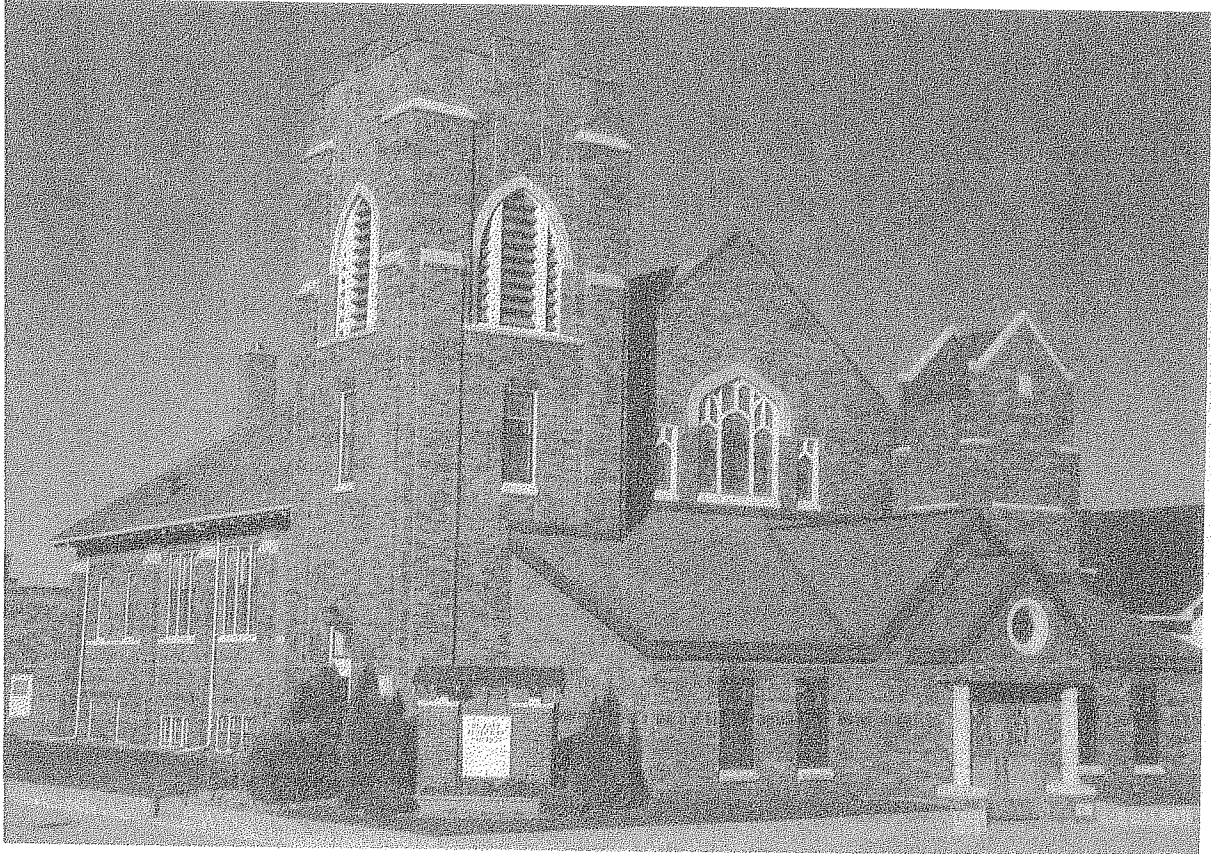


The History of St. Paul's Ev.
Lutheran Church, Bloomer Wisconsin



Church History 331
Matthew D. Kuske
4-16-99

PREFACE

1. Information about the beginning of St. Paul's as well as its early history was gathered from two of the church's anniversary history books and interviews with Mr. Vernon Kressin and Pastor Kuske.
2. The histories of St. Mark's and Zion Ev. Lutheran churches were compiled from an interview with Mrs. Leslie Conrad and a history book about Zion Lutheran church.
3. The history of the church during the time of pastor Elmer Prenzlou Jr. was gathered from an interview with him.
4. The history of the church during the time of pastor Dennis Kempf was compiled from an interview with him.
5. The history of St. Paul's during the ministry of Pastor Norman Kuske was obtained from an interview with him.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran church is located in the heart of downtown Bloomer, Wisconsin. Bloomer is in the northwest part of the state. It lies about twenty-five miles north of Eau Claire on highway fifty-three. Bloomer is a town of around 2,500 people. The town is surrounded by all kinds of farming communities who also make use of the town. It is in a setting like this that the Lord has brought together, preserved, and expanded the family of believers at St. Paul's.

St. Paul's is really an amalgamation of three smaller churches from the surrounding countryside. The first of those three churches is St. Paul's, Tilden which is a small town eight miles south of Bloomer. The next church is St. Mark's, Brush Prairie which is about six miles northeast of Bloomer out by a lake named Marshmiller. The third and final church is Zion Ev. Lutheran church of Auburn which is ten miles northwest of Bloomer out in the countryside. All three of these churches are small country churches. They ^{didn't} all come together at once and form the church in Bloomer. The first church to move to Bloomer was St. Paul's, Tilden. Since this was the case, those members kept the same name for their church in Bloomer.

