

Rev. H. C. Haase: Spreader of the Gospel
in Southwestern Michigan. 1908-1973

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Professors Schuetze and Habeck state on page 229 of Shepherd under Christ, "Although the pastor is called to feed a specific flock, his call also includes winning souls for Christ's Kingdom." Certainly this is in accord with our Savior's mission mandate to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And it is undisputed that such mission zeal is to be expected of every faithful minister in every church of our synod.

Is that eagerness to preach the gospel to the unchurched present in our church today? Certainly it is. On the local, national, and world-wide levels the Lord is making it possible for our preachers to proclaim the Good News to those who are without it.

That's today. But what about the past? The generations of pastors who have served the Lord's Kingdom from the beginning of our Wisconsin synod--have they been faithful to our Lord's command, "Compel them to come in that my house may be full?"

Apparently not, according to some. Vivid in this writer's memory is an allegation put forth by one of the speakers at the Mission Seminar which took place at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary on Jan. 26, 1984. This speaker, explaining the outreach efforts of our new Travel-Cavass-Witness program, tried to force the point that our men in past years had been "more defenders of true doctrine than spreaders of the Gospel."

To assist him in making his point, an overhead projector flashed two pictures--the first of a preacher staunchly set behind his shield of pure doctrine, ready to fight off loose theology, content to defend the truth at the expense of evangelism. The second picture was a representation of a preacher "of today"--zealously announcing the Gospel message.

His point was obvious. Apparently our previous generations of pastors have strived so vehemently to maintain sound doctrine that their efforts at evangelism have been seriously lacking. They have hid behind their shields of pure teaching and have failed to spread the Gospel as they could have.

Can this accusation be supported? In the opinion of that speaker it apparently can. In the opinion of Armin Schuetze, President of our Seminary, it cannot. President Schuetze, addressing the assembly from one of the audience microphones, cited the efforts of our forefathers to keep evangelism the focus of the church's mission. Specifically mentioned were the efforts of one of those veteran pastors, Rev. Ehrhard C. Pankow. Rejecting such an outright blanket accusation, President Schuetze called to mind the fact that this servant, who was to be buried that very afternoon of January 26, served as the first chairman of our synod's Commission on Evangelism back in 1959.

There. That should settle the controversy. Ministers in the WELS have been evangelizing since 1959. The defenders of the true doctrine whom that speaker mentioned must have referred to those pastors before that date. Perhaps they were

the ones who, according to the speaker, have sacrificed evangelism for the pure doctrine of the church.

But were those early pastors really less spreaders of the gospel? That certainly was not true in the case of one of those servants--Pastor Henry C. Haase.

Assisted by the church records of several Southwestern Michigan congregations, and informed by the memories of some who remember Rev. Haase, let us take a look at this man's career as a true spreader of the Gospel from his first call right up until his death.

Considering his early career, his ministry among the people in Southwestern Michigan, and his undying efforts even in retirement, Pastor H. C. Haase will indeed stand out as an effective mission-minded spreader of the Gospel in the Lord's Kingdom.

Rev. Haase's roots go back to Cleveland, Wisconsin, where he was born on October 15, 1882. The ministry was nothing strange to the Haase family. His father, Rev. Julius Haase (b.1829) had served a congregation in Cleveland, and later in Randolph, Wisconsin.

His mother's family was established in the ministry as well. According to Mrs. Paul Schlender, Rev. Henry Haase's daughter, now living in St. Joseph, Michigan, Henry's grandfather on his mother's side had studied to be a missionary in one of the mission societies in Germany. That was the beginning of a long line of WELS ministers. This family, the Popes by name, since coming to America and

settling in southeast Wisconsin, has sent many young sons and daughters into the service of the church.

In all, eight church workers--six pastors and two women teachers came from the Haase family. Henry was baptized, confirmed, and later ordained and married by his father Julius. The influence of his father and grandfather made his decision for a career easy. He attended Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, and later graduated from the Lutheran Seminary at Wauwatosa in 1904.

That he was rooted in mission work early is apparent from his first call out of the Seminary. His first charge was with the Lutheran Apache mission at Fort Apache, Arizona. While there he not only served the Indians with the Gospel, but also travelled about to cow ranches and preached often at the Yuma penitentiary.

