

THE REV. WILLIAM DAMMANN



SEELSORGER THROUGH STORM AND STRESS

by John A. Miller  
April 20, 1986

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*(Dedicated to Pastor Paul G. Eckert  
the present Seelsorger of St. Jacobi)*

April 20, 1986  
John A. Miller  
Church History

THE REV. WILLIAM DAMMANN: SEELSORGER THROUGH STORM AND STRESS

*Zum--Andenken  
an den  
Gruender & langjaehrigen  
verdienstvollen Seelsorger  
der  
Ev. Luth. St. Jacobi--Gemeinde  
Herrn Pastor Wm. Dammann  
Geb. Am 6. Aug. 1829 in  
Erfurt--Deutschland  
Gest. Am 21. Feb. 1894 in  
Milwaukee--Wis.*

*Gewidmet von den Confirmanden am Psalmsonntag 1894*

INTRODUCTION: "REMEMBER YOUR LEADERS..."

"Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7). The last confirmation class of the Rev. Dammann chose to remember their leader by placing a wooden plaque in his memory in their humble Gothic church building. Since 1894, the plaque has been moved twice: once to the ornate, twin-towered ediface which took the place of that first church on Milwaukee's south side, and again some seven miles westward to St. Jacobi Congregation's latest home, a comfortable triple-roofed structure in Greenfield.

The plaque still reads, "In memory of the founder and worthy caretaker of the souls of the Ev. Luth. St. Jacobi Congregation." But who can remember? Who can remember his love and zeal for preaching the Savior's gospel? Who can remember his concern for confessional and Scriptural Lutheranism? Who can remember the hardships he faced in a strange country and unsettled territory? Who can remember the battles he fought on synodical lines and within his own congregations? Who could remember his victories? Who

can remember his faith in the mercies of his God, who time after time blessed his unworthy servant, even through the storms and stress in his life? Who can remember? No one can; those who could are likewise gone. Today the name on the plaque is as unfamiliar as the language in which the words on the plaque are written.

And that's too bad. There is a great deal to learn about Pastor Dammann; there is a great deal to learn from him; there is a great deal that ought not be forgotten. "Remember your leaders!"

#### CHAPTER 1: FROM MILITARY TO MINISTRY

August 6, 1829 brought the birth of William Dammann in Erfurt, Thuringia, Germany. Born to a Herrn-huter family, his religious background at home was likely strong and grounded in Scripture. As pious Christians devoted to the Savior's gospel, it seems he and his family were always interested in Christian missions of some sort. His mother was the first to enlist as a member of the Erfurt women's auxiliary of the Berlin Mission Society. After laying a firm educational foundation in Erfurt, it was no small wonder the young Dammann attended the Berlin Teachers' Seminary. Nor was it a wonder that the director of the school recommended the brilliant Dammann as a tutor to the Prussian ambassador at Rome.<sup>1</sup> Whatever his responsibilities included, the Lord certainly used them to prepare young William for what lay ahead.

But first his career took a bit of a different turn. Described as "stocky"<sup>2</sup> and relatively tall for his generation, he chose something a bit more physical than school teaching for the time being.

Beginning in 1849 he served as a cuirassier with the Prussian cavalry, and helped in putting down a revolution in Baden. He then transferred to the artillery for further advancement. But apparently his love for missions instilled in him since childhood was stronger than his desire to continue serving his country. Somehow he felt called to enlist as a soldier to help in the mission work being conducted among the natives in Africa. In 1855 he received his discharge as a non-commissioned officer.<sup>3</sup> Finally he would begin to put into action his love for proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to those who did not yet know it. He always was a man for missions and he would show that throughout his lifetime. Not only did he keep himself informed as to their progress throughout the world; he also made it his responsibility to keep his people informed and interested in supporting them as well. It was this love that led him to enroll at the Mission House at Barmen at the age of twenty-six.

