

THE BUILDING OF A MIGHTY FORTRESS TO "ZEBAOOTH"

The History of the erecting of
Zebaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church

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The topic of this search in history may seem to some a peculiar item of interest. It might seem more reasonable to research the history of the gathering of the flock that makes up Zebaoth Ev. Luth. Church. However if the same person would worship at Zebaoth, under the roof of this beautiful structure, directed in his meditation by the abundant symbols and carried with the congregation by the beautiful sounds of the organ, then this item of historical study is of interest: What led these people to build this kind of a building? Why so beautiful and ornate? After all, a simple church could sure have been erected at a great savings to the members.

Add to these reasons the fact that the cornerstone of this "mighty fortress" bears the year 1930. How is it that these Christians chose to pursue such an ambitious project in the midst of the Great Depression? These curiosities take us back into the records to seek after some answers.

Zebaoth's Beginnings

To understand where Zebaoth congregation was at when they began this building project, we need a short summary of its beginnings. Zebaoth was organized in May of 1917. It was formed by combining the members of the Elias Mission, at 11th and Finn Place and the Good Hope Mission, at 6th and Mill (later called Melvina) St. Since the Good Hope had a chapel this became the home of the new congregation.

Zebaoth was served by Professor Herman Meyer of the Seminary in Wauwatosa. Prof. Meyer's service as vacancy Pastor came to an end with the installation of Pastor Arthur Tacke as the resident Pastor, July 29, 1917. Pastor Tacke was a young man, only out of the seminary for two years. His faithful shepherding of this newly

organized congregation is a significant part of all of Zebaoth's history, as he spent the rest of his ministry at Zebaoth, retiring on May 1, 1966.

While it is difficult for us to imagine today, Zebaoth was located literally out in the country. The "streets" were dirt roads and there were no utility hook ups. But this location was the area of future growth. As the locality grew up and became populous, so did Zebaoth congregation. When Zebaoth was organized it comprised of 33 communicants, 22 Sunday School children, and 12 voting members. After ten years of growth they had grown almost ten times as large, with 470 souls, 327 communicants, and 118 voters.

Along with this numerical growth Zebaoth grew more and more financially independent. They took over their property from Synod by issuing a note for \$2000 to Synod. They added to their room for growth by purchasing additional adjacent lots in 1920 and 1923.

On January 2, 1925 the congregation voted to reduce the Synod subsided of their pastor's salary by \$5.00 per month. This may not seem very significant until we realize that this is equivalent to \$24.50 today.¹

It appears that 1925 was a very good year for Zebaoth. For in June of that same year the congregation accepted the District Mission Board's recommendation to further reduce the \$43.33/month Synod subsided to \$25/month, beginning July 1. This subsided was to continue through October of 1926. At the end of that same year the Council authorized the payment of \$1000 of its mortgage.⁺

¹ All current dollar values are in terms of Oct. 1980 dollars, the most recent figures available from Standard & Poors at the time of this writing.

Zebaoth's trend toward growing financial independence continued in 1926. On Jan. 11 the congregation voted to raise the Pastor's salary from \$103.33/month to \$120/month,² effective the beginning of the year. Again in their June meeting they took action that must have pleased the District Mission Board. They voted to discontinue Synod subsides, four months in advance of the scheduled cut off date. Then again in December Zebaoth reduced its indebtedness by paying off their 1918 \$2000 interest free note from the Synod. (\$9593.91)³

All these facts are evidence of the total growth that the Holy Spirit was working at Zebaoth. As an expression of thanks to the Zebaoth - the "Lord of Hosts" the congregation decided to launch a debt retirement campaign in celebration of their 10th Anniversary. Thus in December of 1927 Zebaoth retired the other note with the Synod for an amount of \$1800.(\$8821.83)

The growth of Zebaoth resulted in the council relieving the Pastor of his janitorial duties and hiring a janitor in Nov. 1926. Zebaoth also took on the task of doing the Lord's work by supporting the Lutheran Radio Broadcast, beginning in May of 1928. Later in Oct. of the same year the council recommended another salary increase from \$120/month to \$165/month. The voters approved of this significant increase after some time, voting it through in April of 1930. This \$45/month raise would be approximately equal to a \$200/month raise today. The value of the Pastor's \$1980 salary today would be approximately \$9,855.00.

Zebaoth's financial growth was not just reserved for themselves.

² In current dollars, \$512.19 and \$594.82, respectively.

³ From this point on, all bracketed "()" figures are current dollars.

Although the Financial Secretary reported at the close of the year from June 1, 1929 to June 1, 1930 they were behind in their subscription to Synod having only contributed 32.3% of what they had promised, the rest of the year showed a considerable increase. In the last nine months of 1929 Zebaoth gave \$566.70 (\$2803.29). But in the same months of 1930 Zebaoth's contribution to synodical work was \$1008.06 (\$5117.06).

All of these facts and figures are presented to show that Zebaoth's people were richly blessed in the prosperous 20's and they gave of their bounty. Zebaoth was a healthy growing mission in its early years.