His career as a spreader of the Gospel was already primed in these first three years of his ministry. Meanwhile, on the other side of the continent, the need for a spreader of the Gospel was developing in Benton Harbor, Michigan. An influx of German immigrants into the Southwestern Michigan area caused the opportunity for a pastor to serve them. A review of the history of Southwestern Michigan Lutherans will help us to understand the situation into which Rev. Haase would soon be called.

When Lutheranism in Southwestern Michigan is considered, the first congregation to be mentioned is usually St. Matthew's of Benton Harbor. But it is clear that St.

Matthew's was not the first Lutheran church organized within the limits of the city.

As far back as 1894, we find that a number of Lutheran Christians had made repeated efforts to unite and form a congregation. Because their efforts were not supported by Lutherans in the vicinity (apparently some from the Missouri synod who had already founded a congregation across the river in St. Joseph) they sent an appeal to Rev. Phillip von Rohr, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other States. They asked for advice and aid in procuring a Lutheran pastor to proclaim the Gospel in their midst. Their appeal was not in vain. The officials of the Wisconsin synod proved to be faithful friends of the group that had undertaken to organize a congregation.

It was not an easy matter in those days to procure a Lutheran pastor. The supply of pastors was limited, and the demand so great that some pastors served as many as seven preaching stations. In this emergency, the synod sent a pastor that had had very limited experience, the Rev. A. Cronheim.

During his ministry, a congregation was organized under the name of Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Two lots were purchased, on Broadway between Catalpa and Britain Avenues, as a building site for a church. But as the congregation was about to begin building operations, a disagreement arose between the pastor and congregation. As a result the congregation dissolved and the building site was lost.

Again a few of the faithful members appealed to von Rohr. A graduate student from the Seminary was sent, the Rev. H. Peters. He was installed as pastor by Rev. E. Bast of South Haven on February 15, 1898 in a hall above the White House Store on Main Street.

The congregation increased in number, and prospered spiritually. It was reorganized and the name chosen was St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Benton Harbor, Michigan. Two lots were purchased on the southwest corner of Harrison and LaVette Streets, and here a church building was erected.

Thus, the first church building which served the newly founded St. Matthew's congregation was a plain simple structure seating around 300 with a schoolroom in the basement. There were eleven members there to organize the church in the beginning.

A new trial faced the young congregation. On August 22, 1898, the day the church was dedicated, Rev. Peters resigned. The congregation now had a place to worship, but no pastor. Acting on advice from the president of the Michigan District, a call was extended to Rev. August Behrendt. He accepted the call and was installed by Rev. Bast on the last Sunday of October, 1898.

Who were these diligent Lutherans who so earnestly worked to establish a congregation? For now, let us simply mention that these were displaced Germans who had been gradually forced out of their homes in the Ukraine area of Russia. More will be said concerning these immigrants later.

Many of these immigrants who had moved within the area of Benton Harbor or its immediate vicinity became active members of St. Matthew's. Others who lived farther away only attended when opportunity was favorable because of the poor travelling conditions of the day.

Much to the credit of the spiritual appetite of these immigrants, whenever a number of them had settled near a town or village, they would unite and ask a pastor to serve them when he would have an opportune time. A group of these Lutherans who lived in and around Stevensville applied to Rev. Behrendt to be served with the Means of Grace and to aid them in organizing a Lutheran church. Thus St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Stevensville was organized in 1900. They called a pastor from the Wisconsin synod, built both a church and school, and flourished as a congregation in the years to follow. Thus St. Matthew's assisted in founding the congregation in its beginning. This was the first of six churches to be launched from St. Matthew's.

In the summer of 1908, Pastor Behrendt received a call from the Lutheran church at Colby, Wisconsin. He accepted and it was up to St. Matthew's to call another pastor. According to the records of 1908, the church issued a number of calls which were returned. Then the congregation called the Rev. H.C. Haase who was, for the past year and a half, serving a parish in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Rev. Haase accepted the call, much to the delight of the congregation in Benton Harbor. They were not looking forward

to a long vacancy for their congregation, which was yet in its infant years.

Rev. Haase was installed as pastor on December 13, 1908. Although he was just called out of one mission field a year and a half earlier, the situation was such that he was now placed right in the middle of another. Benton Harbor, as well as the area north and east, due to the immigration of hundreds of Germans each year, proved to be a fruitful field for mission work.

