

St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Saginaw, MI: God's Grace in Turbulent Times

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St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Michigan has had some very turbulent yet exciting times. One of the most turbulent times was during the 1950's and 1960's. St. Paul's had its ups and downs during this time. In the minds of most of the people that were interviewed for this paper, the bad events that happened far outweighed the good in the 50's and 60's. However there were things to be thankful for. This essay is going to give a picture of some of the joys that were shared in the 50's and 60's, as well as some of the troubles that faced the congregation in the 50's and 60's. Now let's take a look at some of the exciting events, all of which point to the grace of God, in the 50's and 60's at St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church.

The first major event that we will take a look at is a joyous one indeed. In 1951, St. Paul's was able to enjoy the celebration of the centennial of the congregation. Records from this time are sketchy. Also, very few people are alive that remember this vividly. But, just because the records are sketchy doesn't mean it wasn't something to be thankful about. St. Paul's members celebrated the centennial for one week, from November 25th to December 2nd. The week started with a special church service on Sunday. It was a big enough event to make it into the local newspaper. "St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Court and Bond, will open observance of its 100th anniversary Sunday with special services.... Other events are scheduled during centennial week to be climaxed by a centennial concert on Dec. 2."¹

The sermon and prayers gave thanks to God that he had preserved St. Paul's for one hundred years. The people of the congregation were very thankful that God had shown his grace to them by allowing them to grow from a very small congregation into a very sizable one. The

¹"St. Paul's Lutheran To Mark Anniversary With Special Events" Saginaw News. 25 November 1951, p27.

sermon and prayers also focused on God's continued guidance in the future. It is certain that without God's guidance the congregation would cease to be a Christ centered-congregation as it had been. Therefore the people asked God to continue to guide them with his grace.

During the week that followed there were various activities which people could participate in to help them express their joy in celebrating God's grace over the past one hundred years. Records concerning the centennial celebration from this time are sketchy at best. The only records come from the Ladies Aid meeting minutes, a small booklet that was printed at the time of the centennial, and newspaper articles. The Ladies Aid meeting minutes simply tell about the dinner that was served. The small booklet gives some of the history of the congregation as well as the activities which happened the week of the celebration. The newspaper articles cover some of the things that happened the week of the celebration.

On Monday of centennial week there was a musical program put on by the children of the congregation. "An unusual feature of Monday's musical program by children of the day school and Sunday school, will be the singing of four centennial hymns composed by St. Paul's pastor, Rev. O. J. Eckert."²

"Another service is set for 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Rev. Henry Pussehl, of Wrightstown, Wis., will be guest speaker. On Friday at the same time Rev. K. E. Verts,² of Owosso, will be the speaker. Both these services will be in English and the choir, directed by Edgar Backer, will provide special music."³

"Closing out the centennial week will be services and a choir concert on Sunday, Dec. 2.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Rev. A. F. Westendorf, former pastor at St. Paul's, will speak at 9 a.m. German and 10:30 a.m. English services. A centennial dinner will be served by the church women."⁴

What a joyful week of joining together to hear the Word of God and celebrate his grace over a period of 100 years. Along with the church services we see that there were other special things such as a music program and a dinner. This banquet was prepared by the Ladies Aid of the congregation. The Ladies Aid had this to say about the centennial celebration. "One outstanding event which took place in the history of St. Paul's church was its centennial celebration which took place the later part of Nov. to Dec 2. 1951. This celebration wound up with our Centennial Dinner served by the Ladies Aid on Dec. 2."⁵

The only two reliable sources for this centennial celebration are the newspaper article and the Ladies Aid Journal. From interviews the only responses I got were "My memory of that is really quite limited"⁶ and, about the dinner, "I'm sure there was."⁷ Werner Rosenbaum was in college at the time and therefore was not directly involved with the centennial celebration. Eugene Schreyer did not have much to say about the centennial. In total, I interviewed Eugene Schreyer, Werner Rosenbaum, John Brenner, Milton Spaude, Ed Fredrich, and Doug Stindt. Some of the people I interviewed for this paper did not have anything to say on the specific topics covered, so they are not listed in the bibliography. However the people that are quoted in the paper did have some good insights on many of the main things that happened in the 50's and 60's.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ladies Aid Journal. St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Saginaw MI.