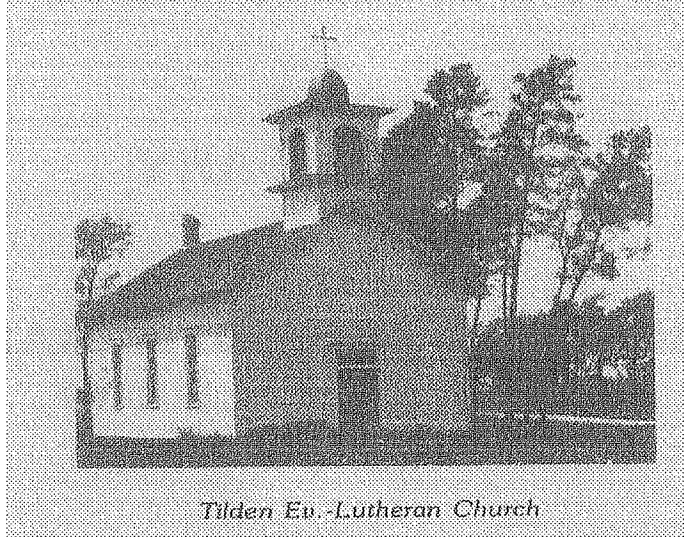
Not much is known about the church at Tilden. The fiftieth anniversary church book of St. Paul's, Bloomer has a little bit of information about it.

- *¹The congregation had its beginning at Tilden in the year 1886. Rev. G. Plehn was the first pastor. Shortly after its organization, Rev. A. Graebner and Rev. G. Schoewe served in quick succession. The following pastors also were called and served St. Paul's, Tilden: J. Rathke in 1891, J. H. Schwartz in 1894, M. F. Plass in 1903, R.O. Bueger in 1908, R. Heike in 1908, M. Busack in 1910, and J. F. Henning starting in 1918.*

In 1926 some of the members from the Tilden church started holding services in Bloomer. One

¹Vernon Kressin, By the Grace of God, 50 years of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Building (Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1978) pg, 2

reason was the church in Tilden was rather small. A second reason was many of Tilden's members were moving to Bloomer which was a larger town. Some of the older members moved to Bloomer to retire there. Younger members also moved to Bloomer to pursue various kinds of work, jobs, and business enterprises.



This group of people started having services at the United Brethren Church in Bloomer. These services started taking place in 1926. This was only a temporary solution for this group of people.

- ² *Within two years a desire for their own place of worship resulted in a meeting which was called in January 1928. About 40 families were represented and the initial steps for the erection of a house of worship were taken.*

Mr. Vernon Kressin added a little more insight. He said:

- ³ *It was these older people who pushed for and who headed up the idea of having a new church in Bloomer.*

This is just part of the story though.

Also in Bloomer at that time was a Swedish Lutheran church, St. John's, which belonged to

² Ibid, pg. 2

³ Vernon Kressin of St. Paul's, interview by N. Kuske, 20 February 1999, Bloomer, tape recording, St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Bloomer.

the ALC. The pastor of this church was a man named Rev. Baer. He had been there a number of years and had seen the numbers of his church continuing to get smaller and smaller. He wanted a new church built thinking this would help draw new people in. The members of his church thought his idea was ridiculous. They didn't see anything wrong with the church they had. Rev. Baer, however, kept pushing and pushing. Finally his members said that if he didn't stop with his idea they would quit his church and leave. He kept pushing so the members went to their ~~S~~^Synod. They wanted to know if they could fire him. The ~~S~~^Synod said that they couldn't because Rev. Baer had a divine call. The members then went ahead with their threat and left.

This disgruntled group of around thirty families approached the group from Tilden who were still worshipping at the United Brethren church. They asked the Tilden group if they would accept them if they would join them. The Tilden group agreed to accept them. The mix~~es~~ of the two groups ^{w^{as}} were about twenty families from Tilden and almost twice that many from this other group. It was ~~Representatives~~^Representatives and families from these two united groups who met at that meeting in January 1928 to discuss the building of a new church. The desire expressed was for a new building where the whole group would be able to worship as one. At that meeting a building committee was elected to look into the matter. Vernon Kressin gives a long, detailed account of the birth of the new church:

- ⁴ *A building site committee was elected to look for a place to build a new church and when they had found a place to report back to the congregation....At the February 1928 meeting, held after the church service, it was voted to buy the two lots from Mrs. Anton Tealey. The two lots were listed as; lot numbers 7 and 8, in block number 4, of Van Loon's addition to the village of Bloomer....On the assessment roll in the city of Bloomer in 1928, these two lots were assessed as mercantile. It was assessed at \$3,000 for the*