Once he arrived in Benton Harbor, Rev. Haase's career as pastor, teacher, husband, evangelist, and organizer had immediately begun. On January 5, 1909, soon after he arrived, he took the former Louise Jung of Randolph, Wisconsin, as his wife. As a lifelong companion, Mrs. Haase not only proved to be a faithful mother to their three children, but she also assisted her husband in his busy ministry.

Although the duties as pastor of the growing congregation would have kept him busy enough, Rev. Haase immediately began teaching school in the basement of the church building. When he was occasionally called away to minister to the sick, his young wife would take over. Although her name is not recorded among the teachers of St. Matthew's, her assistance in teaching the German children English benefited the school greatly.

Rev. Haase taught all the grades of the school full-time in this way for ten years. Soon after World War I had started, the school was closed. It remained closed from 1919 until 1925. At this time it was the decision of the

congregation not to burden the workload of the pastor. St. Matthew's called their first full time school teacher, Mr. Arvin Jantz, in 1925.

Rev. Haase's position as a spreader of the Gospel no doubt assisted him as a member of the Michigan District Mission Board. According to church records, his service on this committee lasted from 1914 to 1920. No doubt this position helped him when he would later place requests for pastors for the people with whom he worked in other areas of Southwestern Michigan.

When Rev. Haase arrived in Benton Harbor in 1908, the number of voting members in the congregation was about 75. The steady growth at St. Matthew's reflected well on his efforts to gather more into the Lord's Kingdom.

As membership increased early in the 1910's, the old church sometimes became overcrowded, and on holidays some were even turned away. In fact, during the first three years of Rev. Haase's ministry there, membership in the congregation increased by more than 200 communicants. St. Matthew's gradually grew to 290 voters, 780 communicants, 120 students, and 60 Sunday schoolers by the time he retired in 1948. That the Lord made St. Matthew's a fruitful vine in the service of His Kingdom is evident from the number of pastoral administrations that were performed during the first fifty years of her history, with Rev. Haase serving 40 of those 50 years. According to the church records, there were 1840 baptisms, 1060 confirmands, 775 marriages, 735 burials, and 46,800 communed during those years.

There might be some historians who would give less credit to Rev. Haase for his mission zeal than has been given here. This is largely founded on the theory that he was placed in a congregation which would have flourished no matter what his efforts were. They would suggest that, given the steady influx of Germans into the area, a growth in membership was inevitable.

Surely this may account for some of the growth of this congregation. But a congregation would fall stagnant without a faithful shepherd. It was undoubtedly the sort of leadership, employed by Rev. Haase, armed with the message of the Gospel, which was drawing more and more worshippers to St. Matthew's early in its history.

His character no doubt aided his success as a pastor. Still vivid in the minds of many today is his mission-minded attitude. To refute those who would suggest that he simply served those who came into the area, Rev. Kermit Biedenbender, who presently serves St. Matthew's, positively characterizes Rev. Haase as being "a mission pastor, energetic and mission-minded." His manner in conversation was such that he was an "irresistible, non-stop evangelist."

Rev. Biedenbender goes on to describe his direct and frank method of witnessing in this way: "In less than two minutes of conversation, he would be asking you if you're praying. He would go right to talking about your faith life." That some people were naturally bugged by his manner is sure. Some may have felt uncomfortable in such a situation. But he

got right to the point. "Here was a man who could do that," remarks Rev. Biedenbender.

As a mission-minded pastor in a growing congregation with a grade school, Rev. Haase's schedule was as filled as it could be. "No matter what time of the day or night it was," his daughter, Mrs. Paul Schiender recalls, "he was always working on something." "If he was looking for fifty excuses for not following through on a pastoral task, he could have found them," Rev. Biedenbender comments. "You don't need a calculator to figure that out."

Although he was a tireless worker, Rev. Haase still took time out for his family. Each year, according to his daughter, the family would leave the busy parsonage for a vacation. A relative from Wisconsin owned a cottage on a lake in Minnesota, a privilege which a pastor could not afford in those days. This location provided the Haase family a week long vacation spot two or three times during their years at St. Matthew's.

Sometimes the family visited relatives in Randolph, Wisconsin during the summer. But often the pastor's schedule and financial situation prevented them from venturing farther than the Sister Lakes area, just fifteen miles to the east of Benton Harbor. There the Haase family would rent a cottage on a lake and vacation for a week.