Along with the numerical grow of Zebaoth came an ever increasing need for more seating space for worshipers. Already in Jan. of 1922 three pews were added. In July of 1924 the Pastor was instructed to order 4 more pews. On March 2, 1925 the voters assigned the council the task of working out "plans providing more seating capacity in the church."⁴ This was such an urgent matter that the council called a special meeting immediately after the voters meeting for the purpose of appointing a committee to resolve this problem.

The following month, at the congregational meeting the possibility of adding a balcony was discussed, but the offer of the choir to provide different seating that would increase capacity was the accepted stop gap measure.

The problem of crowding came up again a year later in the Lenten season. With an eye to the future the Council's minutes of March 5, 1926 read, "Being aware of the fact, that the future will bring about a demand for a larger church, the council considered both advantages and disadvantages of changing sites, without however intending to come

⁴ Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council, March 2, 1925

to any definite conclusion."⁵ These thoughts later led the council to discussions with Ephrata congregation about the possibility of merger.⁶ This idea was later dropped.

Preliminaries to Building

Two years later the consistantly packed church services started discussions at council and voters' meetings that would not stop until the new church was in progress. We find in the March 5, 1928 minutes of the congregation, "There was quite a discussion about the arrangement of services and also (how) to provide more room for the increased attendance, however there was nothing definately decided."

At the congregational meeting a month later (April 16th) we read,

The matter of providing for more room in church caused a lively discussion which ended by a motion made and passed that the chair appoint a committee of three builders to get details and estimates on a new church and report at the next meeting.

They came back May 7, 1928 with their report, showing plans of recently built churches and reporting on their costs. The chair then appointed a committee to investigate financing of a new church and to report to the voters at a special meeting.

The special meeting was called June 19. The idea of building a new church was thoroughly discussed without coming to any definate decision. A straw vote was taken. It indicated that 31 were in favor of building and 17 opposed building. It was decided that another special meeting should be called later to more thoroughly discuss financing of such construction.

⁵ Minutes of the Council of Zebaoth Ev. Luth. Ch., March 5, 1926.

⁶ ibid, June 7, 1926. Called after the voters meeting were Zebaoth declared itself, self-supporting.

No special meeting was called, but the topic came up at the Sept. and Oct. meetings of the congregation. At both meetings it was tabled. In the Oct. meeting it was decided to designate the Jan. 1929 meeting to deal mainly with this question.

The council met Jan. 5, 1929. After discussing the building of a new church the minutes declare, "The Church Council by unanimous vote expressed its opinion that building a new church would be for the best interest of the congregation, if (the) same would be financially able to handle it." When the voters met on Jan. 7th they agreed by a vote of 29 to 5. This was not a commitment to build, but a vote that they wanted more facts out of their great interest in building. To this end they appointed a committee of five to work out the details and report back.

The committee of five reported at the congregational meeting of March 4, 1929. The full report can be found as Appendix A of this paper. In summary their report recommended a \$100,000 (\$498,730.96) building project including a church, parish hall, and ^{the} relocation and brick facing of the parsonage. They calculated that the interest on the required bonds would increase the congregation's annual expenses to \$8,372 (\$41,753.76) compared to an estimated income of \$8,500 a year.

As a result of the committee's report the congregation voted to designate this committee of five as the permanent building committee and dictated to the chair that he was to appoint a committee to start and run a fund campaign for the new church.

Zebaoth's growth had become a "delightful" problem. Members now recall how they had to come to church especially early if you hoped to get a seat. Reflecting on those days in 1929 Zebaoth recalls, "all

available space was utilized. Often the sacristy was filled and some worshipers even sat on chairs behind the altar."⁷ A member told me that there was not just a lack of room in the sanctuary for worship, but also in the basement where Sunday School was held. She remembered how she taught in the kitchen, sharing it with another class.

The minutes on the council record that on account of a lack of space reserve tickets were issued to the parents of the confirmands. This was done in a year when the congregation confirmed over 30 children. It is no wonder that they began to speak of a lack of room in 1928, when the confirmation class was the largest ever, with 41 children.

The effect of the crowding seems to come out in a report made to the voters at their meeting on Aug 5, 1929. In a review of the attendance figures over the previous two years it was noted that the English service attendance remained the same, while the German decreased. This coincided with a change in the hours of worship. It was the point of the report to say that the German attendance had decreased on account of the change. But since this report covers the same period when the church was so crowded it seems people were simply staying away from worship as to "fight the crowd." The need to remedy this problem for the advantage of Christ's kingdom was obvious.

Preparing Some Concrete Plans for Building

The five men elected to the building committee carried some excellent qualifications to serve on this committee. For example Mr. Authur Breest did mason work and was awarded the contract to do

⁷ Reflections of Faith, Zebaoth's 50th Anniv. booklet, p.2.

the mason work on the "new church." Mr. Schoenwetter started on the committee and was a great asset, although it became necessary for him to step down later. Mr. Schoenwetter's name is frequently mentioned in Zebaoth's minutes. He owned a lumberyard and frequently helped Zebaoth with materials as well as expertise. George Riemer was known as a man who was always willing to help at church and was very helpful. One man recalled how he worked quite a bit with the electrical work and sound system.

