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Church History

THE MISSION HISTORY OF ST. JAMES EVANGELICAL CHURCH, 2028 N. 60th.
Milwaukee, WI.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

The history of St. James Evangelical Lutheran church begins when the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, at its annual meeting in 1916, strongly urged that a mission be established between Washington Park and the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary located at the corner of North 60th and West Lloyd Streets. The mission board, consisting of Rev. Emil Schultz, Rev. Herman Ebert, Rev. A. C. Bendler and Rev. Herman Knuth, decided to canvass the area for a suitable location. But the only land which could be found was land that was already occupied by the St. James mission of the General Council. This chapel was located on the corner of 54th and Pabst Ave. The chapel was of such a nature that it could be moved if it became necessary to do so.

It was learned , however, that the General Council was thinking of selling the mission property because the work there was producing no fruit. The result of this was that the Mission Board approached the General Council on the possibility of buying this chapel. The information which the Mission board had received was accurate because on January 13th 1917 the transfer of property was completed and the Wisconsin Synod had a mission station for the price of \$5,109.70.

That first mission station was served by Rev. Emil Schultz. Sunday school classes were started on January 14, 1917 and regular services began just one week later on January 21. But, some of the same problems that forced the General Council to give up its station there soon began to rear there head at this new congregation. Just as before, it seemed that this little congregation was not growing and there was no apparent growth. Therefore, the

Mission Board decided to sell this little piece of land back to the General Council. And so the wheels were set in motion to sell this station back again to the people who once before had been unsuccessful. This idea was not shared by everyone on the Mission Board however. Rev. Knuth thought this would be a mistake and an act of ^{d's} unloyalty to the members of the Sunday school and those who regularly attended services there. Rev. Knuth discussed the matter with Prof. August Pieper of the Seminary, and ^{it} was ~~agreed~~ that Prof. Pieper hold services at the chapel as the sale had not yet been finalized. Prof. Pieper, with the aid of several seminary students, held services at the Mission Station and with God's blessings, their work bore fruit and the numbers increased and there were a total of 42 Sunday school children enrolled in Sunday school.

It is not immediately clear from the records, but it is stated that the mission station had to move. Just why this move had to take place is unclear, but the move was made. And so, with the aid of Rev. Knuth, St. James was moved from its location at 54th and Pabst to the triangle north of the Seminary. This move apparently took place in the fall of 1920. It now seemed that this would be the permanent place for St. James, but as we will see later, another move would soon have to be considered. All the while that St. James was located at this property, the Lord once again blessed his church. Membership increased, English services as well as the standard German services were being conducted. Professors Meyer and Henkel assisted the young flock in preaching and other duties. ~~A~~ Also, since the Seminary was so close, there was an ample supply of students to help.

Due to God's gracious hand there soon was ^{ere} enough people attending St. James so that a congregation could be formed. And so, on May 29, 1921 the orginzation took place with eight voting members present. At first it once again seemed that St. James was in a posistion to receive many blessings, for ~~the~~ area surrounding the mission station was being settled rapidly. But, some problems began to come on the scene. It is somewhat hard to believe, but opposistion to the little flock came from within the Synod. It seems that ~~the~~ some of the people in the Synod thought that the mission congregation was a detriment to some of the already existing congregations in the area. Thankfully, when it was noted that there was much growth taking place, the opposistion subsided.

The second problem that arrived on the scene was that representatives of the Pabst Estate claimed that the triangle on which the chapel stood was part of the Pabst Estate. The members of the Estate demanded that the chapel be moved, so the members of the council had to react quickly. It came about that a piece of land was available at a ^{site} ~~sight~~ that was just east of the Seminary itself. Arrangements were made to buy 120 feet of land at \$25.00 per foot. And so the deal went through and the chapel was moved to its permanent position on 60th street.

Again God blessed St. James and it soon became apparent that a full time pastor would have to be called. With the help of the District Mission Board, St. James called Arthur Paul Voss who accepted the call. He was ordained and installed on November 27, 1921. Pastor Voss preached his first sermon on December 4, 1921. Through his faithful work, especially with the youth, St. James continued

to experience growth. At this point it was the concern of all that St. James do what it could to see about beginning a school. They believed that the children should be trained in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Pastor Voss was perfect for this task for he had experience as a school teacher, and was willing to conduct the school. This is to the credit of Pastor Voss that he would consider doing this along with his pastoral duties. With this kind of support, a committee was put together in the summer of 1922 to consider an addition to the chapel because the building could not serve both purposes. It is interesting to note that this was a building that was not built by contractors, but was put up over the summer by Prof. Pieper and a number of seminary students. The building itself was 16ft. by 24ft. with a 10ft. ceiling and could accommodate 20-24 students. It cost the staggering amount of \$204.44. Dedication services were held on Dec. 10, 1922, with Prof. Pieper preaching in the German service and Prof. Meyer preaching in the English.

The school itself began its term on Feb. 23 with 3 boys being taught by the pastor. But, due to the work of pastor Voss, the enrollment soon jumped to 21 students. This of course, was a source of great joy to the members of the congregation, especially to those who had contributed their hard-earned dollars for the building of the little school house.