Rev. Haase's energetic, out-going, mission-minded attitude served not only his family and his own congregation in Benton Harbor. It is clear that, as an unselfish sower of the Gospel, he reached out to serve people throughout the

Southwestern Michigan area. Those congregations which he helped to establish testify to that point well.

Who were these people, these immigrants from Dowagiac, from Sodus, and from Eau Claire, who were in need of the Gospel message? And why did they settle in this area? Much had to do with their background and origin.

This great immigration into Michigan from the old country was caused by certain restricting laws that had been passed by the Russian Duma, limiting the liberties of these German settlers. They had been invited to come to Russia to help advance her culture and prosperity.

Thousands of Germans had accepted the invitation and settled in the provinces of western Russia, and were developing the resources of the rich and fertile land. They lived in colonies or villages and were always improving the standards of livelihood.

The native Russians looked upon the thrifty Germans, whom they considered to be foreigners, with envy and reproach. They petitioned the Russian government to restrict these Germans from holding property rights and conducting schools in the German language. These restrictions provoked the settlers to look around for more congenial surroundings.

In 1894, the first of these immigrants settled in the neighborhood of Benton Harbor at Sodus. The information he sent back to his friends in Volhynia brought others. Soon the movement spread until there was a steady flow of these German Lutherans to this section of the country.

Because these immigrants were of the Lutheran faith, they sought a Lutheran pastor for services once they arrived at their new homes. Since Benton Harbor was easily available, the pastoral services offered there by Rev. Haase attracted them. From Eau Claire, Sodus, Watervliet, Dowagiac, and Coloma, they came to have their children baptized and instructed, and spiritual care administered in time of need.

Many of these immigrants who had moved within the limits of Benton Harbor became active members of St. Matthew's. Others that lived farther away only attended when opportunity was favorable.

Their need for better, continual spiritual care was obvious. In Russia, daily devotions in the home were to them a way of life. On Sunday mornings they had been well accustomed to many hours of travel in order to join with one another in Christian fellowship and prayer. That element of fellowship was noticeably lacking in their new country.

This little group of Lutherans, finding themselves among people who spoke a different language, generally kept to themselves. Socially, they more or less excluded themselves from outside influences. During the week, while the men were kept quite busy working at the shop or in the fields, and while the women had enough to do in caring for their households, everything went well. But on Sundays and on holidays they felt somewhat uneasy. Something vitally important seemed to be lacking in their life. Their minds were troubled. They missed their usual Sunday worship in a church.

Although many continued to hold devotions in their homes, they felt that more was needed. They missed the fellowship, the strength which comes to one when many hearts are joined together in a common faith. But most of all they felt their children needed better to be taught to know their Savior and His Word.

As a missionary-type pastor, the eager assistance which Rev. Haase offered in such a situation was only natural. As a man with the energy and interest in people, he responded joyfully to their call for help, even though his workload at St. Matthew's was as full as it could be for one man to handle. In the best interest of God's Kingdom, Rev. Haase worked among and finally helped to establish no less than four congregations.

In the history of St. Matthew's, these six daughter congregations are mentioned:

- St. Paul's, Stevensville, in 1900
- St. John's, Dowagiac, in 1910
- St. Paul's, Sodus, in 1912
- Grace, Eau Claire, in 1922
- Grace, Benton Harbor, in 1945
- Good Shepherd, Benton Harbor, in 1955.

The congregation in Stevensville has already been discussed. Good Shepherd of Benton Harbor was founded after Rev. Haase's retirement. But the congregations in Dowagiac, Sodus, Eau Claire, and east Benton Harbor all were established during this man's ministry at St. Matthew's. As we consider the early histories of each of these churches, notice the way the Lord used his faithful servant, Rev. Haase, to assist them in becoming established congregations.

ST. JOHN'S, DOWAGIAC

There were already, at the time of this immigrant influx, a number of churches in Dowagiac, but they all conducted services in English. More importantly, none of them preached the doctrines of the Lutheran faith. Finally, after much consideration among the Germans settled there, it was decided to send a delegation to the nearest Lutheran church to consult with and seek the help and advice of the pastor who was serving there. A delegation went to St. Matthew's in 1908 and spoke with Rev. Haase.

He was greatly pleased that they had come to him. He readily offered to give his help in any way he could, and, as it turned out, he kept his promise faithfully.