Later Mr. William Brockman, who was the organist at Zebaoth⁸ and was well known for his proficiency^{ic} with that instrument, became a member of the building committee. (He was appointed by the congregation April 7, 1930.) He served as the Secretary of the committee and was of great help with the selection and contracting of the organ. He also was a great help in soliciting bonds especially when the great needs arose in 1932, needs we will address later.

All of the men, not just those that were mentioned, seemed to be held with great respect by the members of Zebaoth. As the "elder" members and leaders of this relatively young congregation their sound judgment^e as well as expertise in their various areas had won the respect of all. The only disadvantage of their age is that they are no longer living sources of information for historical research. Since none of the people who are still alive today were directly involved in the detailed planning we must rely on the written records and the building itself to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this paper.

⁸ It is interesting to note that the voters directed Pastor Tacke to seek Mr. Brockman's services as organist to replace Prof. Grothman who was leaving at the May 7, 1928 meeting when the building committee made its first report.

It is significant that I have not spoken of Pastor Tacke's membership on the building committee. He was not a member of this committee. In fact it isn't until the sixth meeting of the building committee that we find the minutes recording, "the motion was carried to extend an invitation to our Pastor to attend meetings of the building committee."⁹ This in no way indicates a lack of involvement of Pastor Tacke in Zebaoth's building project. But it does show that this project was not just the pastor's pet. This is evidence that Zebaoth worked well as a congregation with many capable laymen. This project is not the only place this is evident. The councilmen's involvement in loving Christian discipline is another fine example.

The "permanent" building committee began its weekly meetings March 7, 1929. After electing their officers, men were assigned to interview B. C. Ziegler, Mr. Van Briesen, and Mr. Robert Sieler with respect to church financing. The result of these interviews was reported at the March 14 meeting. An offer was made to finance up to 60% of the project at 6% by a first mortgage.¹⁰

Apparently the committee assigned someone if not all to investigate architects in the first meeting, for they selected Ernest Weyland as architect in the March 14th meeting. I was unable to turn up any information about Mr. Weyland other than the fact that he was Lutheran. The contract was signed with Mr. Weyland on March 21st.

⁹ The Building Committee Minutes, April 18, 1929.

¹⁰ FIRST MORTGAGE: a mortgage that has priority as a lien over all mortgages and liens except those imposed by law. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1974.

The planning for Zebaoth's church then proceeded in a normal manner. The following is a chronology of some of the events recorded by the building committee through the end of 1929 and into 1930.

1929

- May 10 - The architect estimated costs to be slightly higher than the committee's initial estimates.
- June 13 - Proposed drawings were presented by the Architect. The second mortgage was the main topic. The "building drive campaign committee" was established to seek second mortgage bonds from members.
- Oct. 29 - All discussion centered on financing. A notice in the congregation's Messenger was authorized to seek second mortgage bonds from members. The goal of \$20,000 (\$98,172.59) was set for such bonds.

1930

- Apr. 8 - The architect was authorized to proceed with necessary working plans, specifications, and bids with a limit on the total project not to exceed \$85,000. (\$423,058.37)
- Apr. 22 - The basement plans were submitted.
- Apr. 29 - The first floor plans were accepted with seating of 400 in the "auditorium" and 213 in the balcony.
- June 17 - The complete plans were approved by the committee and bids were to be solicited.
- July 8 - Hackett, Hoff and Theirmann's offer of a 6% first mortgage was reported. This bonding company was willing to bond for \$65,000 (\$331,928.92), assuming the church cost \$90,000 (\$423,058.37). This was with an added 4% commission.

Anyone with an eye for history probably took special note of the events of the Oct. 29, 1929 meeting, since the Great Depression is usually considered to have started Oct. 24, 1929. It is very doubtful that the crash of the stockmarket had anything to do with the fact they strictly discussed financing. Few if any of the members of Zebaoth had money invested in the stock market. In addition to this no one fully understood the implications of this crash. Surely Oct. 25's newspapers did not have the headlines, THE GREAT DEPRESSION STARTED YESTERDAY. In

fact news reports in the market section of the Milwaukee Journal during the spring spoke very optimistic^{al}ly of a spring rally that would turn the stock market around.

If the financial condition of the financial community had any effect on the discussion of the Oct 29, 1929 meeting it would have been minimal. As we can see it was a major concern in the June 13, 1929 meeting. In fact the council set the project in motion by supporting the building of the "new church" if the congregation "would be financially able to handle it."¹¹ Since Zebaoth had just paid off their outstanding debts and had no time to save up funds in advance for this building, this was a normal concern.¹²

The "new church building campaign committee"¹³ served to solicitate funds for the new building project. They did this by seeking loans from members and pledges toward contributions. This campaign began in April of 1929. By the end of November 1929 the members had pledged \$10,202.50 (\$50,391.03). No new pledges were received after this date.