A few words need to be said about this institution at Barmen, as Dammann's training there had a direct influence on his confessional stance, as well as the confessional stance the Wisconsin Synod would eventually adhere to. Established in 1826, the Barmen Mission House had quite a backing. The spirited life of its supporters centered around their prayer meetings and mission festivals. The curriculum at Barmen consisted in knowing and understanding Scripture, history, German and in some cases English, geography, natural history, drawing, singing and public speaking. Teaching practice was obtained for its students at area elementary schools.<sup>4</sup>

The school and its students were supported by the offerings of the Langenberg Mission Society, established especially to provide men to give some sort of spiritual guidance to their German countrymen in America. A product of the state's Union Church, missionaries of the society were to remain unrestricted as to their Reformed, Lutheran or United-evangelical confession, and every congregation founded by them was to be free to join the evangelical church of its choice. The aim was solely to "save distant brethren and sisters from falling away, lead the erring in the way of truth and instruct them in the Word of Life, so as to gather them into congregations."<sup>5</sup>

The early Wisconsin Synod, of which Dammann would later be a prominent member, reflected this ideology in its make-up. It wasn't from the beginning strictly Lutheran in ~~in~~ all its practices. But that did begin to change when, for awhile, the Barmen Mission House was headed by a confessional Lutheran. The man was Pastor Dammann's beloved teacher: Johann Christian Wallmann. Wallmann majored at the University of Halle in exegetics and dogmatics, and was led out of the rationalistic smog by one of his instructors who pointed his students to their Savior rather than to their own human reason. Wallmann studied the Lutheran dogmaticians and read Lutheran devotional materials and led true Bible studies, much to the dismay of the rationalistic clergy of his day. As administrator at Barmen, he was confronted often about his confessional Lutheranism. But he could only defend his Scriptural teachings and practice, and pass them along to his students. He maintained good discipline in the dormitories, and showed a deep fatherly concern for his students.

Thus, at the feet of Wallmann, for three years Dammann experienced meaty exegesis of the Scriptures geared for practical use; simple but thorough training in Lutheran doctrine; and pastoral theology from one who was a true pastor at heart. Dammann would be sent out with <sup>the</sup> gospel of Jesus Christ, not with the know-how to be a pioneer of civilization, an expert at stopping the slave trade, or a promulgator of other human interests. He was trained as a pastor and a teacher of the pure Word of God.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, Professor Wallmann had to leave Barmen for confessional reasons in 1857, a few years before Dammann completed his studies there. The school lost its confessional Lutheran influence, and that resulted in friction between the school's new administration and Wallmann's students in the school and out in the field. Toward the end of Dammann's stay at the school, it also resulted in strong differences between him and Inspector Fabri, the new head administrator. Fabri refused to employ Dammann as a missionary in the territory he supervised in Africa, even though he had awarded him only the highest honors in his examinations. Even at this point in time, Dammann was quite certain of his confessional stance over against unionism, and was quite willing to vocally defend it. Writes Koehler, "It is very likely that because of this fact, coupled with his aggressive nature, the unionist Fabri, Wallmann's successor at Barmen, didn't want to see Dammann in his African mission."<sup>7</sup>

So Dammann's dream of being a foreign missionary in Africa was never realized. Apparently it was God's will that he rather serve the Lutherans in America, so desperately in need of sound

spiritual leadership. In 1860 the Barmen Mission House recommended Candidate Dammann to serve to this end.

## CHAPTER 2: FROM GERMANY TO THE LUTHERANS IN AMERICA

If Dammann was at all discouraged by the news of his being sent to America, he might have been encouraged at the thought of again associating with some of his former classmates under Wallmann, already here in America. One such friend was the Rev. C. Gausewitz, also highly confessional in stance. Another may have been the Rev. Phillip Koehler, though it is probable that Koehler was already in America by the time Dammann began his studies at Barmen. In any case, the Langenberg cleric at that time, Secretary Meyeringh, thought of Dammann as a cohort of both. And he and the society did their level best to prevent Candidate Dammann from being assigned as Koehler's "apprentice" as Gausewitz had been. They dreaded Dammann's being exposed to Koehler's confessional influence.<sup>8</sup> It is likely they underestimated the extent of Dammann's own confessionalism.