As the pastor investigated the situation in and around Dowagiac, he was convinced that these people should be served by the church. A congregation was soon organized in their midst. With the consent of St. Matthew's, services were begun in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Rach in 1909.

Aided by the somewhat reliable transportation offered by the interurban, Rev. Haase served those Lutherans in Dowagiac whenever they called on him to do so. He naturally did not have a lot of time to go out during the week because he was teaching school in his own congregation. But he dutifully travelled to preach for them on Sunday afternoons whenever they asked him. Sometimes, if the necessity arose, he stayed overnight and travelled back the next morning.

Although Rev. Haase was faithful to his promise and did all he could to guide this little group, circumstances made it

impossible for him always to go to Dowagiac when he was needed. His duties to his own congregation and the distance to be travelled made it difficult for him. Often these settlers were left without the pastoral care they felt they needed.

Consequently, Rev. Haase sent an appeal to the synod asking them to send a theological student to Dowagiac. Synod complied with his request and sent Kurt Geyer to St. John's sometime in the summer of 1910. He continued to conduct worship services in the home of H. Rach.

After Mr. Geyer returned to school, a call was promptly sent to the Rev. Johann J. Rowkle. This call was quickly accepted. Thus, the congregation was finally on its feet. That the Lord has blessed this tiny group over the years is evident, for today St. John's serves 290 communicants, and 390 baptized souls in Dowagiac. Its Christian Day school offers elementary education to 36 of this congregation's children.

ST. PAUL'S, SODUS

A similar condition was found in and around Sodus. Some immigrants there had already become members of St. Matthew's even before 1909. At that time, they came to the church in Benton Harbor to worship, but as more Lutherans moved into the Sodus area from the old country, the Sodus group felt that it had grown sufficiently large to merit a church of its own. Rev. Haase again assessed the situation, and found that their claims were valid. He founded St. Paul's church in 1912.

At first services were held in the homes of members, but then it came to these people's attention that a Methodist

church in Sodus was for sale. Rev. Haase, then the chairman of the Mission Board of the Michigan District, arranged for its purchase with mission funds. Another congregation rose to its feet.

These faithful worshippers were served for the next four years by Rev. Haase. Finally, after calling for some time, a pastor, Rev. E. Walter Hillmer, accepted the call to St. Paul's in 1916. Over the years, Sodus congregation has been served by five other faithful shepherds. Another group of immigrants and their following generations blessed by the Lord's guiding hand, this church now numbers 312 baptized members and 385 communicants; their grade school educates 36 young people.

GRACE, EAU CLAIRE

On November 3, 1921, 12 men representing German Lutheran families in the vicinity of Eau Claire, met with Rev. Haase in the bank building of Eau Claire to discuss the possibility of establishing a Lutheran church in their village. It was decided to investigate the purchasing of a vacant church building which would serve as their place of worship.

As the following correspondence shows, the paperwork for the congregation in Eau Claire, as well as the financial responsibilities involved, were undertaken by Rev. Haase and his congregation in Benton Harbor.

Rev. H.C. Haase, Benton Harbor. Dear Sir, The Trustees of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of the first Methodist Episcopal Church of Benton Harbor, subject to the approval of Dr. J.O. Willitts, District Superintendent, will sell the Methodist Episcopal church to your people on the following

terms... This proposition will be submitted to Dr. Willitts for his approval at once, and if approved, we will have an abstract prepared, and your people can make a deposit, and take possession of the property. (Signed by W.A. Haney, Secretary, Board of Trustees. Approved by John C. Willitts, District Superintendent, Niles District, Sturgis, Michigan, November 11, 1921.

On December 31, 1921, the congregation was organized under the name of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Michigan, and it was incorporated under that name. The dedication of the purchased church was held on September 24, 1922.

Again, Rev. Haase served as the first pastor of a new congregation. After he led them from November 3, 1921 until February 19, 1922, a dual parish agreement with St. John's of Dowagiac was struck. Three other pastors would serve both congregations until the first resident pastor, Rev. Norman Engel began his ministry in Eau Claire in 1936.

Gradually the Lord blessed Grace Church, and the fruits of His Word have caused it to flourish. To date, this congregation serves 293 communicant members, and 406 baptized souls. The number of students in their Christian Day school now numbers 52.