The first report of receipts taken in on this campaign appeared in the minutes of the August 5, 1929 congregational meeting. As of July 31st they had collected \$1563.88 (\$7,676.51). The progress of this collection can be traced in the chart on the following page.

¹¹ The Minutes of Zebaoth's Council, Jan. 5, 1929.

¹² The gap in "significant events" of the chronology seems of little significance. There were three meetings before Christmas, then no meetings until March 25, 1930. It appears that this gap is explained merely out of a lack of business, while preliminary work was going on.

¹³ This committee was called many different names. It is the same as the "building drive campaign committee."

THE NEW BUILDING CAMPAIGN FUND

Total Receipts through:

August	31, 1929	- \$2,093.53	(\$10,239.17)
September	30, 1929	- \$2,769.78	(\$13,574.73)
October	31, 1929	- \$3,059.28	(\$14,993.58)
November	30, 1929	- \$3,660.18	(\$18,104.32)
December	31, 1929	- \$3,919.18	(\$19,357.17)
January	31, 1930	- \$4,035.18	(\$20,001.79)
February	28, 1930	- \$4,243.93	(\$21,122.71)
March	31, 1930	- \$4,546.08	(\$22,753.48)
April	30, 1930	- \$4,887.83	(\$24,327.50)
May	31, 1930	- \$5,178.58	(\$25,919.19)
June	30, 1930	- \$5,423.58	(\$27,310.62)
.....			
August	31, 1930	- \$5,561.83	(\$28,571.43)
September	30, 1930	- \$5,759.33	(\$29,410.59)
.....			
April	30, 1933	= \$9,534.45	() ¹⁴

The success of the loans from members program is unclear. There seems to be some reference to the existence of some such loans before the building project was officially started, but no exact and clear records were uncovered in my research. One thing that is clear from the Sept. 29, 1929 minutes of the congregational meeting is that the building committee recognized that most of the \$20,000 they hoped to get in the form of a second mortgage was to come from some financial institution.¹⁵ This comes out in their plea that the members contribute their pledged amounts as soon as possible as this would make it easier to borrow the second mortgage money.

¹⁴ In April of 1933 this campaign was close, \$668.05 below the pledged amount. No present dollar equivalent is given as this would be misleading. Such equivalents deal with purchasing power and these dollars were spent long before 1933.

¹⁵ It was obvious from the beginning that most of the \$20,000 would come from a bank, but it seems they had hoped for more private loans.

The Decision to Build

The preliminaries for building were out of the way by Sept. 6, 1930. The plans were made and the bids all in. The costs were totaled and three variations on the same plan ranging in cost from \$95,000 (\$487,055.83) to \$108,751 (\$557,555.88) were prepared for presentation to the congregation. Wanting some more information on financing they delayed their decision to recommend these plans to the congregation. A special meeting was set for Sept. 8th, before the congregational meeting. Then the building committee voted to recommend that Zebaoth put these plan in action and build their new church.

When the congregational meeting was opened 38 men were in attendance. This was about an average attendance figure. After the regular business was attended to the meeting paused briefly for a special prayer before the discussion began on the building of a new church. After the building committee reported on their plans, bids and on possible financing the voters resolved the building committee be empowered to proceed as planned. This motion was pass unanimously.

Out of the three plans presented, the voters selected the plan which eliminated the bell tower. Although this was the least expensive plan it appears that finances were not the only consideration. While the records make no reference to this some members recall a fear among some that the bell tower might weaken the foundation.

Immediately action was taken to proceed. The ground breaking was delayed until financing was secured, but in the mean time bids were let so that all would be ready to go when the financing did come through.¹⁶

¹⁶ Building Committee Minutes, Sept. 17, 1930.

On Sept. 23, 1930 the financing came through. The building committee secretary, Mr. W. Brockman submitted Hackett, Hoff & Thiermann's proposal of "setting forth a bond issue of \$75,000 at 6% interest and a 4% commission, to be retired semiannually."¹⁷ The committee unanimously resolved to accept these terms. This was more than anyone could dream of. With the \$10,000 pledged and a bond issue of \$75,000 they could reduce their borrowed amount on the second mortgage.

With financing in hand there was no time to waste. Ground breaking was set for the following Sunday, Sept. 28. The cornerstone was laid Dec. 14. Zebaoth's new church was dedicated a little over a year after the work began, on Oct. 25, 1931.

The Depressing Effects of the Depression

Up to the time of the laying of the cornerstone and yes even beyond that things went very well for Zebaoth. The problems of the Depression didn't seem to directly effect Zebaoth. This was generally true in industrial America. Only those who lost in the stock market or whose bank lost in the stock market and the farmers who lost their farms to foreclosure really felt the Depression in it early stages. Industrial America continued a while longer.

