in North Liberty. The other two are Christ in North Maple Creek and St. Mary's, Mosquito hill. Let's take up the story of each one of these separately.

EMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

It was nearly twelve years after Lutheranism had reached New London, that there was any organization in the country, just a short distance north of New London. The centennial booklet of

Emanuel states:

In 1869 a number of people left Milwaukee, where they had been members of St. Stephan's Church of the Missouri Synod and settled in the Town(ship) of Maple Creek. They were Heinrich Otto, Heinrich Wiese, Johan Schabel, and Gottlieb Scholz. With others who had come before that time they went about the business of calling a pastor, and began discussions with St. John's congregation in New London.⁷

Contacts were probably first made by Pastor Beyer of Zion, South Caledonia for his parish included St. Johns of New London. After his death, Pastor Daib, Beyer's successor, served from 1870 to 1872. He was the pastor at the time of its incorporation on April 8, 1872. The name of the congregation was: The German Evangelical Lutheran Emanuel Church of the U.A.C.

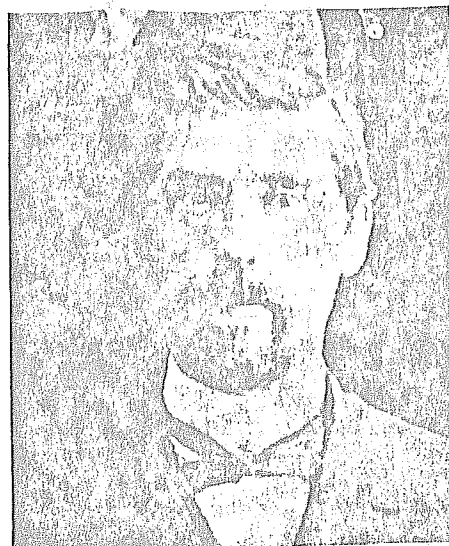
It took only six months for the congregation to erect a place of worship. Except for a different steeple and the chancel which was added later, it is the same building that is being used today. It was dedicated on October 6, 1872. Pastor Lauritzen the new pastor at St. Johns in New London, and now the pastor who would serve them for three years, officiated.

In the next eighteen years there were three different pastors at St. Johns and as a result Emanuel was served by the same three. Pastor Lauritzen left during the summer of 1875. There was a brief vacancy, but on August 15, 1875, J.J. Walker was installed. Walker accepted a call during the year of 1885 and was replaced by William Weber who served St. Johns and Emanuel from 1886-1893.

Because Emanuel was served by St. Johns, it was a Missouri Synod congregation. Today it is a member of the Wisconsin Synod. That change lay in the events that expired in 1893 between the two New London congregations. Ever since 1872, meetings were held to



Rev. J. J. Walker



Rev. William Weber

settle differences and bring the groups together as they once were. But the differences were not settled, so the congregations remained separate. But the climax came in 1893 when St. Johns felt the need to build a new church building. Many thought it was foolish to spend the money if the two groups could be brought together and use the new building St. Pauls already had. So meetings were held and the decision to merge was made. But the question as to which Synod they should join really posed a problem. In the 75th anniversary booklet of the congregation, Pastor Heidemann writes:

The question as to which Synod the congregation would join was one of the more difficult to settle, since each congregation had a degree of loyalty to its own Synod. It was finally decided to request a list of names of pastors from the president of the Synodical Conference and to call from the list. The Synod to which the first pastor belonged, would then be the Synod which the congregation would join. The two Pastors Kluge and Weber agreed to leave and accept other calls...The Momentous meeting took place on September 10, 1893, and the decision to merge was passed by the voters of the two congregations. They also decided that the two pastors, Pastor Weber and Pastor Kluge, should continue to serve the congregation until the new pastor was called and installed. They did this on a rotating basis. One preached one Sunday and the other the next.⁸

The pastor who was called was Rev. Adolf Spiering. He accepted and since he was a member of the Wisconsin Synod, the newly merged group--Emanuel Lutheran--became a member of the Wisconsin Synod. Emanuel of Maple Creek, then too, became a member of the same Synod. Pastor Spiering served Maple Creek for a short time, but it then happened that a new pastor was called to divide the workload. For the merger of St. Johns and St. Pauls brought with it the congregations each had been serving. These were the four mentioned earlier:

- 1) St. Marys of South Liberty (formerly with St. Pauls)
- 2) St. Peters of North Liberty (formerly with St. Johns)
- 3) Christ-North Maple Creek (formerly with St. Pauls)
- 4) Emanuel-South Maple Creek (formerly with St. Johns)



Ad. Spiering

The centennial booklet of Emanuel reads:

Pastor G.A. Dettmann became the first resident pastor, and his first recording is of the baptisms on September 30, 1894 of Leona and Leonora Gerks, now Mrs. Arthur Hintz (my grandmother) and Mrs. George Pribbernow. To this time the congregation had been taken care of by the pastors of New London. With the coming of Pastor Dettman the field was divided, and his call read that he was to serve the two congregations in the Town of Liberty (St. Peters and St. Marys) and the two in the Town of Maple Creek--Emanuel and Christ Lutheran--sometimes also referred to as South Maple Creek and North Maple Creek.⁹

This was known as the Maple Creek Parish or sometimes called the Liberty-Maple Creek Parish. Pastor Dettman served until June 18,

1899. Pastor W. Henkel came next serving for over 5 years. Then Pastor Theodore Brenner served for over 18 years. At the end of his ministry, a change took place in the quad-parish. To understand what happened, let's look at those two small congregations in Liberty.

ST. MARYS - NORTH LIBERTY

The date of its organization was November 16, 1877. Pastor Gensike was its first pastor. In an article in "The New London Press" on March 1, 1972, Lester Lehman writes:

Reverend Gensike moved to New London in 1876, which marked the beginning of the New London Parish (St. Pauls) in the Wisconsin Synod. Within his pastorate, were Dale, Hortonville, Christ Lutheran of North Maple Creek, and a preaching station that later became St. Marys of Liberty.¹⁰

He served until 1880 when he accepted a call to Town of Hermann, Dodge County. But there was no vacancy, for the same day he left, Pastor Albert Kluge was installed at St. Pauls in New London and therefore became the pastor at North Maple Creek, Liberty, Dale and Hortonville. Pastors Dettman, Henkel, and Brenner followed.

The church was built sometime during the 1890's. It was located along what is now Old Highway 54, just east of New London. The church building was typical for its day. It didn't have to be very big for there were only about 16 to 20 families belonging to this congregation.

Records show that the church was abandoned in 1924, probably as a result of the greater mobility of the people. Larger congregations in New London and Hortonville had schools and regular Sunday Services. Services at St. Marys were every other week. All of these factors finally forced the inevitable, that St. Marys church discontinued services in 1924. Pastor Brenner was its last pastor and his leaving during November of 1924, complies with the

last pastoral acts recorded at St. Marys:

Last Marriage.....June 1922
 Last Baptism.....May 20, 1923
 Last Funeral.....1924
 Last Communion.....November 9, 1924

ST. PETERS--SOUTH LIBERTY--MOSQUITO HILL

Pastor Beyer of Zion, South Caledonia can probably be accredited with the gathering of this congregation. When Beyer died in 1870, Pastor Lauritzen served it as a preaching station.

Establishment of the congregation took place in 1875. At that time J.J. Walker was the pastor at St. Johns because Pastor Lauritzen had left in the summer of 1875, accepting a call to Port Huron, Michigan.

Lester Lehman quotes a letter that relays some pertinent information about the early history of this congregation.

Mr. William Stake, who was a member of the church located on Co. Trunk S, which he called the 'South Liberty Church,' gave me much of this information. It was named St. Peters church and was founded in 1898. The church was purchased by the Hortonville Congregation and was rebuilt by the Glasenap Brothers. Church was held every two weeks, and there were about 14-16 families in the congregation. The Pastor's salary was approximately \$150 per year... This church dissolved in about 1923 when Pastor Brenner decided to move to Freedom to a larger congregation.¹¹

According to the letter it was not founded until 1898. Most likely it had existed as a preaching station until the congregation got its own building.