⁴ Vernon Kressin, 60th Anniversary of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church Building (Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1988) pg.s 4-5

land and \$3,500 for the buildings....At the March 30, 1928 meeting, it was decided to build a church 40' x 80' and 16' high. The walls to be of brick and tile and the roof to be asphalt slate shingles. The building committee was entrusted by the congregation to purchase a plan from the architect and to let out the contract of building the church to the lowest bidder....Mr. William Hankey was appointed as the Building fund treasurer. He was to collect all money subscribed and pay all bills as the building committee directed. Mr. Carl Volkmann of Eau Claire was engaged as the architect of the new church building project....The building committee met on May 17, 1928, to open bids and decided to let the contract for building the church go to Tschopp-Durch-Camestral of Chippewa Falls, WI for \$22,404. As soon as the contractors were let known about the contract, the work began immediately. Members also helped in many ways with the work. Men came with teams of horses and ground scoops to help dig the basement. Some members hauled gravel in, that was needed with the work. The work on the basement went steadily so that in June the church basement was in and was getting ready for the superstructure of a handsome church. The contract for the electrical work was awarded to the Bloomer plumbing and heating company.

The preliminary work had all been completed. Finally at the end of June in 1928 the people celebrated the laying of the cornerstone. Once again Mr. Kressin describes what that day was like:

- ⁵ Then came the happy day, June 24, 1928, when the cornerstone laying ceremony took place. In spite of the cold weather and the threatening rain, a large number were in attendance at the morning and the afternoon services. The morning service was held at the U.B. Church with a sermon by Rev. M. Paetz of Friesland, WI. The ladies served a chicken dinner at noon in the basement. In the afternoon the service was held at the site of the new church. Rev. J. F. Henning, local pastor had the opening prayer and was followed by the singing of church hymns with Miss Clara Lanzer at the organ. A forceful sermon was delivered by Rev. H. A. Pankow of Tomah, WI.

After the laying of the cornerstone, the work on the church continued to move right along. Mr. Kressin continues with the building of the new church and its dedication.

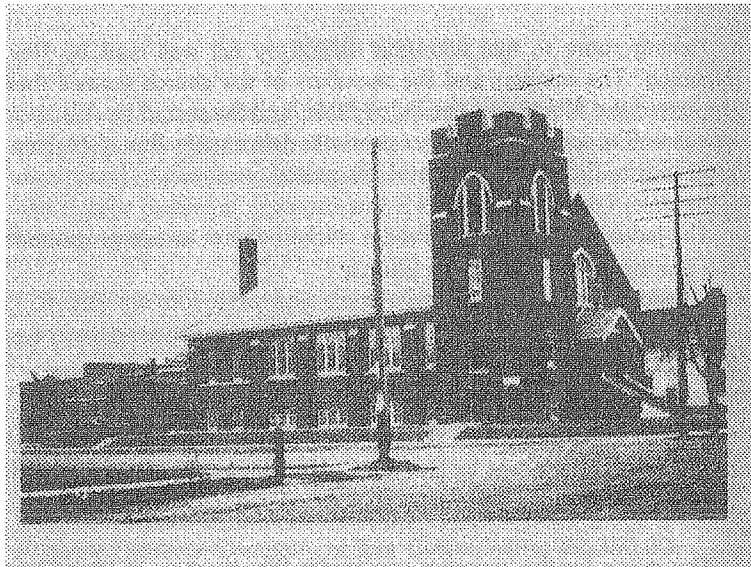
- ⁶ Work on the new church was progressing rapidly. A large crew was employed in its construction. The new building was to be strictly modern, roomy and conveniently arranged for church and social purposes. There was a large basement arranged with a

⁵ Ibid, pg. 6

⁶ Ibid, pg.s 7

kitchen and combination dining and social rooms. In July the roof of the new church was being put on. The brick work was completed except on the tower. At a meeting in July 1928, a resolution was adopted and carried to borrow \$12,000 toward the church building expense. Another motion was made by Emil Lueck and seconded by Arthur Kressin to let the contract to purchase an altar, a pulpit and pews, go to the Phoenix Furniture company of Eau Claire, WI for \$2,350. In October 1928, the new St. Paul Ev. Lutheran church was nearing completion and would soon be ready for its dedication services....The church was now completed and was one of the finest and most commendable church buildings, a source of pride to the members of the congregation. The dedication services were held on November 18, 1928, for the new church with three services.

This is truly an amazing accomplishment. In January of 1928 there was a meeting to have preliminary discussions about building a new church and in November of the same year the congregation was dedicating their new church. The congregation was truly blessed by the Lord.