The first major industry to feel these effects of the economic slowdown was the auto industry. This did have some effect on some of Zebaoth's members as many worked at the Nash auto body factory. However these effects were after the church was built, therefore they had no effect on the decision to build.

¹⁷ The Building Committee Minutes of Sept. 23, 1930.

Again we must conclude that the Depression was not a factor in the decision to build Zebaoth. In general things weren't all that bad in Sept. of 1930. As was mentioned before in April of 1930 Zebaoth gave their Pastor a raise of \$45/month bring his salary up to \$165/month. It is obvious they didn't think things were that bad.

Disturbing news broke in the headlines of the market section of the Feb. 5, 1931 Milwaukee Journal. "MAX THIERMANN VICTIM OF DEATH PLUNGE." Max Theirmann was the major shareholder of Hackett, Hoff & Thiermann, Inc., controlling over 90% of its stock. He was also President of this corporation.

As the facts unfolded Hackett, Hoff & Thiermann, Inc. went into bankruptcy.¹⁸ It seems that instead of holding money in trust as H,H. & Th, Inc. was obligated to do when serving as trustee, all funds poured into a general fund and were in turn reinvested. None of the money was used fraudulently, but when the market dipped on many of H,H & Th, Inc.'s investments trust money was lost.

All of this boiled down to Zebaoth loosing \$32,500 (\$180,069.79). This had a depressing effect indeed, especially when combined with cost overruns in construction amounting to \$25,000 (\$138,515.22). While this was depressing it did not inspire hopelessness. Zebaoth charged on confident that the Lord would work this out also to their benefit.

The Council met June 29, 1931 to select a new trustee. They met again July 2, to "accept the offer of the Synod to keep the new church going."¹⁹ The Synod Board of Trustees also offered to send out a

¹⁸ These details can be found in the Milwaukee Journal and Milwaukee Sentinel articles in the bibliography.

¹⁹ The Minutes of Zebaoth's Council, July 2, 1931.

letter to the churches of the Synod informing them of Zebaoth's need and pleading for assistance. Between July 1931 and April 1932 Zebaoth received \$22,500, roughly equal to \$126,987.30.

The story of Christian love in response to this great need goes far beyond the outpouring of aid from the Synod. It involves members of Zebaoth and friends without. It is a full paper in itself, and is outside the scope of this paper. The long ordeal of indebtedness came to an end for Zebaoth when they celebrated the public burning of the mortgage Oct. 22, 1961.

Building for Worship

We concluded before that Zebaoth decided to build a new church out of a lack of room, but this doesn't answer the question why did they build the beautiful building they constructed? A simple wood structure or even brick structure like Salem on 107th St. could have been constructed to hold 500 worshipers. This would have been much easier to finance for a congregation of less than 500 souls all of middle class economic means. After all there were no wealthy members in Zebaoth's midst to build this \$100,000 sanctuary.

There is only one motivation that can explain the venture of faith taken on by this congregation. They were moved out of love for their Lord to build a church that's very existence expresses their heartfelt praises to their Savior God. The only other way churches like this were built was out of legalistic coercion and the record totally rules that out.

With this kind of motivation we can understand the willingness to back such a significant project, but this still doesn't explain why this elaborate plan was developed and carried to completion.

I would suggest that the answer to this question is found in the booklet published for Zebaoth's dedication of their new church. On page 16, under the heading, "ARCHITECTURE OF OUR NEW CHURCH," we learn,

In plan and design the church is a modern adaptation of thirteenth century French Gothic. This style of architecture is especially well adapted to the forms of Christian worship. Unlike the Classical, the Byzantine, and the Romanesque style, the Gothic was developed under the influence of Christian civilization, and can not be traced back to pagan influences. The narrow and lofty Nave, the chaste forms of all its parts, give to the interior an atmosphere of reverence and devotion. Its simplicity of lines are in harmony with the God-given simplicity of our teachings. The strongly accentuated verticals potently direct the thoughts of the worshiper upward.

After reading this description it is clear that Zebaoth was designed and "built for worship." It was not just built to have a place to worship. The church building was designed to be worshipful. It was an aid to worship and in and of itself expressed the congregations faith and consequential praise of the Triune God. The building of this church was an act of worship. Zebaoth was "built for worship" in the fullest sense of this phrase.

Willium Tacke, a son of Pastor Tacke is an artist. He relayed how when he was studying modern architecture his father was quite disappointed. Pastor Tacke was convinced that Gothic was the finest expression of our Christian faith. He was very concerned that the Gothic architecture of Zebaoth be true to form within the realm of "a modern adaptation." From this is it quite clear the description of the churches architecture was the product of Pastor Tacke's pen.

It would seem that Pastor A. Tacke had a great influence in selecting this style of church being convinced of its value in worship. It is well known to all at Zebaoth that Pastor Tacke left his mark

in the detailed and careful planning and use of symbols throughout the church. These symbols can be found in abundance on the windows. Every pew has one of 6 different hand carved symbols on the ends. These plus many many more are explained on pages 18, and 19 of the dedication booklet quoted from above.