⁶Mr. Werner Rosenbaum. from interview.

⁷Mr. Eugene Schreyer, from interview.

From what the newspaper article said and from the Ladies Aid meeting minutes one gets the impression that it certainly was a joyful event. Certainly the people had much reason to be joyful and give thanks to God.

In fact, the congregation would continue to have things to give thanks about. The next major thing that happened in the 1950's was the question of what to do with the old school and its property. The reason they had to do this was twofold. Firstly, the school was falling into a bad state of disrepair. Secondly, ~~the size of~~ the student body had simply outgrown the old facility. The second reason listed is certainly cause for joy and thanks.

Records for this event are much better because it happened after 1955. After 1955 the church started keeping voter's meeting minutes. Also, after 1959, there are council meeting minutes available. Therefore the question of what to do with one of the parsonages, the old school building and its property are much better documented.

The old school was in great need of renovation. In fact, it was so out of date and in such a state of disrepair that the whole school would have needed a complete restoration. So the question was raised, what do we do? Do we restore the school or do we build a new one? If we restore it, how much will it cost? Also, will the old school continue to meet the needs of the congregation? If not, what size school do we need to build? If we do build a new school, where will we build it? These are just some of the many questions that were raised. These questions started to be raised around 1955-56.

This was a period of change for St. Paul's church and school, not so much because the congregation was growing by leaps and bounds, ~~at the present time~~, but simply that things were getting old. The congregation had grown significantly since the early part of the century when its

facilities were built. The number of church members and school children had started to outgrow the old facilities. Therefore the voters of the congregation had to decide how to proceed into the second half of the 20th century.

The first questions that were answered were the ones concerning whether to keep the old school or to build a new one. The final decision was to build a new school on a new property. Now the problem was what to do with the old school building, the parsonage, a teacherage and the old property. This property was on the corner of Harrison and Ames. The decision was to sell all of them as a unit instead of splitting them up and selling them separately. Eventually they were sold as a unit. The buildings were then renovated and turned into apartment buildings.⁸ Now thoughts turned toward building the new school and where to get the property from.

The first order of business was to get land to put the new school on. The church bought a large portion of land from Mr. Pussehl. Much of the rest of the land was simply donated by members of St. Paul's who lived on Bay Street near the location of the new school. "The biggest piece of that property came to us through Harold Pussehl. It was out in nowhere. He sold it at a very reasonable price. That's how, really, the school was positioned where it is today. They deeded parts of their property to us. They just gave it. [the members of St. Paul's who lived on Bay Street in the area of the new school]."⁹ The decision to build the school at this location was a while coming. At the time that St. Paul's was thinking about purchasing land, Genesee Street did not go all the way through to Bay Street. "The School Building Committee reported on the

⁸Mr Werner Rosenbaum, from interview.

⁹Ibid.

progress of the extension of West Genesee Street."¹⁰ Therefore, at the time, the voters were not sure if it was a good idea to plan for the new school building in such a remote location. At the next meeting the voters "moved and adopted that we ask the Building committee to petition the City Council to extend West Genesee St. ^{for} enough to enable us to gain access to our school property."¹¹ Because of the problem with the intersection of Genesee and Bay Streets, the plans to build the new school were put on hold for some time.

In 1956, the plans for the new school started to move ahead once again. The Building Committee and an architect drew up a budget for the new school. This budget was then presented to the voters. "A revised report was given concerning the cost of our new school. According to this report, the cost will be approximately \$320,000. This report was given by the Building Committee and the architect."¹² This then was talked about for a couple of years, while the Board of Trustees worked with the City of Saginaw to get the details ironed out.

Finally, in 1958, the building program was able to move forward again. The plans for the new school had finally been drawn up and bidding could now begin. It was "Moved and adopted we accept the plans for the new school building as submitted to the School Building Committee so they may be released for bidding purposes."¹³

By the end of 1958, the need for a new school building was really becoming urgent as expressed by Mr. Backer. "Mr Backer gave his school report and indicated that it was important

¹⁰Voter's meeting minutes; January 16, 1955.