Nevertheless, at his final examination on August 29, 1860, Dammann was given express orders as to which confessional attitude to take. And to prevent his being further drawn to any confessional influence, he was instructed to place himself at the disposal of the authorities of the German Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin. To back up these orders, Meyeringh wrote the following letter to President Muehlhaeuser of the Wisconsin Synod:



*It is decidedly the wish of our directors that the newly-sent missionaries for Wisconsin be directed to you and to the disposition of the Synod, not an individual friend of the brethren there. Dammann is a friend of Koehler's (also Gausewitz and others), but it wouldn't seem adviseable that he be placed in his immediate neighborhood because just among such brethren as Koehler, Sprengling (not mentioning others of our dear missionaries) Lutheranism is being fostered too strongly, as we fear. Hence I may definitely state here on behalf of our Society that Dammann is to be at the disposition of your Synod, even though that may not have been told him in such express terms when he was given his instructions.*

*P.S. [by President Hermann]: Everything said endorsed, especially regarding Brother Dammann we very much wish that he should place himself wholly at the disposition of your synod. If my time had permitted I would by now have written to Brother Koehler, since I feel the need of unbosoming myself to him; probably soon.*

With such restrictions, Dammann was commissioned by the mission society for Wisconsin, to be joined at a later date by the Rev. Meumann, and the Rev. Moldehenke who was destined to become the first college and seminary professor of the Wisconsin Synod. It is highly ironic that, without any conscious disregard for the wishes of the mission society, in coming to America, Dammann reported to Pastor Koehler in Manitowoc, under whom he learned the ropes of pastoring in America. By authority of Muehlhaeuser, he was ordained by Koehler and Sprengling, and was pledged to all the confessions of the Lutheran church, according<sup>to</sup> the the ritual outlined in Loehe's Agenda. The men of the northern conference didn't even think of holding an examination or colloquium because of Dammann's training at Barmen under Wallmann. His credentials on that basis were a sufficient guarantee of his orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup>

In May of 1861 President Bading of the Wisconsin Synod was able to report the following at the synod convention held at Watertown:

*In the month of November, Candidate Dammann came from the Langenberg Society, sent here by the Mission House in Barmen. Since he was supposed to take over Pastor Braun's field of work which had become vacant through his departure, I instructed the northern conference to ordain him. The ordination was done immediately on December 2, [1860] in Manitowoc.*

### CHAPTER 3: FROM ST. PETER'S TO ST. PETER'S

In Wisconsin, Pastor Dammann did take over St. Peter's Congregation at Town Addison, Washington County, as was proposed when he arrived. It had been served since 1854 by Koehler himself, who had been troubled by a congregation that had a strong distrust of all preachers. It seems the congregation had been taken advantage of by Methodists, Baptists, and even humanists. Koehler installed Pastor C. Braun, also trained by Wallmann, as his successor in September of 1858. No doubt Pastor Dammann inherited Koehler and Braun's problems, as difficulties regarding conflicting communion service surfaced again later on under one of Dammann's successors.<sup>12</sup>

Dammann's short tenure at Town Addison was probably not the easiest also on other accounts. The parsonage he occupied was probably indicative of the primitive living conditions he endured there. The home had been built primarily by Koehler and his nearby neighbor at Theresa, John Bading, neither of whom were carpenters by any stretch of the imagination. By necessity, the plastering turned out to be a "do-it-yourself job." But advice had to be solicited after the plaster kept falling down as quickly as they could smooth it out. The problem: they had omitted horsehair from their recipe! The next time they got it right, but they

took no chances--they never did smooth out the plaster. The affected room became the study. Consequently, Dammann the pioneer got to work in a study fit for a pioneer, tucked away upstairs, shielded from the public eye.<sup>13</sup>

For a very short time, Dammann was privileged to share his humble abode with his bride, Emma Streissguth, the sister of Pastor W. Streissguth. Their marriage would be blessed with nine children, only seven of which would survive: three sons and four daughters. At the time of Dammann's death, two daughters were married, one to Pastor W. Rader then at Wauwatosa, and the other, Bertha, to Pastor John Jenny, his successor at St. Jacobi. At the time of his death, his two youngest sons were studying to follow in their father's footsteps, one at the Seminary in Wauwatosa, and the other at Watertown.<sup>14</sup> His son Theodore was destined to become Secretary of the State of Wisconsin for many years.