Pastor Tacke spent countless hours on this labor of love that these symbols might serve future generations as instructional and worship aid as each one reminds the Christian of a wonderful truth of our faith. Pastor Tacke's influence on this church is quietly attested to in these symbols.

Lest anyone think that Pastor Tacke was unique in holding these views on the close relationship of architecture and worship we turn to Koehler's, The History of the Wisconsin Synod. In the first full paragraph of page 5 he states,

To what an extent the Gospel lived in men's hearts, is thereby indicated that poetry and art, the master voices of human thought, spoke in the Romanesque and Gothic style and in it gave to the world the truly great forms of art inspired by the Gospel.

Likewise the entire first complete paragraph in the right column of the same page addresses this point. I quote in part.

... What a contrast to the simple, great forms of the early German styles (Romanesque and Gothic) that like the Greek sprang from the soil and the spirit of the people but in a forthright structural advance and departure from the earth-bound horizontal in progressive heavenward aspiration expressed the very truths of the Gospel and therefore in each new form developed, too, could not otherwise but achieve true beauty. ...

Pastor Tacke was a student under Prof. J.P. Koehler. It is difficult to say if his convictions about the fitness of Gothic architecture for Lutheran worship came from sitting at Koehler's

feet or not. It is clear that Pastor Tacke had firm convictions along these lines. It is also clear from other Lutheran writings on the various ecclesiastical arts that ancient was considered best. Of course ancient to Lutherans points to the Gothic style in architecture.

One book that no doubt had a great deal of influence on Pastors in our circles was Paul E. Kretzmann's Christian Art. After spelling out some basic principles for the style of church design he says on page 142,

The question as to the most appropriate style of architecture for a Lutheran church has been answered, in a way, by the statements above that a Lutheran church requires a Christian style. This excludes at once all heathen styles, whether they be Egyptian, or Persian, or Assyrian, or Greek or Moorish, or whatever other style a perverted fancy may suggest.

This point continues on page 145.

The only styles, then, that can be considered with any degree of seriousness, are the Romanesque and the Gothic. Both styles are preeminently ecclesiastical styles, grown out of the spirit of the Church and imbued with its symbolism. They are dissociated from the profane. They have brought forth magnificent structures of a noble art, and their fundamental principles are applicable to all requirements of a Lutheran church building.

He moderates these statements somewhat on page 143.

No one has suggested the copying of a dead art. There is only one Cathedral of Amiens; or York, or Cologne, but the fundamental principles of Gothic art live forever. It is the same glorious fact which weaves enchantment around every art, lifting it out of the dreary rut of the commonplace, and causing it to become a lodestar for all times.

Kretzmann published Christian Art in 1921. It probably reflected common thought on Lutheran architecture as well as promoting it.

Out of this interest in Lutheran architecture Zebaoth selected a Lutheran Architect, Ernest Weyland. In addition to his influence on the style of Zebaoth one member recalled that Mr. Brockmann also

influenced the style of church Zebaoth selected. The Gothic style with its high ceilings allowed the worshipers to enjoy the full benefit of the pipe organ as it lead them in their worship.

In short, Zebaoth built a church that expressed their faith as best they knew how. They did not do this irregardless of cost, yet their faith moved them to commit themselves to a big project that would call for sacrifice and commitment. Their faith led them the extra mile in giving God glory through their building as well as all the other aspects of their service to Christ.

Could a Zebaoth be Built Today?

The virtues of the school of thought that favored Gothic architecture could be an interesting topic of discussion with an eye toward its application toward church construction today. This would make a paper in itself. I have not chosen to draw that application or its implications on the contemporary scene. Rather we might briefly explore the possibility of building a church of the style of Zebaoth in 1981.

As has been rumored with stain glass, so also with churches like Zebaoth people concluded, "You can't build churches like that anymore! It's impossible!" If by impossible it is meant the skills of the various ecclesiastical arts that constructed the "neo-gothic" churches of the 1920's and 1930's have been lost forever, we can say that that statement has no basis. Architect Russel Zimmermann of Milwaukee is gain^{ing} a reputation for designing and building structures according to these older style, although he has not done any churches.

However, when most people make the rash statement that such a building project is impossible to mean to say it is economic^{ally}

prohibitive. Is this true or have we instead lost the will to build such churches?

First of all we need to compare costs. Although Zebaoth was to be built for \$95,000 the final cost was \$134,034.²⁰ Using this as the cost figure on the date of dedication, Oct 25, 1931 and converting it over to present dollar values we come up with a figure of approximately \$762,700.

The insurance man who handles Zebaoth's insurance on the building estimated the value of the building between \$700,000 and \$800,000 on the basis of its size, that is area and height. This includes the fastened pews and organ.

Since such insurance values do not replace the foundation, since they assume that it will remain in the case of fire or wind damage, the \$762,700 price would seem to be an accurate figure for rebuilding Zebaoth on that location if the building were destroyed. However there is one item, although covered by their insurance, that we would have to add to the rebuilding cost. This is the cost of the stained glass windows.

