

Curt Holub
April 30, 1975
Church History

T H E P A U L G . B E R G M A N N S T O R Y

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REVEREND P. G. BERGMANN
The Present Pastor



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The following is my last, most frustrating, most expensive, most time consuming, and yet most interesting, most rewarding, and most stimulating paper of the years of my formal education for the ministry. What started out as a simple inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Trinity congregation leaving our synod to join LC-MS turned into a massive search by means of personal interviews, phone calls, and mailings into the nature of Paul G. Bergmann. I regret that time and money did not allow communication with later parishoners of his and dozens of others who made his acquaintance through the years. A bibliography in the back lists those who were contacted and others who may be of help in further research on this man. The following is a biographical sketch of Paul G. Bergmann, with special emphasis on the Menasha congregation he took over to the Missouri Synod. Unfortunately things such as date and place of birth, information regarding his immediate family, histories of other congregations he served remain completely uncovered.

In the Spring of 1911, Bergmann, age 16, appeared at the Northwestern campus. There he was the roommate of student Paul Eggert, who later served our synod for many years. Rev. Eggert is now retired and living in Appleton where he owns a home and cares for his invalid wife. I relied very heavily on him to fill me in on the early history of Bergmann. When Bergmann arrived, at NWG, he knew no English. After hearing a new word, he would often go off by himself to practice it. As soon as possible he would look for an opportunity to use it. The impression I received from Rev. Eggert was that Bergman was equally diligent and enthusiastic in his studies. Eggert didn't have much time to get to know Bergmann intimately while at

Northwestern. He and four other Juniors left Northwestern that spring to move on to the seminary at Wauwatosa. Concerning Bergmann's personal life, the one thing which stuck in Eggert's mind was that Bergmann's father had been an actor back in Germany.

Bergmann chose not to go all the way through our system. He graduated from Springfield Seminary in 1919. He was ordained on August 24, 1919, at Town Norton, Minnesota, by Pastor August Bergmann (a brother?). On September 14, 1919, he was installed at Holy Cross of Dagget, Michigan. Pastor Kurt Geyer of Peshtigo, who was an immigrant himself, officiated. A list of parishes he served follows:

- 1919 - Dagget, Michigan (Holy Cross)
- 1923 - Valmy, Wisconsin (near Sturgeon Bay, St. Johns)
- 1926 - Rhinelander (Zion)
- 1936 - Menasha (Trinity)
- 1951 - Carroll, Iowa (St. Paul's)
- 1957 - Luxemburg, WI (St. Paul's)
- 1958 - Marcus, Iowa (Trinity)

He went to Dagget a bachelor, but shortly married a girl from southern Wisconsin who remains alive with him to this day. In going to Upper Michigan, Bergmann entered the Superior and renewed his acquaintance with Eggert who was serving the congregation at Abrams. There were thirteen pastors in the conference at that time.

The first of many rocky personal relationships with colleagues in the field developed already while at Dagget. It seems that Bergmann and Pastor Geyer had it out over some matter. When Eggert preached for a mission festival up at Dagget, Bergmann poured out his heart to Eggert. On the way back to Abrams, Eggert stopped to visit with Geyer concerning the matter.

Whether it was resolved or not, Bergmann shortly took a call (Oct, '22) to Valmy, northeast of Sturgeon Bay on the Green Bay peninsula. Nothing sensational of his ministry there came to my attention, but in 1925, Bergmann made a pilgrimage back to Germany, where he visited Wittenberg and begged Dr. Riemer, ephorus of Castle Church, to grant him one stone from the church should he be privileged to build a church in America, Riemer promised to grant his wish "because of American help that was extended to the starving German children after the World War."