¹¹Voter's meeting minutes; April 17, 1955.

¹²Voter's meeting minutes; November 4, 1956.

¹³Voter's meeting minutes; April 13, 1958.

to have the new school building project begin as soon as possible."¹⁴

Work, by the church in organizing and planning the new school was going as planned and "On Sunday, April 26, 1959, at 2:00 P.M. a large number of the members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Saginaw, Michigan, assembled at their new school building site on the recently opened extension of West Genesee between Bay and Brenner, to witness the ground-breaking ceremonies for their new school."¹⁵ What a joyful event. It certainly could not have been realized without God's guiding hand. Once again God was showing St. Paul's his grace in turbulent times.

However, growing tensions about the intersynodical situation, that is the situation of fellowship between Wisconsin Synod and Missouri Synod, were starting to surface. The building of the new school was almost postponed for a while as we see here. "The purpose of the meeting was stated by the chairman by asking the secretary to read the motion that was tabled from the October 12, 1958 meeting. This motion read 'that we table the motion 'that we delay our building program until October, 1959, because of the differences in thing and opinions relative to the intersynodical situation' to a special meeting to be held on October 26 at 2 P.M."¹⁶ Although this tabled motion was defeated and the building program was allowed to continue, events within the next year would delay the building program.

In the years between the planning of the school building project and its dedication, St. Paul's faced one of its darker hours. The situation I am about to talk about is a very touchy subject. Many people still do not want to talk about it, even after all of these years. The facts and

¹⁴Voter's meeting minutes; October 12, 1958.

¹⁵Northwestern Lutheran; July 19, 1959; p 235.

¹⁶Voter's meeting minutes; October 26, 1958.

opinions which will be included in this paper concerning this topic are taken from voter's meeting minutes, council minutes and interviews. The minutes which talk about this topic simply give the facts. The interviews will help to clue us into the feelings of the people involved. Now we get to the topic: the termination of the call of Pastor Otto J. Eckert at St. Paul's.

Pastor Eckert had served the congregation faithfully since 1939. However in the decade or so before his release from service he had begun to focus more and more on the growing problems in the Missouri Synod. In fact, for the five or so years before St. Paul's finally voted to terminate his call, Pastor Eckert preached consistently from Sunday to Sunday against Wisconsin Synod's (WELS) fellowship with the Missouri Synod (LCMS). The congregation was growing aware of the problems with the LCMS. They were discussing the intersynodical situation already in 1955. "A discussion on inter-synodical relations followed."¹⁷ As it turned out he was correct in what he was talking about. For the Wisconsin Synod did break with Missouri Synod in 1961. However, the way that he handled the situation was problematic. He worked into every one of his sermons something concerning problems about the WELS fellowship with the LCMS. Also, two years before the WELS broke with LCMS he insisted that WELS break fellowship. From that point on he insisted that the WELS was sinning in its fellowship with LCMS. For a year before the termination of his call, he insisted that St. Paul's was sinning in its fellowship with WELS because of its stance with LCMS.

Finally, this situation with Pastor Eckert came down to a questionnaire given to him by the Board of Trustees of St. Paul's. However, even this questionnaire was controversial as can be seen by this statement, "A letter of protest from the Board of Elders was read and filed with the

¹⁷Voter's meeting minutes; July 10, 1955.

secretary that protested the action of the Chairman and Board of Trustees of St. Paul's Congregation ... Discussion was held concerning the letter of the Board of Elders. The chairman held the letter out of order ... Pastor Eckert also held this to be proper procedure."¹⁸ In this questionnaire the Board of Trustees asked Pastor Eckert what his stance was concerning the position of the WELS and its fellowship with LCMS. The Board also asked him what his stance was concerning the position of St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church and its fellowship with the WELS. Pastor Eckert stated clearly that he felt that both organizations were out of line in their dealings.