The stained glass windows were installed at the cost of \$8,113.45. This is equivalent to \$46,168.41 today, but replacement cost is in excess of \$182,500. Considering the cost of stained glass, the cost of replacing the rest of the building and the cost of laying the foundation a church like Zebaoth could probably be built today for \$1,150,000. This is considerably more expensive than the equivalent cost of \$762,700.

²⁰ This is the cost of building used when Zebaoth applied for a new first mortgage with Eckhardt-Peterson & Co. Inc. in Oct of 1938.

Before we jump to any conclusions by comparing these two cost figures we need to make sure that we are truly comparing like costs. While they are equal in the sense that they are based on equivalent dollars for their units there are other inequalities that need to be brought forth.

Due to OSHA standards, new building laws, fire codes and energy considerations if not codes, building an exact replic of Zebaoth would be impossible. This does not rule out building a building of this style, even with large stained glass windows and high ceilings. These energy problems can be solved with new technology.

New technology could also be used saving time and money. It is doubtful that anyone would want to use all of the techniques of 1930 in constructing a Gothic style church. The problem that any group would face in such a building project is finding an architect who is qualified and willing to implement the new techniques in a Gothic style.

A major cost savings in the initial building of Zebaoth was the availability and willingness of qualified members to assist in this project at a reduced cost. It is doubtful that many congregations would have these skills available today. And even if they did labor laws and other considerations might prevent a congregation from such cost reductions, not to mention depriving members of opportunities to give of themselves.

In recent years the cost of money (interest rates) have added significantly to building costs. While church bonds can be obtained from B. C. Ziegler of West Bend between 13.5% and 16%

plus a one-time 7% underwriting discount or commission. This is considerably higher than Zebaoth's 6% rate with a 4% commission.

The other major contributing factor to the expense of construction is the increased cost in labor. Unskilled labor has had a real increase of 425% and skilled labor an increase of about 200%. These figures however are offset to some degree by an increased use of machinery.

All of these technical and financial only serves to broaden the gap between the cost of building in 1931 and building in 1981. The interest rates of the levels we are experiencing now is the major increase. Only when it is reduced with skill and technology be able to reduce the gap.

Everything we look at seems to send the "adapated Gothic" style further and further out of the reach on the average congregation. There is one other factor that we need to consider in a feasibility study. How do the abilities to contribute toward such a project compare? In the 1929 census the average annual income for the hourly wage earners and salaried men was \$1,653.10 (\$7,004.11 in 1979 dollars). Poverty level income for 1979 was \$6,700. By our standards today Zebaoth's members for the most part were at or near poverty level.

This may seem like an insult to Zebaoth's members, but it isn't. It just shows the difference in standards of living. In 1931 when the church was built few owned a car and not even that many had radios. These Christians' needs were met and they still had money left to build a \$100,000 church. The church not only received a greater % of their income but also made up a greater part of their social life. It was a community church.

I want to make it clear that I do not wish to imply that these figures show that church people in 1931 were more sanctified and better stewards of their gifts from the Lord. I do think that it indicates a greater emphasis on going the extra set in building a beautiful house of worship that will go beyond being a nice place to worship.

Why don't we build churches like Zebaoth today? I would conclude it is a combination of these three factors.

1. Lack of architects trained and interested in this style of building.
2. The high cost of construction.
3. A lower interest and will to build "for worship" in the fullest sense of the term, as I defined it.

Appendix A

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL BUILDING COMMITTEE*

The following report in regard to the building of a new parish church is the result of an exhaustive study by this committee as to the best placement of the group on the site. It also includes many recommendations in regard to a most practical plan, finance, construction and several suggestive policies to be followed during the construction period. This report is the result of a unanimous opinion of all its members. It is their qualified recommendation to the congregation. This committee therefore requests careful consideration of all its recommendations at this meeting, since time is the essence, especially in this so important matter. The absence of adequate facilities is hampering the growth of this congregation to some extent. We therefore recommend beginning construction on this project as soon as the frost has left the ground. The report reads as follows:

1) Placement: Various arrangements as to placement on the site were considered, and after several conferences with the building inspection department in this regard, we evolved the placement diagram which accompanies this report which you will find posted on the bulletin board for your inspection. According to this placement diagram, the present parsonage will have to be moved to the south end of the premises facing east on Sixth Street. The long side of the church will extend along Melvina St. acting as a wind break to the north and west winds in the winter, also affording proper orientation to the court, parish hall and the parsonage. The present church building will have to be demolished or moved from the premises.

*Source: Zebaoth Congregational minutes, p. 136 ff.