Bergmann was installed at Rhinelander, Wisconsin, on October 17, 1926. Less than one year later, on September 11, 1927, the motion carried at the third quarterly meeting to build a new church. The need for a new and bigger church was the result of the way in which God blessed the mission endeavors of Bergmann's predecessor, Henry Schmitt. Some felt that Bergmann received much of the credit which should have gone to Pastor Schmitt. The call that took Schmitt away was to do mission work in California. He had arrived at Rhinelander when the lumber industry was booming in 1921. Prof. Scharf from Northwestern College had a most interesting observation of the strong suits of each of his three predecessors to Zion congregation:

Schmitt - MISSIONS, ardent missionary, who gathered a lot of people.
"Thrown out the front door, he would come in the back."

Bergmann - STEWARDSHIP, developed enthusiasm, fiery person. So energetic, "people for him, were all for him"

Giesden - EDUCATION, had been teacher in Milwaukee, thorough teacher and indoctrinator, good bible classes, orderly.

"The combination of the strong suits of the three made Zion the strong congregation I inherited."

Zion church building, dedicated in 1929, is an American masterpiece of beauty and symbolism. Bergmann showed great personal genius in directing its design. In taking the example of the stone from Castle Church, the following quote gives a sampling of not only his aesthetic genius, but of his mastering of the English language - which, remember, he didn't speak at all 16 years earlier. On the dedication of the Luther Memorial Stone, June 17, 1928, he preached the following words in his address:

Even this stone before you brings a message. And if your new church edifice is to be a sermon in stones, then this stone will cry out before all others. It is only a common red sandstone, but it would preach to us a sermon as beautiful as the morning dawn, as assuring as the stars at night. For this stone has seen great things. History favored this stone to witness the greatest act of God since the days of the apostles. It was broken out of the walls of the world-famous Castle Church of Wittenberg; and it comes to us filled with all the recollection of the nailing of the ninety-five theses by Dr. Luther to the door of that very church. It would remind us of the historical importance of the Reformation. As this stone was taken out of the very bedrock of our dear old Lutheran Church, I bid you with the words of Holy Writ: "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the Words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." Joshua 24:27

For about ten years, Bergman served Zion Lutheran in Rhineland. He was "a most interesting and dynamic speaker." If it was something he inherited from his actor father, it served him well. Those who respect him cannot say enough about both his preaching style and content. How vain he really was in his prime, and deserving of the title "grandstander" I cannot ascertain. But a true sincerity for the welfare of souls and the preaching of the Gospel rings out loud and clear. Yet despite the power of his personality, his "straightlacedness" and "legalistic outbursts" made for an unpopularity among a segment of the congregation of Rhineland which played into his decision to accept the call to Trinity, Menasha. There his longest ministry in one place would include the focal point of

his entire ministry.

Bergmann served Trinity, Menasha, from late 1936 until late 1951. His first years were relatively quiet as far as problems with synod and colleagues, but his very arrival in Trinity marked the beginning of a spiritual battle within the congregation. Trinity had a poor reputation in 1936 because of its number of lodge members who graced the pews on Sunday mornings. Without reflecting on his predecessor, it seems quite obvious that a strong willed man such as himself was the logical choice to handle the situation. At any rate, to quote Bergmann from one of his first sermons, "I have come to clean out the eagle's nest!"

In view of the length of his stay, his excellent handling of this matter must not have "ruffled too many feathers." His success in this and other areas gained for him new respect in the district, and in 1944 he was elected district home mission chairman. Yet this was the only term he was ever to serve in any position on the district level. This is true despite the fact that in 1950 his congregation of approximately 500 communicants was seventh in the district with offerings to synod (\$4731.04). The principle in our synod that the busiest pastors, with the biggest congregations, serve on the district level, too, didn't hold here, even though from all indications Bergmann was a most willing aspirant to district service.