Not only was life in the congregation and in the parsonage rough on the young Pastor Dammann. His first brutal Wisconsin winter took its toll on him as well: he froze both of his feet on his winter hikes through the parish. As a result, he spent some time recovering in Milwaukee.<sup>15</sup>

In spring of 1861, Pastor Dammann received a call to St. Peter's Congregation in Milwaukee, which had been established by members of St. John's and Grace churches who lived on the south side of the city. They were augmented by members of the nearby St. Stephen's Congregation of the Missouri Synod who were promptly excommunicated by their own Pastor Steinbach. St. Peter's had been served irregularly by Pastors Muehlhaeuser and Streissguth; for work to flourish

there, they needed a resident pastor. After a certain Pastor Reim returned their call, they called Pastor Dammann at the suggestion of Pastor Muehlhaeuser. He accepted their call with the following letter:

*I have received your call and will accept it. I shall come as soon as possible. However, I cannot state the exact time of my arrival, since I cannot just walk out on my present congregation. God must first supply the man who is to take my place. He is on his way from Germany and is expected to arrive soon.*

The man to take Dammann's place was Pastor Meumann, and indeed he did arrive soon, freeing Dammann to come to Milwaukee. He arrived on May 10, 1861, and on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, he preached his initial sermon in the morning. In an afternoon service he was installed by Pastors Muehlhaeuser and Streissguth.

For such a momentous occasion, it was fitting that the church be beautifully decorated. The choir of Grace church sang the liturgy.

Upon Pastor Dammann's arrival, things began to happen. With permission of the congregation, he had a parsonage built at his own expense, though located on church property. There he would live until his death. Two weeks after his installation, St. Peter's School was officially opened, and he himself took charge until 1864. Finally his tutoring and teaching experiences were paying off! Pastor Dammann also took it upon himself at this time to write a history of St. Peter's earliest years, from which the following paragraphs are extracted:

*On November 3, 1861, a joint Mission Festival was celebrated in Grace Church, participated in by St. John's, Grace, and St. Peter's. There were large numbers in attendance and the festival collection amounted to \$17.00.*

*A collection was taken among the members of our congregation for a new altar and pulpit. The money to pay for this furniture was on hand and enough remained to purchase altar hangings of black velvet with silver*

*fringes. Certain friends presented a crucifix, candelabra, and artificial flowers for the altar.*

CHAPTER 4: FROM UNIONISM TO CONFSSIONALISM--THE SYNODICAL SCENE

During his pastorate at St. Peter's, Pastor Dammann became greatly involved in synodical matters. With his firm foundation in the Lutheran confessions, he, together with Koehler and others, had no small influence on the Wisconsin Synod as it grew more confessional in practice. If unionism had set Dammann off in Germany at Barmen, it was sure to do the same here in America. Already in November of 1861, by means of a letter, he took the praesidium to task for indefinite action in regard to unionism. The recurring problem seemed to be Wisconsin's relationship with the German mission societies. Eventually the little synod would have to make it clear to the societies that it could no longer settle for any man the societies chose to send. Furthermore, it would have to be made clear that Lutheran men could not be expected to serve Reformed congregations with Reformed doctrine.

Yet, in late 1863 and early 1864, that is exactly what the societies were asking their Wisconsin men to do. Some in the synod found nothing wrong with that, at least until the societies could send more Reformed men for Reformed congregations. Others in the synod, led by Pastor Koehler, loudly protested. In fact, Koehler was even ready to resign his position as synod secretary over the matter, rather than sign and affix the synod seal to something that went against every fibre in his body. The northern conference backed him up by refusing to send its conference report to the German

societies. Pastor Dammann likewise in the southern conference stood behind Koehler and his objections.<sup>18</sup>

At the convention held at Manitowoc in May of 1864, the matter was discussed at length. While a unanimous stand was made for the Lutheran confessions, the synod was not yet ready to cut her ties with the unionistic societies. Dammann was one of the few who favored such clean severing. Former President Muehlhaeuser wrote to former President Bading:

*A mild spirit was in evidence. Gausewitz sticks to his old stand. Brother Koehler made the motion to cut loose from the Berlin society, because our Lutheran confession is menaced by continuing association. But only Koehler, Dammann, Brockmann, Sprengling, and several others were in favor of it. The great majority were in favor of this that the relationship continue, and that we are under great obligations to Berlin....*

The matter again came up in November of the same year when the societies sent a memorandum to synod officials and to Langenberg missionaries, including Dammann. The memorandum stated that the society expected its men presently in the field to serve both Lutheran and Reformed congregations as the need arose, rather than let some go without any spiritual care at all. The congregation and not the pastor would determine which catechism would be used in instruction classes. Furthermore, a Lutheran pastor dare not impose his confessional ideals on a Reformed congregation. Where the memorandum was sent to Langenberg missionaries, it was accompanied by a personal letter inviting a response.

While the memorandum sent to synod officials was answered in an official (and diplomatic) way, Pastors Dammann and Koehler hotly replied to the personal letter with their own personal letters. These letters, probably more than anything, led the Langenberg

Society to consider dropping Wisconsin from its missionary supply list. The matter was again smoothed over at the 1865 convention where friendly relations were restored with the society. Both mission societies promised not to demand anything that wasn't in keeping with the synod's "special trend."<sup>20</sup> The reconciliation was only temporary, however, as bonds were finally broken in 1868. The Wisconsin Synod would have to supply her own pastors, as indeed she was already beginning to do through her new college and seminary in Watertown. That strictly Lutheran teaching and practice would now be insured in the Wisconsin Synod must have given Pastor Dammann and those with whom he worked a reason for great rejoicing.

Also in 1868 Pastor Dammann served on a committee involved in conducting a colloquium with representatives of the Missouri Synod. The following agreement was reached between the two synods:

- 1) *Both synods will recognize each other as orthodox Lutheran church bodies.*
- 2) *Both synods will practice pulpit and altar fellowship.*
- 3) *The brotherly relation will be fostered by mutual representation at synod meetings and participation in pastoral conferences.*
- 4) *If pastors or parishioners of one synod join the other, admission is to be contingent on certification of honorable release.*
- 5) *Disciplinary cases within a body are respected by the other synod....*
- 6) *Where congregations of the two synods are opposing each other, both sides should bend all efforts to stop the opposition in Christian order and establish a brotherly relationship.*
- 7) *Both synods retain the right to found new congregations anywhere as the need arises....*
- 8) *If in either synod false teaching rears its head, each synod is bound to put down such an error with all means at its command, and as long as this is done, the orthodoxy of one or the other synod shall not be questioned.*

Milwaukee, Wis., October 22, A.D. 1868

Johannes Bading, Praeses

A. Hoenecke, Prof.

Ph. Koehler

W. Dammann

C. Gausewitz

C.F.W. Walther, Praeses

E.A. Brauer, Prof.

F. Lochner

F. Sievers<sup>21</sup>

C. Strasen

The 1869 convention held at Helenville ratified the accord and moved toward further cooperation in other areas of church work.

The agreement, especially #6, had far-reaching effects in Dammann's own St. Peter's congregation. Apparently there was still dissension between St. Peter's and Pastor Steinbach of St. Stephen's because he had disciplined those members who had helped found St. Peter's. Finally, the matter was investigated when both factions agreed to place their differences before an impartial arbitration committee consisting of both synod presidents. The outcome of the meeting was that Pastor Steinbach lifted the excommunication ban he had placed on the members who had left St. Stephen's to help found St. Peter's. In token of the peace which was established, joint mid-week Advent and Lenten services were held, alternating between the two churches.<sup>22</sup> This concord no doubt took a tremendous load off of Pastor Dammann's mind.