The New St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church. Picture taken Nov.20, 1928

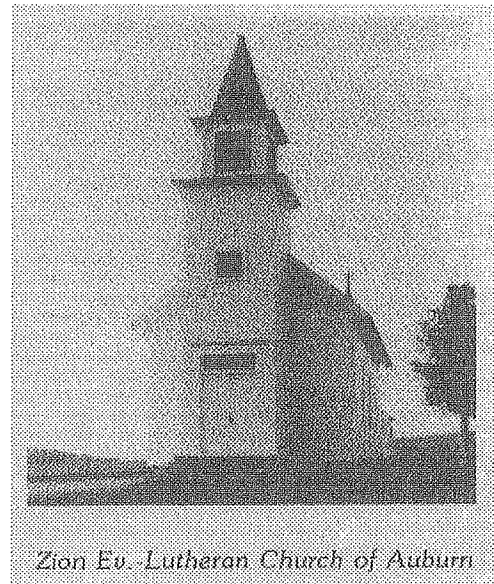
An ironic note is that the dissident group, who left Rev. Baer because he wanted a new church, ended up building a new church anyway with the Tilden group of people. The church was named St. Paul's after the church in Tilden. The cost of the church building along with all of the furnishings ended up being somewhat more than \$33,000. The congregation asked Rev. J. F. Henning to serve them. At the time Pastor Henning was serving those members who still remained at the Tilden church. He agreed to serve both churches.

This was a time when there weren't a lot of pastors and transportation wasn't always the most

reliable. Mrs. Leslie Conrad who is familiar with the history of Zion Lutheran church of Auburn and St. Mark's Brush Prairie recounts:

- ⁷ *Zion and St. Mark's didn't have their own pastor. They also asked pastor Henning if he would serve them. This continued on this way for a while. Eventually these two churches felt like they were getting shortchanged. The churches in Bloomer and Tilden were much closer to Pastor Henning than Zion and St. Mark's. Pastor Henning didn't make it out to those two churches as much as he did to Bloomer and Tilden. Because Zion and St. Mark's felt they were getting shortchanged, they decided to call for their own pastor.*

These two churches ^{did} do eventually become part of the congregation in Bloomer. But for the time being they were still trying to exist on their own. These two country congregations were without a pastor and wanted one. They extended a call to Pastor Carleton Toppe in 1941. He was currently serving at First German of Manitowoc. Pastor David Schneider has a little bit of insight about Toppe's time at Zion and St. Mark's. This was a time when Toppe was courting his soon to be wife.



- ⁸ *The two continued to correspond with each other even after Toppe accepted the call to serve a dual parish near Bloomer, Wisconsin. In 1941 they were married at First German Lutheran of Manitowoc. They lived in Bloomer until 1943 when Toppe accepted*

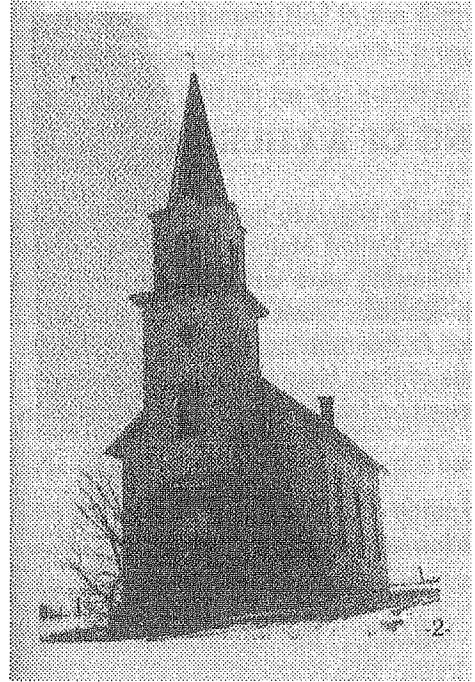
⁷ Leslie Conrad of St. Paul's, interview by author, 20 February 1999, Bloomer, tape recording, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

⁸ David Schneider, "Well done good and faithful servant!" an interview recalling the life and ministry of Reverend Carlton Toppe Senior Church History paper (May 1, 1979): pg.s 7-8

a call to Elmwood and Ellsworth Wisconsin.

Those two small country churches struggled to continue after ^Ppastor Toppe took his call. Mrs. Conrad describes what happened to them:

- ⁹ *After Pastor Toppe took a call, Zion Lutheran Church of Auburn and St. Mark's Brush Prairie couldn't really continue. With both of those churches being very small and being country churches, they closed down. It was sometime in the early fifties that most of the members from both of those churches joined St. Paul's in Bloomer. After Zion Ev. Lutheran church closed down it was bought by a local farmer. He tore down the tower and turned the church into a mini-barn. He also built a bigger barn which was right next to and connected to the church building barn. The church at Brush Prairie no longer exists. A farm field is where the church used to be.*



St. Mark's Ev. Luth. Church, Brush Prairie

The history records for St. Mark's are gone. Perhaps they have been destroyed or lost but no one knows where they are. A few records from Zion Ev. Lutheran church still do exist. Those records fill in some more details about the state of the church after pastor Toppe left. Here are some excerpts:

- ¹⁰ *After pastor Toppe left, Zion was served by ^Ppastor Theophil Mahnke from 1943-1946. When pastor Mahnke left, Zion was unable to get a pastor for a while. In 1947 the majority in the congregation voted to join the ELC synod and share the pastor of the ELC church in Bloomer, Our Savior's. As a result of this decision nine families leave Zion and join St. Paul's in Bloomer. After four to five years had passed the congregation had declined significantly. In the annual meeting of 1952 it was voted five to four to disband Zion Ev. Lutheran church. The four families who had voted to keep the church*