Professor Erwin Scharf, who became pastor of Zion in Rhimelander in 1944, was elected to the home missions board along with Bergmann that year. He gained great personal respect for Bergmann while serving with him on this board. But 1944 also marked another big milestone in the life of Paul G. Bergmann. Besides the fact that he was elected to his only district post, it was at that year's district convention in Neenah that Bergmann delivered his paper, "The First Synodical Convention as a Pattern for our Centennial

Observance" (based on Acts 15 and Galatians 2). Many people who were there and heard it described it as an excellent paper. While the paper did circulate through a number of hands, yet it never was published. Though just about everyone who heard it read marvelled at the workmanship which went into it, few seem to recall ^{*}Pastor Paul Giesche~~n~~ objecting to something in the paper. Rev. Eggert recalls "quite a debate on the floor." Was the discussion over a point of doctrine in the paper? Church history? Something else? Eggert could remember only Bergmann refusing some change and Giessen being equally determined so that the end result was that the paper was never published. The proceedings of the convention do not as much as even summarize it.

An interview with Arthur Jacobson, who was a member of Trinity originally and a charter member of Bethel, brought out the fact that one of the things which embittered Bergmann toward the Wisconsin Synod was its refusal to publish one of his writings. According to Jacobson, however, publication was denied because some of the material was not original. If this is the 1944 district paper Jacobson had in mind then the matter festered in Bergmann's heart for seven years until his split from Wisconsin in 1951. In the meantime, he wrote a widely distributed pamphlet entitled, "Christmas in Hell."

After 1944 things on the surface at least continued to go smoothly at Trinity. Yet one has to wonder whether there being no record of Bergmann holding a district office wasn't a premonition of things to come. Sons David and Mark (He also has a daughter Eunice, Mrs. Neal Schattauer, who lives in Orlando, Florida.) attended Missouri schools and graduated from St. Louis Seminary in 1948 and 1950 respectively. Robert Brown brought to my attention that around 1965 Bergmann "donated" (quotations mine) \$1000 to Northwestern. Was that back tuition ~~on~~ from his sons discontinuing in our system?

David is now serving a congregation in El Paso, Texas. Mark is in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. There was a heated debate between Bergmann and Synod President Bergemann somewhere along the line concerning the placement of St. Louis grads in the Wisconsin Synod. This added more fuel to the fire, to which there had already been added the remark which made the circle around to Bergmann that "he felt our schools weren't good enough for his sons." Being a Springfield grad himself, he was under suspicion for being thus prejudiced.

What really was the final clincher in his decision to go Missouri remains a secret to the writer. Pastor Lyle Lange in Escondito has discussed the circumstances surrounding Bergmann's bitterness toward Wisconsin Synod, but will offer no more than "Bergmann feels he was heavy-handed by the Wisconsin Synod." While claiming not to defend Bergmann, Lange noted that there were personalities of others playing into it, too. In what appears to be the most humiliating thing for Bergmann, he was once denied communion at a Winnebago Conference Meeting. Add to this the thought ventured that he felt slighted in having Walter Strohschein elected district president over him in 1950, and we have the setting for the Menasha crisis.

A congregational meeting was called for April 15, 1951 at Trinity. While a few say they had a feeling what was really going to be coming off, most assembled for what they thought was to be an information meeting on the building project. Pledges had already been taken for the new church and the money was coming in, but no final plans had been drawn up yet, Bergmann had confided in a few close members his desire to go over to Missouri, but for most of the people it was a real bombshell the way in which he frankly requested the congregation to come along with him as an alternative to what lay open before him as an opportunity to get out of our synod. For Bergmann held in his hand a LC-MS call to Auroraville, Wisconsin. As little

as this writer claims to know of Paul Bergmann, he would have concur with those who are of the opinion that there was no way Bergmann was going to take a call to "where"? Unless he was much more depressed than people give him credit for being, he was merely using the call as a lever to persuade the congregation to join Missouri.

Yet the monkey was on the people's back. As one man remarked, "The people who loved the man all but idolized him and would follow him into anything short of hell." Obviously the people felt Missouri wasn't in that big a mess yet, because they followed. The vote was about three to one in favor of joining Missouri, with 37 or 38 dissenting votes. The four men who stood up and protested the change were told by Bergmann after the vote, "You don't have any business here anymore!" 94 communicants (134 souls) remained faithful to the Wisconsin Synod. The 1952 Northern Wisconsin District Proceedings read, "Those members who protested against the unethical means used to take Trinity away from the Wisconsin Synod were left without property or place of worship."