On the synodical scene, it was not only external relations that consumed Pastor Dammann's energies. He was also actively involved with internal matters. At the 1863 convention, where the location of the Synod's college and seminary were debated, Dammann was one of the voices who spoke up loudly for Watertown. He remarked that although Milwaukee needed a college badly, he preferred Watertown as a location for the seminary. The college-combination-seminary would indeed be located at Watertown. At this convention Pastor Dammann was appointed to a committee with



Muehlhaeuser, Fachtmann, Reim, Streissguth and Koehler to examine student applicants for the new college/seminary.<sup>23</sup>

At the 1867 convention, Dammann served on a committee to examine "our synod's attitude toward secret societies." The stand is characteristic of ~~of~~ that which Dammann himself took in all the congregations he served. The committee's resolve was that the synod would be constrained to give lodge members a definite choice: either lodge or church, but not both. The resolution was amended by the floor as follows:

*Synod finally demands that the pastors and congregations, after thorough and patient instruction, proceed against members of secret societies by refusal of the Lord's Supper, and in case the congregations protest against such a procedure of the pastor, Synod declares that eventually it will sever relations with such a congregation.*<sup>24</sup>

#### CHAPTER 5: FROM STORM TO STORM

If synodical affairs didn't keep Pastor Dammann occupied, events within his own St. Peter's congregation certainly did. As the following will indicate, there were happy times, momentous events that Dammann most likely cherished in his memory the rest of his life. But unfortunately, most of the storms and stress Pastor Dammann faced in his lifetime came while he served St. Peter's in Milwaukee.

Those storms began already in 1872 when some members insisted on standing at the Lord's Table, while others just as emphatically insisted on kneeling during the distribution. Pastor Dammann tried to settle the matter, but to no avail. In fact, a faction of the members began to turn against him. The dissension within the con-

gregation got so out of hand that President Bading and another pastor, the Rev. Goldammer of Burlington, had to be called in to settle the dispute and attempt a compromise. The compromise agreed to: all members were to receive the Lord's Supper standing, while the confession of sins was made while kneeling.<sup>25</sup>

New trouble arose in the fall of 1863 when Pastor Dammann ordered a reed organ for \$100.00 from a firm in Watertown. When delivery of the organ was delayed, certain members began pointing accusing fingers at the pastor, apparently implying that he pocketed the money. It might have also been the case that he was not in favor of that kind of money out-lay at that time and thought it wise to look for a better deal, and so the members opposed him on that account. Whatever the case, in a meeting led by Pastor Streissguth, the pastor was cleared of whatever suspicion this faction had placed him under, and those members who had caused the trouble were expelled from the congregation.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that after this ordeal, a resolution was passed that the congregation be more careful in receiving new members, and a stand was taken against receiving and retaining lodge members. Apparently, during this period of rapid growth at St. Peter's, members were not instructed and screened as carefully as they might have been. This opened the door for those who were, perhaps, under discipline elsewhere, or for those who were simply troublemakers. It seems that at St. Peter's there always was a faction of members who were out to "get Pastor Dammann's goat," and probably quite often succeeded. This, coupled with Pastor Dammann's own strong personality, could only mean dissension.

It is unfortunate that the resolution passed by the congregation did not solve the problems at St. Peter's that Pastor Dammann had to deal with.

A new disturbance was caused by a new teacher, Mr. Brueggemann in 1864. This man apparently thought wonders of who he was, and tried to convince others that he was destined for bigger and better things. He began turning members against the pastor and winning them for himself. It seems he wanted to enthrone himself as pastor. However, his conspiracy was short-lived. It was discovered that he had made himself guilty of misdemeanors in the classroom. When he was called upon to face these charges, he absconded with \$300.00 from the congregation's treasury, and was never heard from again.<sup>27</sup>

A situation Pastor Dammann apparently didn't let himself get riled up about was the wheel-of-fortune used for many years at the annual fair held in conjunction with the children's picnic. In 1864 alone, 3,000 lottery or chance tickets were also printed for the affair, which had even been advertised in the Milwaukee newspapers. That this event raised money for the church can be seen from the fact that the picnic treasurer had to furnish a bond for \$1,000. Such methods are bound to be repulsive to us who in our day are used to more Scriptural stewardship principles. Yet these fund raising schemes pale when compared to the fact that in 1866 St. Peter's employed bill collectors to kill the debts. These men were paid \$1.75 per day and their efforts were successful!<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately, however, the congregation never lost sight of its real reason for existing: preaching the gospel. Pastor Dammann

also saw to it that preaching the gospel outside of St. Peter's was kept before the eyes of his people. Again, his love for missions came through! St. Peter's was a regular participant in the joint mission festivals held from time to time around Milwaukee. Reference was already made to one held in 1861 in which St. Peter's participated. The year 1865 was no different, as Pastor Dammann himself reported in the very first volume of the Gemeinde-Blatt:

MISSION FESTIVAL IN MILWAUKEE

*(On the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity)--The congregations in Milwaukee assemble for joint mission festivals, alternating use of one another's churches. This time it was St. Peter's turn. The weather was favorable; the little church was jammed full of festival guests, and many had to sit in the adjacent spacious school area. Eloquent sermons were preached by Pastors Muehlhaeuser, Streissguth and Giese; the choir of the congregation helped beautify the festival. The assembly followed the address with rapt attention; we hope that the Word found receptive soil in many. At the close of the liturgy, the pastor dismissed the assembly with the blessing. The collection brought forth \$23.41.*<sup>29</sup>

W. Dammann

From the description of the above service, it is obvious that at that time a new, larger church building was not far in the future. The old church was only a frame structure that had been purchased from a Congregational church and moved to St. Peter's property. This time, in a meeting held in January of 1866, the congregation voted to build a brick ediface, following the plans of Architect Rugee. The new church was 64 X 44 feet, and housed the school in the basement.<sup>30</sup> The old church and school were sold and moved, and proceeds likely went toward the new church which cost \$7,191. St. Peter's members were not alone in raising money for the new church, however. The following notice appeared in the Gemeinde-Blatt:

*THANKS!--St. Peter's Congregation in Milwaukee has resolved to express heartfelt thanks to her sister congregations in Milwaukee, Caledonia Center, Racine, Burlington, Kilbourn Road, Smith's Road, Greenfield,*

*Granville, Freistadt, Germantown, West Bend, Hermann, Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, Eldorado, and the Rev. Squer for their much needed help in the building of their church.*

The cornerstone of the new church was laid on June 24, 1866, and the dedication took place in three services held on September 30 of that year. Pastor Dammann preached in the morning as did Pastor Streissguth, Professor Martin of Watertown preached in English in the afternoon, and Pastor Lange preached in German. At the evening service, Pastor Hoffmann of Portage addressed the assembly. Not long after the dedication of the church, a new organ costing \$1,700 was ordered from the Wolfgram organ builders of Chicago and later installed.<sup>32</sup> This time there were no accusations against Pastor Dammann.

Beginning in about 1870, Pastor Dammann's responsibilities as a Seelsorger increased when he began to serve another congregation together with St. Peter's. The congregation was St. John's of New Coeln, present day Oak Creek, quite a distance from the Scott Street location of St. Peter's. St. John's had been organized in 1850 by Pastor Muehlhaeuser as the Evangelical Protestant Church, and had been served by various pastors since that time, not all of them Lutheran. In 1867, under Dammann's immediate predecessor, the congregation changed its name to St. John's and became a member of the Wisconsin Synod. It would seem that during the few years Dammann served St. John's, he displayed a warm concern for the spiritual welfare of its members. During those years he baptized 40, confirmed 16, married 6 couples, and buried 9.<sup>33</sup>

Sometime before 1872, Pastor Dammann also began serving Lutherans recently settled in the village of Bay View, then south of the city

of Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Iron Company had not long before opened a large plant there, and many of the workers who had moved to Bay View were Lutherans, still retaining their membership at St. Peter's and St. Stephen's. Pastor Dammann took these Lutherans under his wing and ironed out plans for founding a separate congregation in Bay View.