The people that I interviewed concerning this situation felt that the situation was handled properly. They felt that the WELS and St. Paul's congregation acted appropriately in dealing with Pastor Eckert's position against the course of action the WELS was taking. Information regarding this matter in the minutes of the voter's assembly show that the situation was handled in an orderly way. No one who was involved in the situation was left in the dark. This can be seen from these words, "In addition to further arguments presented by the 2 pastors of St. Paul's for their respective cases remarks also were presented on behalf of our Synod's current stand with Missouri Synod by Pastor Conrad Frey, Pastor Press, Pastor O. J. Hoenecke, Pastor Schulz and Pastor Martin Toepel."¹⁹ After all of these presentations were made the congregation voted on whether St. Paul's should endorse the position of the WELS or if it should endorse the position that Pastor O. J. Eckert was holding to, namely that "my protest is presented on the basis that the

¹⁸Church Board meeting minutes; September 9, 1959.

¹⁹Voter's meeting minutes; October 4, 1959.

course our Synod is pursuing is unscriptural."²⁰ The ballot was held. The result was "(92 yes, 6 no, 3 blank) that St. Paul's Congregation endorse the Wisconsin Synod's action taken"²¹, namely that WELS remain in fellowship with LCMS at this time. St. Paul's did not feel that the WELS was following an unscriptural path in dealing with LCMS as Pastor Eckert did.

Pastor Eckert was given three weeks to retract his statements concerning the course that the WELS was following and his position on the current standing of St. Paul's congregation with the WELS. On October 25, 1959 the recessed meeting of October 4, 1959 was called to order. At this meeting "Rev. Eckert was asked whether or not he had retracted his statements that St. Paul's Congregation and the Wisconsin Synod are unscriptural. He indicated by a 'No' answer that he had not retracted his statements."²² Thus "it was moved that inasmuch Pastor Eckert had not changed his charge that the Wisconsin Synod and St. Paul's Congregation are unscriptural in its dealings with Missouri Synod, and since St. Paul's Congregation has affirmed that its action are scriptural that Rev. Eckert be relieved of his duties at St. Paul's as of this date, October 25, 1959. The results of the ballot vote on this motion were 75 Yes, 21 No, 7 neutral, 3 not voting. The motion passed and was adopted that Rev Eckert be relieved of his duties at St. Paul's as of October 25, 1959."²³

This was a hard time for all of the people involved. There were many hard feelings

²⁰Document presented by Pastor Otto J. Eckert at Regular Meeting of Church Board; September 1, 1959.

²¹Voter's meeting minutes; October 4, 1959.

²²Voter's meeting minutes; October 25, 1959.

²³Ibid.

because of this situation. St. Paul's congregation and Pastor Gensmer did what they could to smooth out the situation. It was "moved and adopted that Pastor Gensmer and the secretary draw up a letter regretting the action taken on the release of Rev. Eckert and thanking him for his past faithful service."²⁴ The congregation relieved Pastor Eckert of his duties at St. Paul's because of his doctrinal position concerning fellowship, not because they didn't like him. They were happy for his faithful service and were deeply sorry for the step that they had to take. The fact that the congregation and Pastor Gensmer were upset by the course of action that had to be taken can be seen from such quotations as this, "I ... believe that it [the release of Pastor Eckert] should be viewed only in the light of the basic facts involved and not in the light of personal emotion and sentiment. It was a very drastic and extreme action which has caused a deep wound in the heart of each and every one of us - a wound which only time can heal."²⁵ Another statement concerning this matter was put into the church bulletin the Sunday after the meeting at which Pastor Eckert was released. It said, concerning the release, "This motion passed by a vote of 75 to 21 with 7 abstentions. Words fail us with which to express our regret that this step became necessary."²⁶

Feelings ran very deep over this subject. There was a great deal of sadness concerning this situation. In fact, not all people who knew about this situation felt that it was even handled correctly. In general the people that I interviewed felt that it was handled correctly. However, as can be seen by this statement received in a letter to the Church Board of St. Paul's, not everyone agreed. "We have seen the official notice given to Pastor Eckert, stating the reason for

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Document from Pastor Gensmer to the Congregation; November 1959.