Headlines in the local newspaper the next day read, "Church Splits over Boy Scouts." Bergmann was quoted as saying he was leaving the Wisconsin Synod "because of its narrowmindedness on scouting." Oddly enough, no one seems to recall exactly what reasons for going Missouri were given at the meeting - other than the fact that Bergmann had a call he was seriously considering. It is most difficult to follow how scouting could have played into the matter at all. This man had been vehemently against the lodge years before. Right to the end he seemed to be consistent in that shortly before the split Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Kuhrs recall being the objects of his righteous wrath, after they had made the mistake of consenting to their son's desire to join the Boys' Brigade in Neenah.

Another interesting feature of this critical vote to go Missouri lies in the fact that the women present were allowed to vote. This seems inconsistent with Bergmann's conservative tendencies also, though if he was going to Missouri, he was at that time already disregarding our synod's concern over such things as the IC-MS and ALC's Common Confession, which had come up at the 1950 district convention 10 months earlier. Scouting wasn't Missouri's only problem as Bergmann should have been well aware at that time.

Robert Braun, who was a member of his 1947 eighth grade confirmation class, remembers Bergmann as one who was very doctrinely sound and emphatic. He was demanding of his confirmation classes. Braun recalled his own examination day and what happened to one boy who failed to answer a particular question. The child was humiliated before the whole congregation by Bergmann's remark: "Look at that dummy! I've been teaching him for two years, and he still doesn't know the answer." Braun also remembers well Bergmann looking for the answer "King Herod" to a question on that examination day. None in the class could come up with the answer. Braun said he can no longer at all recall how the question was worded, but Bergmann's disgruntlement at there not being a single confirmand who could answer correctly, causes him to wake up nights yet with "King Herod" on his lips. Way into the forties, Bergmann still practiced the policy of directing ushers to wake up sermon sleepers, without fear of anyone calling him on it. Without getting into the conclusions I hope to draw at the end of this paper, let me just here interject that his temper and "self-confidence" should have shown through by now as things which were not to his credit.

Still these weaknesses did not seem to undercut the people's confidence in his ability to lead them in the paths of righteousness. More than a few

felt that he could not err in anything regarding the church. His dynamic character may have been simply overwhelming in many respects, but still many leading laymen in his congregations who were great leaders in their own right (such as the lumber magnate Abendroth in the Rhinelander congregation) remain his dearest of friends.

But sad to say, the magic he had with people didn't always bear him through. Though he succeeded in his aim to take Trinity congregation with himself to the Missouri Synod, in one-half year he was packing for Iowa because of pressure among the very people who had six months earlier blindly followed his lead. There are a number of reasons why deciding to leave in the fall of 1951 was the best thing he did while he was there. The bitterness between those who left and those who stayed was unreal. I had a couple with whom I had made an appointment to interview call me back and say they refused to talk about it. After 25 years the scars were still so deep they felt it would just stir up too many emotions which they had been trying to suppress all these years.

As mentioned before, those who stood up and protested the move were told, "You don't have any business here anymore." Money always has a way of making feuds all the more hot, and those who left (or were told to leave) would be yielding up considerable amounts of money they had given toward fulfilling their generous pledges for the proposed new church building. Rather than yield without some kind of fight, they challenged Bergmann and the majority's right to jump synods, especially in view of the way in which it was carried out. (There was no church constitution.) The result was that the matter went to court. The judge praised Pastor Walter Pankow (home missions chairman at that time - from New London - now deceased) who represented the minority for "his good memory and cool, level-headedness." (As opposed to who?) Nevertheless, he saw fit to award all property and paid

pledges to the congregation - as represented by the majority. The responsibility for the fact that all this dirty laundry had to be hung out for all the public to see weighed heavy on Bergmann. Then, too, Trinity's lawyer, Ponath, got his cut of the property for saving it for Bergmann's allies. This further embittered and frustrated all those involved. The building project was delayed indefinitely while the congregation recovered the loss paid to the lawyer.