Again in the case of this small group, the larger congregation in New London with its school contributed to its disbanding more than anything else. By the last recordings we again see that the dis-

solving of the congregation corresponds with the departure of Pastor Brenner. Records show:

Last Marriage.....June 1922
 Last Baptism.....May 20, 1923
 Last Funeral.....1924
 Last Communion.....Nov. 9, 1924

That left only two churches of the quad-parish: Emanuel of South Maple Creek and Christ of North Maple Creek.

CHRIST--NORTH MAPLE CREEK

The actual date of the beginning of this congregation is difficult to determine. It was in existence by 1878 because the Outagamie Plat map of that year has it located at the present intersection of Highway 76 and County "W".

Pastor Traugott Gensike of St. Pauls in New London did the work of gathering the small group together. By 1877 the congregation was organized. Lester Lehman comments about the lack of information on this congregation: "Information concerning this church is very scarce and a great deal of effort was expended to uncover what little I found. From the information I have gathered, it was a frame church, and there was another building some distance away for sheltering and tying up the horses."¹¹

Christ Lutheran existed until 1941 as a member of the parish formed by their own congregation, Emanuel of South Maple Creek and Grace of Sugar Bush. This third congregation was the result of Pastor Spiering's work. The 50th anniversary booklet of Grace says:

The Lutheran families who had settled in and around Sugar Bush attended church services at Emanuel Lutheran Church in New London or Christ Lutheran Church in the town of Maple Creek until 1915. With horse and buggy the trip to New London took one to one and

a half hours each way. Pastor Ad. Spiering of New London began conducting Lutheran services in the Cedar Dell schoolhouse west of Sugar Bush on April 4, 1915. Such great interest was shown in these services that the seating and standing room in the schoolhouse became too small. On January 11, 1916 a meeting was held at the home of John Braun (Brown) to organize a congregation. All present voted in favor of this.¹³

The centennial booklet of Emanuel describes the new tri-parish:

Now another change was made in the parish. The two congregations in the Town of Liberty ceased their existence in 1924. Grace Lutheran Church of Sugar Bush, which had been founded by Pastor Ad. Spiering of New London in April 1915 and organized in January 1916, and which had been served by him and Pastor K. Timmel until this time, decided to form a parish with the two congregations in the Town of Maple Creek. Pastor K. Timmel was called as pastor of these three congregations, and was installed by Pastor Spiering on December 1924.¹⁴

Although no specific reason has been put down in the records on why the congregation disbanded in 1941, one can assume that the larger congregations of Grace and Emanuel drew these few members. It simply was more practical for the pastor and better for all involved.

From that time on, Emanuel Lutheran of Maple Creek and Grace Lutheran of Sugar Bush have existed in a dual parish. And that is still the arrangement today. For Emanuel, it has been a long road, but a history that again and again exhibits how God has shed His grace on His people. That little, country church exhibits a heritage that all its members have in the riches of God's eternal Word. Someday Emanuel, will be gone, but that Savior of whom they learned within its walls is theirs forever. It truly is a story of God's grace.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Quoted from Centennial booklet of Emanuel Lutheran Church of Maple Creek. p.9.
- 2 From Lester Lehman's study of Lutheranism in the New London Area--Paragraph entitled: Rev. Fachtmann's First Journey.
- 3 Lehman, Ibid., Paragraph: Rev. Fachtmann's Second Journey.
- 4 From "God With Us 1893-1968" 75th anniversary booklet of Emanuel Lutheran Church, New London, p. 14.
- 5 Lehman, Op. Cit. paragraph: Zion, South Caledonia, organized in 1861.
- 6 From Zion's centennial booklet
- 7 From Emanuel's centennial booklet p.1.
- 8 From "God With Us" p. 18.
- 9 From Emanuel's Centennial booklet, p.4.
- 10 From an article by Lester Lehman in "The New London Press" March 1, 1972
- 11 Lehman, Op. Cit. Quoted from a letter of Mrs. A. Schwerin giving information relayed to Mrs. Ray Anson from William Stake.
- 12 Lehman, Op. Cit. paragraph: Maple Creek Township, Outagamie county
- 13 From "50 Years of Grace" 1916-1966, 50th anniversary booklet of Grace Lutheran Church, Sugar Bush. p.3.
- 14 From Emanuel's centennial booklet. p. 6.