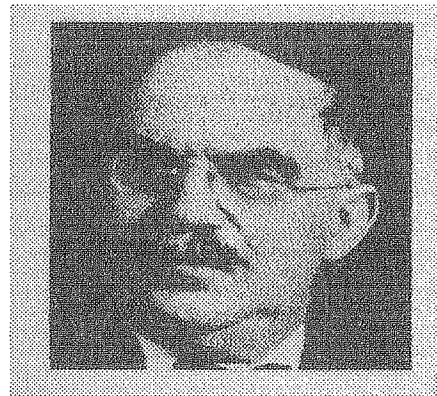
⁹ Leslie Conrad of St. Paul's, interview by N. Kuske, 20 February 1999, Bloomer, tape recording, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

¹⁰ Pastor Kuske of St. Paul's, interview by author, 2 April 1999, Bloomer, hand written notes, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

going now were without any church. They came and joined St. Paul's shortly thereafter.

St. Mark's Brush Prairie also closed around this time. About one third of those families came to St. Paul's. The other two thirds joined another nearby WELS church in Eagleton. That is how those two churches became a part of the congregation at Bloomer. But before we get any farther ahead of ourselves let us return to 1928 and the new church at Bloomer.

In 1928 Pastor Henning became the first pastor to serve the new church in Bloomer. He served St. Paul's from 1928-1932. Keep in mind that St. Paul's was made up of a majority of people from the disgruntled ALC church, St. John's. Also keep in mind that those families left over a dispute with their former synod. First of all they left because they wanted to fire Rev. Baer but they were told that they couldn't. Secondly, they wanted to own the deed to their old church so Rev. Baer couldn't force his way and have a new one built. However, the ALC synod owned the deed and they didn't want to hand it over to the members of that congregation. So, as stated before, the majority of those members from that ALC church left and joined the Tilden members in Bloomer to form their own congregation.



Pastor F. A. Henning

Now when Pastor Henning and the congregation met to organize St. Paul's in Bloomer there were some strong feelings on the part of the members. St. Paul's did not join any synod. They remained independent. The ideas of the members having control over the affairs of their own church and over their pastor are what these people wanted. This thread of thinking has lasted a long time. As the statistical report of the WELS shows, it wasn't until 1991 that St. Paul's was

recognized as a member of the WELS:

• 11

Congregation	ID#	M (M=Member of Synod)
Bloomer, WI, St. Paul	9205	Yes, a member of Synod

The 1990 report shows that St. Paul's was still an organized congregation but not a member of the WELS:

• 12

Congregation	ID#	O (O=Non-Member of Synod, but organized)
Bloomer, WI, St. Paul	9205	No, Organized but a nonmember

This, however, is false. In an interview with pastor Kuske he explains further:

- ¹³ *In 1991 the WELS recognized St. Paul's as a member of synod but this isn't totally accurate. St. Paul's started thinking about joining the WELS in 1991. It wasn't until 1996 that the congregation formerly consented to joining the WELS.*

This is getting ahead of ourselves though. Let us return to the late twenties and pastor Henning.

He helped the members of St. Paul's build and organize their new church in Bloomer. He served St. Paul's until 1932.

After Pastor Henning, St. Paul's called George T. Fisher to be their pastor. He served the congregation from 1933-1946. Again, this was a time when there weren't a lot of pastors. Pastor

¹¹ WELS, Statistical report of the WELS for 1991 (Milwaukee: Synod Building, 1991) pg. 88

¹² WELS, Statistical report of the WELS for 1990 (Milwaukee: Synod Building, 1990) pg. 88

¹³ Pastor Norman Kuske of St. Paul's, interview by author, 19 February 1999, Bloomer, tape recording, St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Bloomer.

Fisher was actually called from the St. Louis seminary as a graduate to serve in Bloomer. Being an independent church, St. Paul's went with the synod that would be able to supply them with a pastor. The Missouri synod was able to do that. When pastor Fisher arrived in Bloomer there weren't many Missouri synod congregations in that area. There were, however, more Wisconsin Synod churches. Since both synods were still in fellowship at that time, pastor Fisher switched over to the Wisconsin synod. After this, St. Paul's continued to work with the Wisconsin synod and get their pastors from there.

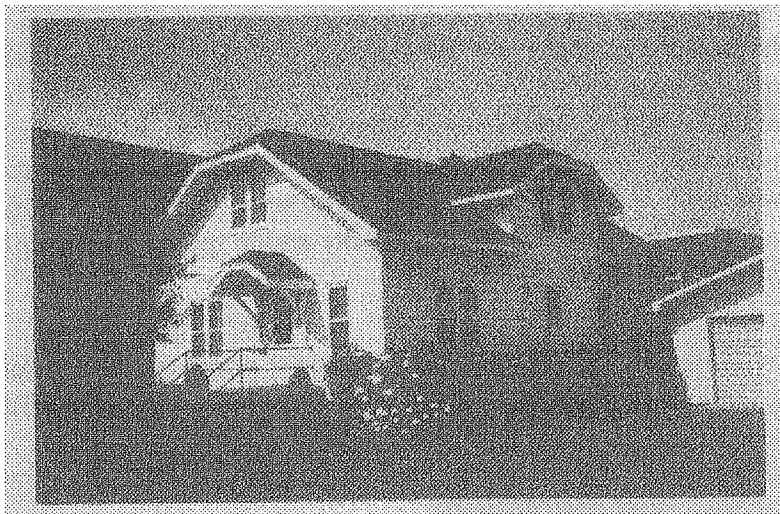


Pastor George T. Fisher

There were a number of events that took place at St. Paul's while pastor Fisher was there.