²⁶Announcement in Church Bulletin for the Sunday of November 2, 1959.

terminating his pastorate, and we fail to find any scriptural justification therefore. Hence that troubles us greatly. We stand ready to discuss the entire matter with you in the light of God's Word ... Sincerely yours, Pastors Theo. J. Horneber, Leroy H. Lothert, M. C. Schroeder, and Hilmer Eckert.¹²⁷

After Pastor Eckert left St. Paul's he founded a CLC (Church of the Lutheran Confessions) Church in Saginaw, MI. This congregation, Gethsemane Lutheran Church still exists today. There were about 25 families that also split from St. Paul's to form Gethsemane with Pastor Eckert. This splitting is what led to many of the hard and hurt feelings of people on both sides of the split.

This entire situation of Pastor Eckert's call at St. Paul's and his subsequent founding of a CLC (Church of the Lutheran Confessions) congregation was a greatly talked about subject in Saginaw. It was so big, in fact, that it made it into the Saginaw News newspaper. One newspaper article had this to say, "Gethsemane Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saginaw -- the congregation formed from a splinter of St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Court and Bond) -- has more than doubled its membership since it was organized in November.... The congregation was organized by 14 voting members of St. Paul's Lutheran who remained with Rev. Mr. Eckert when he was released from the St. Paul's pastorate after 30 years of service."²⁸ There were a number of articles in 1959-60 about what was happening at St. Paul's. This was a very unfortunate incident.

The people that I interviewed had a great deal to say about the Eckert situation. Milton Spaude said, There was a "loss of about 100 members and there were some hard feelings. It was

²⁷Church Board meeting minutes; January 5, 1960.

²⁸The Saginaw News, "Membership On Increase." December 15, 1959.

a tough time. Pastor Eckert used to bring it up again and again in sermon after sermon after sermon, this idea of breaking fellowship with Missouri and unionism. Just about every sermon had something about unionism in it... A lot of people just got fed up with it. Finally it got to the point where the Church Council took him to task. '51 or '52 in there, Pastor Eckert preached this way."²⁹ When asked if the situation was handled properly, Milt said, "I think as a general statement. Some thought that Eckert got the short end of the stick. The congregation was falling apart you might say."³⁰

Werner Rosenbaum said, "Pastor Eckert objected to the way our church body was going about it. 'We have to get out of there right now.' (Quoting Pastor Eckert) I personally felt that the whole situation was handled effectively, ... and I think it was done fairly. He was a good pastor, I don't think that anyone would ever dispute that. He was a very dedicated person. He was also very determined. His big hangup was with scouting. I don't think he ever really explained that to people; what is wrong with the scouting movement. He never really expressed himself about this situation. The whole thing was handled fairly. There were a lot of words exchanged there, quite bitter words at times."³¹ As an example of some of the conversations that went on at the meetings he said, "What are you going to do? You have to take your stand elsewhere and leave us because we're not going to differ from what synod is doing. We're going to stay with them because that is what they feel the best thing to do is. Most of it was done on a less formal basis (dealing with Eckert). Those were tough times. We lost a number of people. In

²⁹Mr. Milton Spaude, from interview.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Mr. Werner Rosenbaum, from interview.

my opinion, and other^s I have spoken with over the years agree, in some ways that it really was a blessing for people that left as well as our own church. Some of those that left were very marginal church members. But they became stronger because they had to. [It was a] blessing for both parties as it turned out. [In] my own opinion, I feel that most of those people that left that time really were not caught up in the Missouri and Wisconsin thing,... they left because of pastor Eckert. It was their allegiance to him that took them away from St. Paul's."³²

Doug Stindt said, "Synod went a little bit off on a tangent in his [Pastor Eckert's] mind, staying with Missouri Synod. Wisconsin Synod stayed with them as a brother should. As Wisconsin Synod stayed with Missouri, Eckert was saying we should cut, break. We've got to break. We are living in sin by not breaking with them because we are in fellowship with someone who is not staying true to the Bible. It would have been fine if it would have just been his opinion, but it was his belief. He says I believe. This is my belief. We are sinners. We are living in sin. If he had said, 'This is my opinion,' we could have lived with that. But it was his belief and he preached that. Finally it just got to a head. One guy got up [at the voter's meeting] and said, 'As far as I am concerned you can no longer be my pastor.' That hurt. That hurt me and I was sitting in the back. It was sad, but it had to be done. He couldn't preach when he thought it [our Synod] was wrong."³³ When asked whether the situation was handled properly, Mr. Stindt replied, "Oh yeah. Nobody wanted to kick him out, but it had to be done. He was given every opportunity."³⁴

³²Ibid.