By 1924 the membership of the church had increased to 25 families, and for the first time, the church could pay a salary of \$250.00 toward the pastor's expenses. This was not the only blessing which came upon the church, because the enrollment of the

school had gone up to 24 students. As a result, the Mission Board authorized the calling of a teacher to assist the pastor in the ^{training} ~~training~~ of the children. The teacher was to take grades 1-4. In 1924, the school was able to have its first full time teacher teach at the school.

With the increasing membership, it soon became apparent that the little chapel building would no longer serve the purposes of St. James. In order to build a new church, it would become necessary to purchase more land than what they now had for the chapel. The solution was to buy 160 ft. of continuous frontage for \$2000.00. For the purchasing of the land and the building of the new church, help was received from other congregations in the area. One such example of this is contained in the records where it is recorded that St. Marcus congregation donated the sum of \$255.60 toward the building of the new church. On August 13, 1924 St. James decided to go ahead with the building of a new church in the "Flagg style". The church was to be 85ft. long and 65ft. wide, and have an estimated cost of \$22,000. On October 19, 1924 the ^{coner-} ~~coner-~~ stone was laid and construction proceeded during the winter months.

On May 17, 1925 dedication of the new church took place with a program of three services. The ~~serv~~ices were held at three different times of the day. There were two German services, and one English service which was held ¹⁴ ~~during~~ the evening ~~service~~. In every case, pastors from the surrounding congregations took part in the dedication.

In 1927 the congregation had its first opportunity to secure a pipe organ. The organ was being made available ^{by} ~~from~~ of all

places, a Jewish temple. The Jewish congregation B'ne Jesurun had to move because the site on which they were located, on 10th and Kilbourn, had just been sold to the county so that at that site, construction of the new Milwaukee County Court House was to begin. On Dec. 14, 1927, at a special voters meeting, it was resolved to ~~the~~^{buy} that organ for a cost of \$1,700. The organ itself dated back to 1872. One of the conditions of the sale however, was that St. James had to remove the organ from the temple. The responsibility for this task was turned over to Prof. Voss. In order to do this difficult task of dismantling the organ and bringing it over to St. James, seminary students were hired at a cost of \$50 per hour. The task itself must have been a rather time consuming one, because the records show that it took until January 1929 before the organ committee was discharged of its duties, and the finance committee was given the job of collecting the remaining pledges.

The records also show that even though St. James was itself a very young and struggling congregation, it was not ^{involving} (above their calling) to help other missions in the area. On July 11, 1927 the congregation voted to join the City Mission Society. This was the early forerunner of the Institutional Missions. In March of the following year the congregation voted ~~to~~ an annual contribution of \$25 for the "new movement" of Lutheran Radio Broadcasting. The records also show that the congregation was not afraid to take on ~~any~~^{for} special needs giving that might have occurred. On January 31, 1929 the church council authorized an extra collection of \$10 per communicant to be taken in order to contribute a fair share toward the cost of purchasing a new home for the city missionary,

Rev. Enno Duemling.

By May of 1929 St. James had 182 contributing members in the congregation. With that number of people it was now ready to take on the task of paying the pastor's salary and maintaining^{ing} the church property by itself. But even though the congregation had the means to do this, they did not have the means to put up a parsonage for the pastor. This did not take place till 1954. Pastor Voss—a bachelor— had to live in a home that was owned by his sister.

As far as services were concerned, the congregation had to go to two services. The German service began at 9:00 a.m., followed by Sunday School at 10:00 a.m., and an English service at 11:00.

Also in 1929 came the moving of the Seminary from its location across from St. James, to its present location in ^{Mogson} ~~Thiensville~~. This of course put more of a burden on pastor Voss since he would not have the assistance of the students and the professors. But, in the minutes of the congregation it was decided that St. James should try to purchase the property from the Synod for a price of \$57,500. The thought was that the congregation could use the buildings and the land for its own purposes. The Seminary board decided against it however, because they thought that this would be too risky in light of the problems with the Pabst Estate regarding boundaries.

By 1930 there were 220 communicants and 56 children attending the school. There were 103 enrolled in Sunday School.

In January of 1931 the congregation took the momentous step

of formally ^{joining} ~~joining~~ the Wisconsin Synod. Up until that time St. James had been ~~only~~ a mission under the jurisdiction of the Mission Board. And so the congregation, by means of a petition, asked that they be considered for entry into the Synod. This was to take place at the next meeting of the Synod the following summer. Another step toward independence was taken when it was resolved that the congregation should pay a greater portion of the teachers' salaries. They voted to pay an additional \$25 per month toward their wages. This reduced the annual Synod subsidy from \$2,300 to \$2,000 per year.

On January 1, 1933 St. James became self-supporting. This meant that the congregation was relinquishing the last annual subsidy of \$1,200. The church records show that at that time the congregation had grown to 477 souls and 365 communicants. God had truly blessed St. James from the time of its beginning.

SOURCES

The sources for the paper came from minutes of council meetings, congregational meetings, church bulletins.