Vernon Kressin details them:

- ¹⁴ *At the annual meeting of January 12, 1936, a motion was carried to extend to Pastor Fisher a special vote of thanks for being instrumental in obtaining an outdoor bulletin board for the church....In June 1933, at a special congregational meeting, it was voted to build a parsonage on the lot next to the church. This lot was one of original two purchased at the time of the church construction....No further action was taken on this matter until the annual meeting of January, 1936, when it was voted to*



The Parsonage at St. Paul's

¹⁴ Vernon Kressin, 60th Anniversary of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church Building (Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1988) pg.s 13-15

begin construction of the parsonage. The O & N Lumber Company was the low bidder of \$4,038.82. Construction work began in May 1936....At the annual of the congregation in January 1937, the records show the parsonage was completed and the building committee was dismissed with a vote of thanks....Pastor and Mrs. George Fisher moved into the new parsonage from the apartment they were living in on 15th Avenue from 1933 thru 1937.... The organ to whose strains we sing our praises to our God was the results of the untiring efforts of our Young People's Society. During the year of 1938, the organ was purchased and installed.

The next pastor to serve at St. Paul's was Theophil Mahnke. He served from 1946-1953.

There were few records concerning his time served at St.

Paul's. In talking with some of the older members, they

pretty much remember only one thing. They said that

^P pastor Mahnke was a faithful servant, but in the end he had

to be released for cause. During ^P pastor Mahnke's time at

St. Paul's the church did undergo a few changes. In the

fiftieth anniversary booklet of the church Mr. Kressin

reports:



Pastor Theophil Mahnke

- ¹⁵ *At the annual meeting of January 12, 1947 it was voted to purchase new hymnals of the type we use today....At a special meeting on May 9, 1948 it was voted to insulate the church and install a new furnace.*

It was also during the time of pastor Mahnke's ministry that members from the two churches of Zion and St. Mark's joined the congregation in Bloomer.

After ^P pastor Mahnke was released by St. Paul's, the church called Elmer Prenzlou Jr. He served St. Paul's from 1953-1962. At that time, back in 1953, there was an Elmer Prenzlou Sr.

¹⁵ Vernon Kressin, *By the Grace of God, 50 years of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Building* (Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1978) pg. 5

who was a pastor in Cornell. Cornell is a small town about five miles east of Bloomer. When ^Ppastor Mahnke was released ^Ppastor Prenzlów Sr. served the vacancy in Bloomer. St. Paul's tried to call a pastor but the call was returned. Bloomer was independent so they could extend a call to whomever they wanted, wherever that person happened to be. They really didn't have to follow the rules of the Wisconsin ^Ssynod because



Pastor Elmer Prenzlów Jr.

they didn't belong to the Wisconsin synod. Elmer Prenzlów Sr. mentioned to the congregation that his son was graduating from the seminary in a couple of months and perhaps they may want to call him.

St. Paul's took the counsel of Prenzlów Sr. They ignored the call list they had and when call day at seminary came in 1953 they called Elmer Prenzlów Jr. to serve them. This presented a dilemma for the young graduate. Pastor Prenzlów Jr. talks about the situation.

- ¹⁶ *He had been assigned on call day to serve a congregation in Circle, Montana. He also received this call to serve St. Paul's in Bloomer. He was probably one of the few graduates who had two calls from two different congregations on call day. Well, now he had to choose. Did he accept the call to serve a small congregation in a remote, rugged area of the United States in Montana? Or did he accept the call to a congregation right by his family, a congregation that was well established with a fairly new church, a congregation that had about 300 families, a congregation in a more popularized and modern part of the country when compared to Montana, a congregation that was doing well financially? Pastor Prenzlów Jr. accepted the call to serve at Bloomer. He arrived in Bloomer in the summer of 1953.*

There are a few points to note during pastor Prenzlów's ministry at St. Paul's. During his

¹⁶ Pastor Prenzlów Jr. of the LCMS, interview by N. Kuske, 6 February 1999, Bloomer, notes taken, St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Bloomer.

time the congregation prospered. St. Paul's had a vision of opening a Lutheran day school. But before that could take place a number of items had to be taken care of. The first was erecting a building by the church which could be used for a school. Once again Mr. Kressin writes:

- ¹⁷ *It was further voted at the special meeting of July 26, 1956 to build an educational unit....E.F. Klingler & Associates were hired as architects. General contractors were Market construction, and Northwest electric from Eau Claire and Solie & Sons from Barron....The educational unit was completed and dedicated at special services on June 23, 1959.*

With the construction of this educational unit added onto the church a few renovations had to be made. Another newer and larger furnace was installed to accommodate both the church and the educational unit. The kitchen was also redone in anticipation of a school being opened. Mr. Kressin reports on a couple of other renovations:

- ¹⁸ *At a special meeting on July 26, 1956, it was voted to install a tile floor in the basement of the church....At the annual meeting of January 18, 1959 a motion was passed to purchase the parking lot on Larson street for \$2,500.*

The education unit consisted of two floors. The lower floor consisted of four small classrooms on one side and on the other side there were bathrooms and two larger classrooms. The lower floor was connected to the basement of the church. The upper floor consisted of four small classrooms on one side and on the other side there were an office, a council meeting room, and

¹⁷ Vernon Kressin, *By the Grace of God, 50 years of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Building* (Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1978) pg. 8

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pg.s 5 & 9

another larger classroom that connected directly to the sanctuary of the church.

This new educational unit as well as all the renovations cost the congregation quite a sum of money. The congregation had a large debt to pay off now. Unfortunately, the average per communicant offering was very low. With these two factors, the large debt and the low giving, St. Paul's was not able to start a school right away as was planned. The hope was to start the school as soon as the debt was paid off. Instead of increasing their giving to pay the debt off, the congregation went in another direction. They had this large newly redone basement and a big kitchen. It was decided to have a supper on Friday nights, open it to the public, and charge for the meals. These suppers were very popular in the community and many people came to them. In this way, the congregation paid for most of their debt. Soon, though, the government told them that if they would be putting on a certain number of these meals a year they would have to come under restaurant guidelines. The congregation would have to meet certain criteria and codes that the restaurants do. There was no way the congregation could afford to do that so the practice of Friday night suppers for the community slowly went away.

Another item that took place during pastor Prenzlow's ministry was a conflict over the lodge. It was discovered that around twenty members of St. Paul's were also members of the local moose lodge. He described it this way

- *¹⁹ Instruction with the congregation about the lodge began. This raised a lot of tension in the church. After much instruction and deliberation a stand had to be made. The lodge members either had to quit the lodge or leave the church, they couldn't be members of*

¹⁹ Pastor Prenzlow Jr. of the LCMS, interview by N. Kuske, 6 February 1999, Bloomer, notes taken, St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Bloomer.

both. It ended up that those members and their families left St. Paul's.

All this took place around the same time that the educational unit was being built in the late fifties.

Ironically those families went back to St. John's the ALC church in Bloomer. About ten years later in the late sixties or early seventies a new pastor came to St. John's who had very liberal views. This young pastor challenged the basic teachings of the Bible as well as the deity of Christ among other things. This upset those families who had left St. Paul's a decade earlier. They didn't agree with this new pastor's views so they left St. John's. Once again they were looking for a new church home. Pride kept them from coming back to St. Paul's. Then in the early seventies this group of people formed their own church. They called it Good Shepherd Lutheran church. It became a member of the ELS with whom we are in fellowship today. But this is once again getting ahead of ourselves.

One final note about St. Paul's while ^Ppastor Prenzlów was serving them. In 1962 he divorced his wife. At that time such action was not looked upon favorably. Previously St. Paul's had rescinded pastor Mahnke's call for cause. Now they also asked pastor Prenzlów to step down. He agreed and left St. Paul's. After two years he wanted to rejoin the WELS but they didn't accept him. He remarried and became a pastor in the LCMS. He has prospered there as one of their planned giving counselors.



Pastor Herbert Koehler

After ^Ppastor Prenzlów Jr. came ^Ppastor Herbert Koehler. He served St. Paul's from 1963-1972. The records about

pastor Koehler's ministry were few to none. The only thing noted in the history booklets was that the church was redecorated during this time. Not much was recorded during his ministry at St. Paul's.

Pastor Dennis Kempf came after Pastor Koehler. Pastor Kempf served St. Paul's from 1973-1988. During this time St. Paul's had a few more changes. Mr.



Pastor Dennis Kempf

Kressin notes:

- ²⁰ *At the annual meeting of January 20, 1974 a motion was carried to institute the Pioneer program in our congregation for boys and girls....At the annual meeting of January 25, 1976 a motion was carried to give the church council the authority to purchase the Lang property when it will become available.... The Lang property was purchased and the house was torn down. The lot will be made into a parking lot.*

This property is right by the parsonage. It was turned into a parking lot. A garage for the parsonage was also put in on this land. Also, some members from St. Paul's consented to become charter members of a new church. These members along with their families helped found Redeemer Lutheran church in Rice Lake which is about thirty miles north of Bloomer.