³³Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

³⁴Ibid.

Mr. Schreyer said, "Pastor Gensmer's personality clashed with Eckert's", but he also said, "I felt the situation was handled OK." Eugene also backed up what others had said about the reason that people left with Pastor Eckert. He said they left "mainly for personal reasons."³⁵ Yet it didn't sound like Mr. Schreyer was implying that it was because of personality clash that Pastor Eckert's call was terminated.

Even two years after the incident had taken place, there were still people who were upset with the way Pastor Eckert's call was terminated. An example of this can be found in the Church Board minutes. "It was moved and adopted that we release ... at their reason `because of the unconstitutional and unscriptural termination of Pastor Eckert's ministry in St. Paul's and the violation of principles involved therein."³⁶ There were certainly people who felt that Pastor Eckert got the short end of the stick. My opinion from the facts gathered is that it was a very sad and unfortunate step, but one that needed to be taken. Even in such a dark situation we see God's guiding hand, in the fact that St. Paul's wasn't completely torn apart and abandoned as a congregation. God held St. Paul's together with his Word of grace.

After the situation with Pastor Eckert, two things were in the works at St. Paul's. One of those things was that St. Paul's continued to grow and once again needed to move on with the business of building the new school. The second was the need for another pastor.

The finding of land and the drawing up of prints, even the ground-breaking had been done before Pastor Eckert left St. Paul's. Now the builder's simply needed to finish building the school.

Work went as scheduled with very little changes made to the original architectural prints.

³⁵Mr. Eugene Schreyer, from interview.

³⁶Church Board meeting minutes; September 5, 1961.

On June 12, 1960 the new school building was dedicated at a special service.³⁷ Even with all of the things that had happened in the last year, God saw to it that Christian education of the young people at St. Paul's could go on. God blessed the efforts of the congregation and made it possible to accommodate even more children with the new facilities. Thanks be to God.

The major reason for the building of the new school was simply to replace the old outdated facilities. Some may think that the new school had to be built because there were a lot of new members being added to the church, thus causing enrollment to increase. That simply was not the case. Numbers show that the size of the congregation and the number of children enrolled in the school stayed fairly constant throughout the two decades being covered in this thesis.

Milton Spaude also commented on this topic. He said, "It was a dead congregation. Confirm, preach, baptize and bury. He was a faithful worker. He was difficult to speak with. Not an outgoing person [speaking of Pastor Gensmer], but still a good pastor, faithful."³⁸ When asked about the spirit of the church during the 50's and 60's Milton said, "They didn't do much at all as far as outreach."³⁹ Doug Stindt said, "It was an old congregation. 60's started building up. Then in the 70's it really started going to town.[as far as the younger population of the congregation] Oh yeah, [very education oriented congregation]"⁴⁰ Mr. Rosenbaum said, "I think the 60's pretty well completed our transition from like a 3 or 4 teacher school to what we have

³⁷Dedication Program Folder from Dedication Service of June 12, 1960.

³⁸Mr. Milton Spaude, from interview.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

today. We have a teacher for every grade."⁴¹

There were also four daughter congregations started by St. Paul's, most of them before Pastor Eckert was released from St. Paul's. Doug Stindt talked about one of the congregations, Bethany. "St. Paul's had said, good then the people will go to that church. It didn't work out that way. Some of the people didn't want to be told that they were leaving St. Paul's and going to Bethany, so the people who were more or less promised to Bethany didn't all go."⁴² (Still some animosity today according to Mr. Stindt.) When looking at St. Paul's today, one can still see the results of all of this. The four daughter congregations are relatively small, while St. Paul's is still gigantic. In my opinion, which I share with some of the people I talked to, it stayed this way because St. Paul's had the better facilities, so people wanted to stay with St. Paul's. One example of this Mr. Stindt pointed out. He said, "Bethany started their school because their people were always going over to St. Paul's. So they figured if they'd start their own school maybe the people would come to Bethany."⁴³ Mr. Schreyer also talked about it. He made mention of the fact that "Bethany Lutheran Church was Pastor Eckert Jr.'s work."⁴⁴