When Bergmann left in the fall, he had to be a most unhappy man. To be sure, he had some plans for how the new Trinity church would reflect his artistic genius and be full of spiritual symbolism for his people. After April 15, nothing progressed on the project. The call he took was to St. Paul's in Carroll, Iowa. There was no day school there, and the impression I get is that it ironically may not have been any more responsible a position than the call he held in the spring to Auroraville, Wisconsin. He served there through 1956, and then returned for just a short time to Wisconsin, serving St. Paul's at Luxemburg, Wisconsin. That congregation had a day school. Already in 1958 he was back in Iowa, this time at Trinity in Marcus. They also had a day school. He served there until 1960, at which time he retired at the age of 65 to Tucumcari, New Mexico. Since he is still alive and physically stable some 15 years later, his possible premature retirement provides circumstantial evidence to the rumor that congregational difficulties drained him emotionally.

In 1963 he moved to Highland, California, and in 1964 to Escondido. He has served a number of vacancies in the area through the years and has preached on numerous occasions until just recently. Since 1965 he has lived at his present address, 2000 Paddy Place, which adjoins the property of our Ascension Lutheran Church served by Pastor Lyle Lange. Whether Bergmann

is so close to us by choice or chance, I don't know, but Pastor Lange in a phone interview disclosed that despite "being emotionally charged and still bitter toward the Wisconsin Synod," Bergmann attended his church Christmas eve and Christmas day and has sought to be communed there. On the basis of discussions Pastor Lange has had with him, he was forced to refuse him communion. Bergman was a member and often used to preach at the FAL congregation there. Sometime around Christmas he separated from them and is now a man without a church.

It would have been most interesting to have spoken with Pastor Schmitt yet at St. Paul's, Escondido. One has to wonder whether Bergmann had anything to do with St. Paul's going FAL. In a Christmas letter in 1972, he expressed sadness over LC-MS trends:

What bothers us more than any of these physical afflictions is the disturbing state of affairs in our Church with so many of the leaders of our Missouri Synod doing away with the truths of the Word of God. This is hurting us and no small number of our sincere Lutherans. What a sad 125th Anniversary year of our synod.

His son Mark at Peace Lutheran Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, shares his regret over the Missouri Synod situation. In a December 4 letter published in the January 13, 1975, Christian News, he and his congregation challenged Florida - Georgia District President Rev. L. Behnken "in relation to the authorization or commissioning or official approval and use of Seminex graduates in our Florida - Georgia District."

In 1972-73 Bergmann underwent a series of operations for throat cancer. He thought his preaching days were over. But since then he has preached with the aid of an amplifier. As late as December 8 of last year he was scheduled to speak at a cornerstone laying at St. Paul's there in Escondido. Since his 1974 Christmas newsletter pre-dated that, it is unknown if he functioned in that capacity before falling out with the congregation.

CONCLUSION

Throughout these retirement years, he has had the opportunity to use his free time to exercise his artistic talent. Panoramas of the desert and the Rocky Mountains are some of the beautiful scenes he has colorfully captured with his brush. Pastor Lange mentioned that any number of his own parishoners have paintings from him. More important, though, is his contribution to the work in the Lord's Kingdom. From the successes the Lord granted him one can see that his work in the church furthered the building of the kingdom of grace. His failures should serve as an example for us that we carry the blame for our failures more than we can lay claim to the glory of our successes. God accomplished much through Bergmann.