In 1978 St. Paul's celebrated fifty years under the grace of God. A special service was held on November 18, 1978. The guest speaker was Northwestern College president Carleton Toppe. The liturgist was former pastor Herbert Koehler. Once again in the early eighties St. Paul's had the kitchen extensively remodeled. In January of 1988 pastor Kempf accepted a call. Pastor

²⁰ Vernon Kressin, By the Grace of God, 50 years of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Building (Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1978) pg. 9

Jeffery Seelow of Cornell, Wisconsin served as vacancy pastor until August of 1988.

In August of 1988 Pastor Norman Kuske accepted the call to serve St. Paul's. He is still the current pastor of St. Paul's today. On November 13, 1988, the congregation celebrated its sixtieth anniversary.



Pastor Norman C. Kuske

The congregation at this time still had the desire to start a Lutheran elementary school. Now, however, priorities had shifted a little bit. The members who had helped with the addition of the educational unit back in the late fifties were now thirty years older. The members of St. Paul's told pastor Kuske when he arrived that they were an older congregation. Some of the older members wanted to build a disabled entrance before a school was started. It was decided that besides an elevator for the elderly members to use, an addition to the front entrance of the church would also be built. This way, the church would have a much larger narthex area where the members could gather, hang their coats, and keep out of the elements and weather. Some of the members were hesitant about supporting this idea.

Eventually it was resolved that the front addition would be built and it would include an elevator for the elderly to use. It is a good twenty to twenty-five steps to get from ground level to the main church floor. As mentioned before, the whole church building when it was completed and furnished cost a little more than \$33,000. This new front entrance with an elevator cost a little more than \$400,000. Work began on the addition in early 1990. It was completed in the fall of 1991. The addition was also dedicated shortly thereafter in the fall of 1991. A special service

was held on the church's anniversary Sunday to dedicate this addition.

Many of the members were concerned how the congregation was going to pay for this expensive addition. They thought they would have to have all kinds of suppers and sales to make some money to help pay for the addition. Pastor Kuske instructed the congregation that since this is a St. Paul's congregational expense, the congregation should look to itself first as well as reevaluate its stewardship principles. The congregation did this and in seven years, in 1998, the loan taken out for the addition was paid off.

In 1996 some of the younger members with families wanted to start a school. Later in 1996 the congregation looked ahead and agreed that if everything continued to go the way they were, the loan for the addition would be paid off in 1998. Plans started to be put into motion for the opening of a new school. The education wing had to have some minor remodeling done to it to make the two larger downstairs classrooms ready to serve as schoolrooms. The education wing also had to have some changes made to it to bring up to code so it could be classified as a school. Fire alarms had to be installed, the bathrooms had to be redone, and fire doors had to be installed among a few other things. In the spring of 1997 St. Paul's was assigned a teacher from the call committee at Martin Luther College. Their teacher's name is Miss Jill Richards. The school opened in the fall of 1997 with nine students. The enrollment increased in 1998 to fifteen students. Also back in 1996, as stated earlier, St. Paul's officially became a member of the WELS.

Here are the statistical numbers of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran congregation as of 1997:

• 21

²¹ WELS, Statistical report of the WELS for 1997 (Milwaukee: Synod Building, 1997) pg. 88

Congregation	St. Paul's, Bloomer WI	Professions of Faith	4
Member of Synod	yes	Transfers in	1
Year organized	1886	Communicant deaths	7
Pastor	Norman C. Kuske	Transfers out	2
Baptized members	465	Joined other churches	0
Communicant members	399	Removal	12
Child Baptisms	7	Net comm. gain or losses	-9
Adult Baptisms	0	Ave. Sunday attendance	192
Child confirmations	4	Marriages	2
Adult confirmations	3	Burials	7

The Lord has truly blessed this group of believers at St. Paul's. He has provided many things for the congregation throughout its history. He has given them pastors as well as many good times. He has also provided the congregation with unique challenges and hardships. Most importantly though, the Lord has poured out his grace upon these people and has worked saving faith in their hearts. God-willing, St. Paul's will continue its ministry well into the twenty-first century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books.

Kressin, Vernon. By the Grace of God, 50 years of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Building Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1978.

Kressin, Vernon. 60th Anniversary of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church Building Bloomer: Bloomer Printing, 1988.

Interviews.

Conrad, Leslie. Interview by N. Kuske, 20 February 1999, Bloomer. tape recording. St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

Kempf, Dennis. Interview by author, 19 March 1999, Milwaukee. telephone interview. St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

Kressin, Vernon. Interview by N. Kuske, 20 February 1999, Bloomer. tape recording and hand written notes. St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

Kuske, Norman. Interview by author, 19 February and 2 April 1999, Bloomer and Milwaukee. tape and telephone interview. St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bloomer.

Prenzlow Jr., Elmer. (of the LCMS) Interview by N. Kuske, 6 February 1999, Bloomer. notes taken. St. Paul's Ev. Luth. Church, Bloomer.

Articles.

WELS, Statistical report of the WELS for 1990 Milwaukee: Synod Building, 1990.

WELS, Statistical report of the WELS for 1991 Milwaukee: Synod Building, 1991.

WELS, Statistical report of the WELS for 1997 Milwaukee: Synod Building, 1997.