GRACE, EAST BENTON HARBOR

During the first thirty years of the congregation in Benton Harbor, those members of St. Matthew's who resided on the east side of town continued to travel over the poor roads in order to attend services and school. Time had come to discuss the founding of a second Lutheran church in Benton Harbor. Several members of St. Matthew's were willing to aid

in establishing a mission of the east side to form a nucleus around which another congregation could begin.

The District Mission Board, on the request of Rev. Haase, called Rev. E. Berg to take charge of the mission. Grace Lutheran Church was thus founded in May of 1945.

Continuous growth had since made relocation for this congregation necessary. After moving to its new location in St. Joseph in 1967, Grace Church has been serving a mission field all its own. This congregation is still growing rapidly with a present membership of 1251 communicants and 1694 baptized souls. That these members are concerned about the education of their children is evident from the number of youngsters in their school. To this date they educate 196 children in grades kindergarden through eight. Obviously this is another case of the Lord working through His people to bring the Good News to more and more people in Southwestern Michigan.

Although these congregations were on their feet and walking, Rev. Haase did not step out of the picture once he had founded them. Still in the memory of his daughter, Mrs. Paul Schlender, are the times when the pastors from Dowagiac, Sodus, Eau Claire, and east Benton Harbor would come to Rev. Haase's regularly. St. Matthew's had become a central location where they would meet--a gathering place for the pastors of the area.

Those are the fruits of the efforts of the Lord's servant, Rev. H.C. Haase. At least those were the things which occurred up to 1948 during his 40 year ministry at St.

Matthew's. By this time, Rev. Haase was 66 years old, and thinking about retirement.

In our day, retirement does not seem all that unusual once a minister approaches the age of 65 or 70. But in 1945, the idea of retirement from the ministry was not so common. The general goal of many ministers then was to "die in the saddle, with my boots on." To retire, in the minds of some, was considered to be unfaithful to the pastoral call.

Often this was not the best attitude for a pastor to have. Some congregations have unfortunately gone stagnant under the waning leadership of a pastor no longer effective to his call as he once was. Sadly, there have been congregations which have suffered because a pastor refused to unselfishly realize that he should step down and hand the reins over to a younger shepherd.

Such a selfish attitude was foreign to Rev. Haase. His decision to retire in 1948 was, in his mind, for the benefit of those whom he served.

During the last two years of his ministry, he felt that, to guide the congregation to undertake the largest project in its history, that of the building of a new school, was the task for a younger man. Therefore, in the regular meeting in March 1948, Rev. Haase suggested that the matter should be discussed. On April 4, the largest voters' assembly meeting in the history of St. Matthew's passed the resolution unanimously that another pastor should be called to take over the responsibilities of conducting the congregation, beginning on January 1, 1949.

So, in this humble way, Rev. H.C. Haase retired from the active ministry at St. Matthew's. However, using the direct observation of Rev. Biedenbender, we notice that "he didn't just dry up and die!"

The Northwestern Lutheran, in December 1973, described his retirement years in this way: "Filling vacant pulpits and preaching for mission festivals kept the first 20 years of retirement relatively active." Actually, "relatively active" is an understatement.

Consider the following article from the News-Palladium, the local Benton Harbor newspaper. It appeared on May 22, 1958--ten full years after his official "retirement:" "Still active in church work, the Rev. Haase preaches in the absence of Rev. Wendland at St. Matthew's, and substitutes in area churches when called upon."

Certainly the years in "retirement" were not idle ones. Again the News-Palladium, on May 26, 1966--18 years after his retirement offers the following in an article entitled, "Retired Minister Won't Retire:"

The pastor emeritus of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, the Rev. H.C. Haase, is a retiree who refuses to stay retired. Bright, alert, and in excellent health despite his 81 years (sic), the minister serves the Wisconsin synod as supply pastor, and as such, preaches someplace almost every Sunday. Yesterday, he preached not one, but two sermons, one in Sturgis at 9am, and the other in Battle Creek at 11am. Recently he was featured speaker at two centennial church celebrations in the synod. And he receives stacks of invitations for speaking engagements--more than he could possibly fill.

Thus, Rev. Haase still served those congregations which he helped to establish more than 50 years earlier.

Rev. Haase remained a very personable fellow, even in his advanced age. His life, had, up to now, been free from major illness, with the exception of a brief bout with kidney stones. Then it seemed as though an unfortunate fall would bring his active post-retirement ministry to an end.