- 2) Accomodation: After making a thorough study of the congregation's present needs and the estimated future needs we have established the following. Total seating capacity of church, 500; Sunday School capacity 450. There also is ample accomodation for entertainment, dramatical work, lectures, bazaars and banquets. The parish hall unit will have a total seating capacity for 100 on first and second floors, with additional seating capacity in the basement. The class rooms being suitable for Sunday School, Bible Class, as well as for other educational work.
- 3) The parish hall: While this committee was given instructions to study the problem of building a church only, it deemed itself essential to make a more far reaching survey, therefore have taken the liberty to include a parish hall unit in the group plan.
- 4) The plan: By reference to the floor plans on the placement diagram, all areas are designatèd by number and key to each space will be found in the schedule.
- 5) Design: We suggest that the design of the group be modern Gothic which we consider will be beautiful and fitting, both for the purpose to which it is to be put and for the setting in which it is to be placed. It shall be a true creation, symbolizing truth and simplicity. It must embody all qualities, such as great strength and vitality, yet show refinement in form and material. It shall show absolute repose indicating an assured position.
- 6) Construction: We recommend constructing all exterior walls of a good grade of face brick with a moderate use of stone trim. All brick facing is to be backed up with concrete block or some similar material. All foundation walls and first floors of church and parish hall unit to be poured concrete. The entire roof of the church shall

be supported by steel trusses, which also shall be supported by steel columns down to the foundation walls making a rigid frame, thereby expediting construction. The roofing is to be either slate, tile or asbestos shingles. The parsonage shall be brick veneered to match.

7) Proposed cost: We suggest taking separate figures on the following three units of the work. The church, the parish hall, the parsonage veneering. After thorough consideration this committee placed the maximum cost of the church unit at \$80,00.00 and the cost of construction of the parish hall and veneering of the parsonage at \$20,000.00 making a total proposed cost of \$100,000 if all units are built at one time.

8) Financial plan: We appointed a sub committee to especially survey the various ways and means of finance in vogue with other congregations of similar size. This subcommittee has submitted its report at one of our meetings which was carefully analyzed and a plan evolved applicable to our special condition. We recommend placing a first mortgage of 50% on the valuation of the project which would release approximately \$75,000. We recommend a further placing of a second trust mortgage of about \$20,999 and under it issue notes in denominations of \$50.00, \$100.00, \$200.00, and \$500.00 each, with a maturity later to be determined. A conservative estimate of our present resources and an estimate of contributions was made which we summarize as follows:

Value of real estate \$15,000
Value of parsonage \$5,000
Estimate of contributions \$5,000
Total \$25,000

The operating or maintainance cost we summarize as follows:

Interest on first mortgage 5% = \$3,750
Interest on second mortgage 5% = \$1,000

Cost of heating per season	\$800.00
Cost of electric lighting	\$150.00
Cost of water service	\$ 36.00
Cost of gas service	\$ 36.00
Cost of janitor service	\$200.00
Salary of Pastor	\$2000.00
Salary of organist	\$400.00
Total	\$8372.00

Our estimated income based on our record for the past years and taking into consideration the growth of the congregation which was conservatively placed at an increase in membership of 50% in two years. We arrived at a total estimated income of approximately \$8,500.00 which will more than cover our annual obligations. We also wish to call attention to the fact that we have not taken into account additional revenues such as from bazaars, entertainments, lectures, banquets, etc. which we considered intangibles, nevertheless we will benefit considerably from such sources.

9) The architect: We recommend that the congregation empower the permanent building committee to select an architect and engage such selected architect to prepare plans and specifications, and to take figures on all branches of work.

10) General policies: We suggest adopting the following policies throughout the progress of the work. All gifts shall conform to the architectural scheme and shall be subject to the approval of such committee appointed. The committee shall make a list of gifts varying in cost appropriate for the intended purpose. All donors shall cooperate accordingly. We also suggest to limit the bidding on the construction in the various branches to Lutheran contractors whenever possible, assuring better work and cooperation at a fair value.

11) Our petition: This committee recommends that a permanent building committee be appointed to act for the congregation in all matters during the progress of all work with full authority to engage

an architect and to have him prepare necessary plans and specifications and to have him supervise the construction as well as have him perform all the usual services incident to architectural practice. All figures shall be based on the three units and shall when obtained be opened at a regular meeting of such appointed building committee and determine the successful bidders and make such recommendations to the congregation at one of its regular meetings, When the congregation so approves the letting of the contracts, the trustee members of the building committee shall be empowered to execute the contracts and shall have full power to approve all orders for payment to the contractors in behalf of the congregation. The building committee shall report its progress from time to time, as well as report the progress of construction at each congregation meeting and at the close of all work submit a final summary of cost accounts, disbursements together with a set of final plans, and a complete record of progress for final or permanent filing. Our report is concluded and again we wish to emphasize the fact that time is the essence, for there is a dire need for more and better facilities. We therefore ask a motion be made for the acceptance in full of this report. The following have signed the original report.

H. Myrold
A.E. Breest
George Riemer
Lewis Schoenwetter
Oscar C. Abel
Emil S. Hoenig

E. Gruell
Recording Secretary

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Mrs. Eva (Christopher) Densow

Mrs. Ella Wills

Mr. Robert Reimer

Mr. William Tacke

Dr. Arthur Tacke