If we must classify him and his characteristics, the thought comes to mind of some kind of cross between Matthias Flacius and impetuous Peter. Certainly God used their talents for the good of the Church. We thank God that he also covers the sins of his shortcomings and ours in the blood of Christ. I would like very much to have made the acquaintance of Paul G. Bergmann, but more than likely I never will in this life. The oldest and dearest friends who have loved him throughout his life, I don't believe, are blind to his faults and his difficulties in the various stations he has served. Even looking at him from this distance, I would have to say I admire him. It is most sad indeed that the Menasha chapter had to be written into his life's story. Without that, history could treat him much more kindly. Yet to his memory stands Zion Church edifice in Rhineland, a structure which long after his death will symbolize his loving service to God and to the faith which the Luther Memorial stone represents.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Abendroth, Walter - Sarasota, FL, former Rhinelander Church leader and still close friend with Bergmann.
- Bergmann, David - El Paso, TX, son in ministry.
- Bergmann, Mark - Ft. Lauderdale, FL, son in ministry.
- Bergmann, Paul - 2000 Paddy Place, Escondido, CA
- ** Braun, Robert - Menasha High School senior at time of 1951 split, confirmand of Bergmann, present member of Bethel.
- ** Eggert, Rev. Paul - Appleton, WI, fellow NWC student, early Lake Superior Conference colleague of Bergmann.
- Ehrenberg, Louis - Poysippi, WI, charter member of Bethel, works Wisconsin Child and Family Service?
- Hallemeier, D. E. - Green Lake, WI, first pastor to serve Bethel mission.
- * Hasselquist, Reuben - Rhinelander, WI, correspondents with the Bergmanns.
- * Hibbard, Vern - Rhinelander, WI, active member already in time of Bergmann.
- * Jacobson, Arthur - New London, WI, charter member of Bethel, probably most well versed of Bethel fathers who shared in Trinity conflict alive today.
- * Johnson, Rev. Sylvester - Appleton, WI, member of Trinity, Menasha, and a sem student when Bergmann came to Menasha.
- Kluge, Theodore - Menasha, WI, charter member of Bethel, later returned to Trinity.
- ** Kuhrs, Mrs Clarence - Menasha, WI, charter members of Bethel, one of those to speak out at April 15, 1951, Trinity meeting.
- * Kuehl, James - Menasha, WI, son-in-law of Theodore Boettcher who was a teacher at Trinity in 1951 (Boettcher still alive in Fox Cities nursing home).
- Langbecker, Roland - em Jackson, CA, ordained by Bergmann and has maintained intimate contact, recommended highly by Lange for details.
- * Lange, Lyle - Escondido, CA, neighbor of Bergmann, as pastor of our church there he has had dialogue with Bergmann which he did not feel free to relate.
- Pastor Lichtsinn, present pastor of Trinity, Menasha, (there since Bergmann!).
- Page, Amos - close personal friend of Bergmann, member of Trinity, Menasha.
- Ponath, - still living in Fox Cities?, Trinity majority lawyer in 1951 court case.
- Quant, Lillian - Appleton, WI, grade school teacher at Trinity, 1951.

Retzlaff, Mrs. Henry - Menasha, WI, wife of Bethel Church father who knew Bergmann intimately.

Retzlaff, Nathan - pastor at Lomira, WI, son of Henry Retzlaff,

* Schaefer, Gerhard - pastor at Trinity, Neenah, WI, since early 1940's, hosted 1944 District Convention.

* Scharf, Prof. Erwin - became pastor of Rhinelander congregation in 1944.

Schatternau, Mrs. Neal (Eunice) - Orlando, FL, daughter of Bergmann.

Schmitt, A. E. - Escondido, CA, FAL pastor of last congregation Bergmann affiliated with.

** Tiefel, Arnold - Oshkosh, WI, Bethel, Menasha's first resident pastor, has document on file regarding Trinity split.

** personal visit interview

* telephone interview

Prof. Wilhelm Zahn, New Ulm, principle of school at time of split at Trinity

*Other Source Material

Christian News, January, 13, 1975.

Document by former Trinity member regarding split.