After his wife Louise had passed away in 1967, he moved into an apartment a block or so from the church. One evening, as he went out his door to get the paper, he slipped, fell, and cracked his elbow. He lived alone at the time, but he now needed daily therapy for his injury. After much prodding by his family and friends, he reluctantly agreed to take up residence at Shoreham Terrace nursing home on Red Arrow Highway in St. Joseph.

At first he was very unhappy there. But soon his mission-minded attitude resurfaced. Being the talkative, personable fellow that he was, even in his old age, he soon had his own little congregation there in Shoreham. Then he was content to stay there. Observes Rev. Biedenbender, who served him during those years, "Other pastors might have had a different personality, but Rev. Haase was not the quiet type. He loved to talk. Very soon he would be talking religion to the people there. The old folks who were around him just loved that attention."

The Northwestern Lutheran attests to the enjoyable situation which was afforded to Rev. Haase in this atmosphere. In his obituary, recorded in 1973, this is said concerning Rev. Haase and his stay at the home: "Living in a convalescent home for the last few years provided opportunity

for a personal ministry to fellow residents--something which Pastor Haase enjoyed."

Actually, it can be properly noted that the ministry of Rev. H.C. Haase never really experienced retirement--at least not until the Lord called him home at the age of 91 years.

On Sunday afternoon, having attended worship in the morning, Pastor Haase enjoyed an open house in honor of his his 91st birthday. On the succeeding days he appeared to be in good health, but in the early hours of Thursday, October 18, the Lord called His faithful servant home peacefully in his sleep. (The Northwestern Lutheran, December, 1973)

Finally, the Lord called His faithful missionary into true, peaceful retirement. The mission zeal which this pastor carried with him throughout his ministry can be summed up by the words of a man whose wife had been in the nursing home along with Rev. Haase. At his funeral, this man remarked to Mrs. Paul Schlender: "I can't convince my wife that your father is dead. She thinks he should be coming in and praying with her!"

Such was the mission zeal which accompanied him later in life. Such was the mission zeal which began 69 years earlier among the Apache Indians in Arizona. Such was the mission zeal of the Lord's servant, Rev. H.C. Haase.

Was this man a defender of pure doctrine, as that speaker at the 1984 Mission Seminar assumed? Certainly he was. Those whom he served received God's Word in its truth and purity day after day, week after week. But did he carry that doctrinally sound shield at the expense of evangelism? Certainly not! Not in his early career, not in the prime of his ministry, and

certainly not in his retirement! That allegation was a hasty generalization conceived to make the speaker's shallow point. It certainly does not apply universally to our former pastors. It certainly does not apply in the ministry of Rev. H.C. Haase.

Let his efforts among the Lord's sheep speak for themselves. Those daughter congregations found in him a personable missionary who was more than willing to lend a hand to advance the Kingdom of God in Southwestern Michigan.

Let those who knew him and who recognized his strong attitude on evangelism testify to the fact. Rev. Biedenbender comments, "He would have been a cracker-jack of a missionary. He got down to the heart of the matter right away. He enjoyed canvassing and was very personable." Rev. Peters of Sodus refers to him as "the missionary-type pastor, the 'father' of Sodus church." His son-in-law, Mr. Paul Schlender tells us that "he was a well-versed man. He used to talk to people always about Jesus, even when he was down there in the home."

Rev. H.C. Haase--a defender of the true doctrine? He certainly was! But, as it has been shown throughout his long ministry on this earth, he was much more a spreader of the Gospel. Again, the words of one of his successors makes it clear: "His manner was such that he was an irresistible, unstoppable evangelist--energetic and mission-minded."

Historical and biographical information used in this presentation has come from the following sources:

January 1984 interview with Rev. Kermit Biedenbender, pastor of St. Matthew's, Benton Harbor since 1965.

January 1984 interview with Rev. Henry Peter, pastor of St. Paul's, Sodus since 1961.

January 1984 interview with Mr. and Mrs. Paul Schlender of St. Joseph, Michigan, son-in-law and daughter of Rev. Haase.

The Golden Anniversary Booklet of St. Matthew's Congregation, Benton Harbor (1948).

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The Northwestern Lutheran, December, 1973.

Shepherd Under Christ, by Schuetze and Habeck.

The News-Palladium, May 22, 1958.

The News-Palladium, January 3, 1959.

The News-Palladium, May 26, 1966.

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