The second thing that we will look at is the need for another pastor. What should St. Paul's do? They resolved that they should seek permanent pastoral assistance, "either in the way of an assistant pastor, associate pastor or vicar."⁴⁵ In the meantime, St. Paul's extended a call to

⁴¹Mr. Werner Rosenbaum, from interview.

⁴²Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Mr. Eugene Schreyer, from interview.

⁴⁵Church Board meeting minutes; January 5, 1960.

Milton Spaude from Michigan Lutheran Seminary to be a preaching assistant. He accepted this call and assisted Pastor Gensmer until permanent help was received.

For a couple of years St. Paul's had been calling for an assistant pastor. All of the calls that had been sent were declined. After lengthy discussion at a voter's meeting in 1961, the congregation decided to call for an associate pastor instead of an assistant pastor. Also at this meeting the congregation decided to put in the call the same salary that they were presently giving Pastor Gensmer and instead of housing allowance, that the new pastor would be furnished with a parsonage.⁴⁶ This call also was turned down. In a special meeting of February 14, 1961, the voters decided to try one last time to call an assistant pastor under the terms for an assistant pastor and that if this call was declined they would call for a vicar. The reason that St. Paul's continued calling for an assistant pastor as opposed to an associate pastor was because of how Pastor Gensmer felt. "We had a pastor then who didn't want to be an associate cause he had been here that long. Very much (strong willed). He was a good pastor. I liked him. He was difficult to get along with when he wanted his way."⁴⁷

During this time of searching for another pastor, other things were changing at St. Paul's. Up until 1960 the congregation had been having regular German services the third and fifth Sunday of every month. Then the services were cut back to just the fifth Sunday on the month when there would be a fifth Sunday. Now in April of 1961, they "moved and adopted on the recommendation of the Church Board that German Services be continued for the duration of this

⁴⁶Voter's meeting minutes; January 4, 1961.

⁴⁷Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

year of 1961. No regular German Services [were] to be conducted after January 1, 1962."⁴⁸ At least that was the intention of the voters. However in 1962, a member of St. Paul's requested that the German services continue. "A lengthy discussion was held in connection with Mr. Pfeifer's request to have German services. The motion was made and carried to have a German service with communion once a month."⁴⁹

While the state of the German services was up in the air, the pastoral staff at St. Paul's was changing as well. At the congregational meeting of July 9, 1961 "a welcome was extended to Vicar Daniel Jungkuntz at his attendance at his first Congregational Meeting."⁵⁰ It is apparent from this statement that the last call for an assistant pastor had been declined. Therefore, St. Paul's put in an application for assignment of a vicar and in this way were able to obtain pastoral help. Vicar Jungkuntz was the only vicar that St. Paul's ever had. After his year of vicaring, St. Paul's asked the Assignment Committee to assign Vicar Jungkuntz as assistant pastor to St. Paul's. He was then assigned as assistant pastor by the Assignment Committee. I interviewed Milton Spaude concerning the calling of additional pastoral assistance. He said, "I don't think it was a big issue at all. If he were a vicar he would be the only one.[Vicar Jungkuntz]"⁵¹ Doug Stindt said, "I think so", when asked if Vicar Jungkuntz was the only vicar. He also said, "It just didn't work out. The next one was an associate."⁵² And Werner Rosenbaum adds, "I don't think

⁴⁸Voter's meeting minutes; April 9, 1961.

⁴⁹Voter's meeting minutes; January 21, 1962.

⁵⁰Voter's meeting minutes; July 9, 1961.

⁵¹Mr. Milton Spaude, from interview.