Northern Wisconsin District Convention Proceedings, 1920 - 1952.

Various Wisconsin and Missouri Synod Yearbooks.

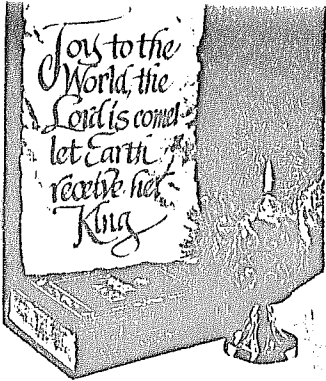
1929 Zion Church Dedication Book.

The question may be asked why I didn't contact Bergmann himself, or at least his sons. This would have answered such questions as when and where he was born, his gut feelings on Wisconsin & Menasha, his present position on LC-MS in relation to ours, family thoughts into various personality clashes through the years - if he and his sons would have chosen to cooperate. I especially feared censure on doing the paper, One has enough problems building motivation to do a paper without having the subject say, "No!" To be sure, I wanted to get a background of information on the story before posing questions to Bergmann himself. As time ran out it became too late to correspond a few times by mail anyway, and with his voice situation as it is, a phone interview may have been difficult for both of us. His last three

*Christmas newsletters which are attached are the next best thing to direct communication.

In speaking to Pastor Lange, he himself did not encourage me to contact Bergmann, though he did give me a number of avenues to pursue. If Bergmann is still so bitter against our synod (Not individuals, we pray!), knowing that one was doing a paper for one of our institutions might cause him more unnecessary consternation, and I would have felt uncomfortable taking his sons into confidence without his knowledge.

Rather, I tried to be just as objective as possible on the basis of the abundant other sources open to me. I was disappointed that a document written by a deceased Bethel charter member was misplaced in the shuffle of Pastor Tiefel's move to Oshkosh from Kewaunee recently. All in all, there still were a number of fresh leads I was unable to check out. It would have been most revealing to have heard the story from the other side, by contacting older members of the Trinity congregation. After the fact of the paper, the temptation to know the answers to certain key and puzzling questions may still lead me to make the fatal call to the man with all the answers. The paper is behind me, but the desire to know some things may not as easily be done away with.



Dear Carl. The letter you may keep they are copies.

ADVENT 1972

HOWEVER many years go by, the pleasure never ends
In memories of happy times
That we have shared with friends.
So every Christmas Season, as we joyously review
Good memories, our fondest thoughts
All turn to friends like you.

THIS PAST 1972 YEAR has been a time of bringing us closer to the days of old age. 77 years of earthly existence for both of us is now beginning to tell.

We have experienced the meaning of the score of years which the 90th Psalm designates as "labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Something of the longing for the everlasting Christmas is with us.

Two operations on my throat, with another in the offing, this past year have taken away most of my voice. I can only whisper. Can not sing "Silent Night" this year. My preaching days are over. The final correction on my throat is to restore a little more of my voice. But the doctor is not making any promises. With the prayers and encouragements of so many of our friends, we are leaving it all to the graces of our Savior, content with our lot.

* What bothers us more than any of these physical afflictions is the disturbing state of affairs in our Church with so many of the leaders of our Missouri Synod doing away with the truths of the Word of God. This is hurting us and no small number of our sincere Lutherans. What a sad 125th Anniversary year of our Synod.

May God have mercy on us.

Some of our good friends have taken us out for rides and dinners. The good will of many of our former parishioners have surprised us with money and favors beyond our expectations.

In this way we have seen the beauty of Yosemite Park. We were taken into the Ojai Valley, the Julian region, where so many of the movies were and still are made. We have seen more of the desert and and Wild Life Zoo of Africa near here in replica.

We are still called upon to counsel troubled souls who come to us and are happy to help in the Kingdom in this way. We still do a little painting in oil. And so our days are made pleasant even though in these minor afflictions - for all of which we praise the Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

May this 1972 Christmas find you thankful
and joyful, and above all, faithful to
the Child in the manger.

Cordially yours,
Pastor Paul and Esther Bergmann

2008 Paddy Place
Escondido, California 92027



As the rumors of war cleave the world far ajar
And our lights of this season grow dim
May you find once again
"The Tidings of Joy"
In the Babe born in Bethlehem.

With the blessings of heaven for you and for me
In this land of our Fathers still free
May you have more than ever
"The peace beyond measure"
And the proof of God's wonderful Love.

The past year of 1973 has brought home to the Bergmann family the frailty of our mortal bodies. Pastor Bergmann was able to stay out of the hospital but his throat is still under the doctor's care. Our voice is diminished to a mere whisper. In a previous operation one vocal chord had to be removed.

Our daughter Eunice (Mrs. Neal Schattauer of Orlando, Fla.) suffered open heart surgery in June. Our prayers were answered. She made a remarkable recovery.

Our son David, pastor in El Paso, Texas, had a most serious stomach operation in September. He is now recovering, and returned to his pulpit in November.

Our son Mark had a minor car accident, which left him unharmed but with a damaged car. Pastor Mark is in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. now in the process of enlarging his church.

We have learned to marvel at the progress in medicine, and the miracles worked in surgery. So thankful that the Lord gave us these gifts. But we do want to remember that while the doctor is cutting, the Lord has to do the healing.

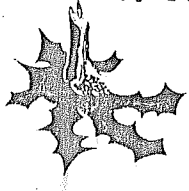
Health is never appreciated enough until we are in danger of losing it. So many more reasons to be thankful for all the Lord's gracious help in this past year.

We still do a little painting and now and then our pictures find appreciation among our friends. The old friends are getting less and less. For our age of 78 years we feel fairly well but realize that our departure out of this vale of tears is not too far hence.

May you and yours enjoy the gladness of Christmas and the blessings of the New Year.

Cordially, yours in Christ
Pastor and Mrs. Paul G. Bergmann.

2008 Paddy Place
Escondido, Calif. 92027





Christmas

ADVENT 1974

As Christmas dawns on us again we live
In a world of restless men; People are driven by
tension and fear into a dreadful end - so near.

O Lord, in the midst of these restless men
Make known Thy peace of Bethlehem; Give us
The faith in Christ above; Help us
to see God's Christmas Love. Amen.

This 1974 Christmas makes us thoughtful and very thankful. In age, we both, Pastor and Mrs. Bergmann are only one year away from the Biblical "four score years and ten" which is to be full of "labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." By the grace of God we have experienced this in a somewhat lesser degree. These waning days of the past year have been pleasant even though we felt the sorrows of old age. Doctor and Dentist bills crept up on us.

The new authentic Lutheran mission here in Escondido gave us the opportunity to preach twice; and three times I filled the pulpit of a neighboring congregation during the sickness of their pastor. This was done with the help of an amplifier and an adjusted mike. At the cornerstone laying of the new St. Paul parish hall I am to speak again on December 8th.

Since my throat operation two years ago, which left me with a little more than a whisper, I had never expected to serve the Lord again in that manner.

Our son Pastor David of El Paso, Texas, and his wife visited us this past July. Pastor Mark and his wife Naomi of Fort Lauderdale, Florida have moved into a larger Church. Our daughter Eunice Schattauer and Neal are still in Orlando, Florida with their growing four children. We hope to visit them in the coming year. Eunice has recovered from her open-heart operation of a year ago.

We are thinking of you in this blessed season and remember the former happy Christmas times of the past.

May the Lord bless you and yours and grant you the peace of which the angels sang. And may the joy of the shepherds and that of the Wise Men continue in your home and heart in the 1975 coming year.

Yours in Christ
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Dear Curt: I believe the one person who could give you good info on Pastor Bergman is Miss. Eva Danner. She is of that vintage and was the secretary at that time. Pastor Bergmann left Rhinelander about 1936.

R. C. Hasselquist