⁵²Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

it was more than a year or so that he was with us as a pastor. Then he left us because he did not agree with our philosophy [concerning MO Synod]."⁵³ Also the Regular Church Board makes mention of their only vicar in some of their minutes. "Pastor Gensmer noted that our Vicar, Daniel Jungkuntz, would be installed in the 10:30 a.m. Service on June 11, 1961."⁵⁴ Again Mr. Stindt said, "Dan didn't really know if he wanted to be a pastor. He was here two years. Then he went back. Now I heard he's not even in the ministry. He didn't know what Synod he wanted to be in either (Missouri or WELS). Real nice guy, but he was just unsettled."⁵⁵ So things didn't work out with a vicar, but after the 60's there was no need for vicars due to the availability of pastors at St. Paul's. God's grace continued to guide the church.

The last major event that took place in the years between 1951 and 1970 was the renovation and rededication of the church building. The church building at this time had been around since 1921. This was the second church building that the congregation at St. Paul's had used. The first church building had burned to the ground in 1919. The only things that were saved from the fire were the two high backed chairs which the pastors sit on at the front of church and a couple of candle holders. The high backed chairs have since been reupholstered and are still in use today at St. Paul's. The church building that was built then, after the fire, was now in need of quite a bit of renovating. Thus in 1968, the question was brought to the voters as to what should be done with the church. "This special meeting was called open to all members of the congregation for the purpose of determining whether to refurbish our present church or to build a

⁵³Mr. Werner Rosenbaum, from interview.

⁵⁴Church Board meeting minutes; June 6 1961.

⁵⁵Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

new church on the school property."⁵⁶ At the next meeting on October 13, 1968 "the motion was made and seconded that we refurbish our present church. The motion carried by a vote of 42 to 11."⁵⁷ Apparently it was certainly in need of renovation from what Doug Stindt said. "It was a dingy looking place. The balcony had no carpeting at all. It was very noisy."⁵⁸

The renovation was relatively major. The people who undertook this task did a very thorough job. They took out all of the pews and the carpet. They added dimmers to the lights that hang from the ceiling. Along with these things they repainted the inside of the church. Then they put the pews back in and replaced the carpeting. Also included in the refurbishing was a repaving of the parking lot at the church building site, a cleaning of all the stone at the church, a putting in of rear entrance and rear stairs as well as work on the front stairs, a refinishing of the pews, electrical work and even an exhaust fan for the church.⁵⁹

When the renovation was complete, the church decided to rededicate the church building and the congregation to the Lord. Thus a special service was held at which this was done. The people attending this service were well pleased with the renovation that had taken place. They were pleased to thank God for his continued kindness and grace for St. Paul's.

Finally at the end of the 1960's, God saw fit to bless St. Paul's with an end to the problem of pastoral assistance for the congregation. In 1969, Pastor Duane Tomhave was called. He accepted the call and became a permanent associate pastor at St. Paul's. "I always remember

⁵⁶Voter's meeting minutes; September 22, 1968.

⁵⁷Voter's meeting minutes; October 13, 1968.

⁵⁸Mr. Doug Stindt, from interview.

⁵⁹Voter's meeting minutes; January 19, 1969.

Tom have coming because he came in the year we were renovating our church... He was actually installed in our school building because the church was torn apart when he came. He was installed the day we landed on the moon. After that, we again had a succession of pastors. We didn't have a vacant pulpit."⁶⁰ With his coming, a new age of outreach as well as nurture began. St. Paul's congregation could now continue with its purpose of bringing God's Word to needy souls. Once again God's grace is shown in abundance.

We can see that these two decades of history at St. Paul's opened and closed with joyous events. Unfortunately the most major event of the two decades was a tragedy which overshadowed the joyous events even to this day. When asked what is the thing that people remember most about the 50's and 60's at St. Paul's, invariably the answer will be the leaving of Pastor Eckert from St. Paul's. Even with this tragedy, though, St. Paul's remains a vital part of God's kingdom and work in the Saginaw area. God still continues to guide this church with his loving hand. Let us pray that St. Paul's continues to rely on the guidance of God and his Word forever.

⁶⁰Mr. Werner Rosenbaum, from interview.

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