Early in 1872 Pastor Dammann persuaded the owners of the Milwaukee Iron Company to donate a parcel of land as a building site for the congregation that was about to organize. Then he convinced St. John's of New Coeln to call as their pastor the candidate of theology Mr. John Hodtwalker, with the understanding that he be a missionary in Bay View, found a congregation, and from there also serve St. John's in New Coeln. The plan apparently worked, and Dammann was relieved of both congregations. Dammann did, however, meet with the new pastor in planning a church building for the Bay View congregation, and helped dedicate the little church on October 6, 1872. On the Sunday after the dedication the congregation which had been gathered by Dammann organized itself under the name: German Evangelical Lutheran St. Lucas Congregation in Bay View, Milwaukee Co., Wisconsin.<sup>34</sup>

Pastor Dammann might have hoped that now he would be able to devote his full energies to matters at St. Peter's and enjoy some peace and quiet there. Such would not be the case. In fact, the worst storm of his ministry loomed on the horizon early in 1873. Several members again began hurling serious criticisms at him, and started rumors that caused his moral integrity to be called into question. Pastor Paul Eckert of St. Jacobi explains that the cause

apparently was contrariness and antagonisms over against Pastor Dammann on the part of some members. These antagonisms apparently were met at first with some irritation and delay in trying to settle matters.<sup>35</sup> Whatever the case, provoked or unprovoked, Pastor Dammann's good name was darkened by this antagonistic faction, and his work at St. Peter's was severely hindered.

Once again, synod officials were called upon to investigate the matter. President Bading and Pastor Adolph Hoenecke were present at the congregational meeting where, by a vote of 98 to 38, it was decided that Pastor Dammann could no longer continue to work with blessing at St. Peter's. Efforts were made by Professor Ernst, Pastor Hoenecke, Pastor Koehler, and Pastor Jaeckel to save the situation, but with no success. A synodical committee consisting of Pastors Bading, Hoenecke, Brenner, Waldt, Hoffmann, Lucas, Koehler, Denninger, Popp, Jaeckel, and Professor Ernst determined that the congregation was justified in the action taken.<sup>36</sup> At the same time as Pastor Dammann was officially removed from St. Peter's, he took with him a handful of members and founded a new congregation.

The entire incident came up again at the synod convention held at La Crosse in June of 1873. President Bading addressed the floor as follows:

*During the course of the past winter, nasty rumors began surfacing in St. Peter's Congregation, Milwaukee, in regard to their pastor, which rumors in a very short time spread in all directions throughout the city. An investigation of the rumors established that the charges pinned on the pastor so maliciously in the rumors were certainly not able to be substantiated, but that his conduct, however, was certainly not in keeping with the Word of God which says he ought to have 'fled all evil appearances.' The confidence of the congregation in their pastor, through the aforementioned rumors, as well as through long-standing controversies, was so shaken, that blessed work in the same place was no longer possible. Since a peaceful solution between pastor and congregation was not reached, the latter dismissed him, while he,*

together with a small faction of the same, founded a new congregation and on the third day of May declared their withdrawal from membership in the synod. The report relating to this incident, and documents written by Pastor Dammann, the congregation and the commission established for looking into this matter will be presented to the synod at a later time for further discussion and appraisal.<sup>37</sup>

The committee did again look into the matter and submitted the following report to the convention:

Committee Report: The committee which has to report on withdrawals and releases of pastors and congregations from the synod permits itself to report to the venerable synod as follows: In the matter regarding the Rev. W. Dammann in Milwaukee, the committee of the synod recommends approving the removal of the same from the factional parties within St. Peter's Congregation in Milwaukee for his own sake, for the reasons established in the documents submitted, and recognizes his withdrawal from the synod.

Respectfully,

Pastor Ph. Koehler  
Pastor B. Ungrodt  
Pastor A. Opitz  
Deleg. W. Lieber  
Deleg. H. L. Fosten<sup>38</sup>

The above report was unanimously upheld by decision of the synod, but only after reviewing the proceedings of the congregational meeting in which Dammann was removed, and only after careful and thoughtful examination of the facts.

The above decision must have sickened those who had to make it, especially Pastor Koehler. And it must have hurt Pastor Dammann deeply to have left St. Peter's under such circumstances. But it must have hurt him even more deeply to have left behind a synod he had so faithfully served and one which he had come to love so dearly. He would simply have to take the little flock that had followed him and begin again, trusting that the Lord would use even this nightmare for the good of his Kingdom. His God had always been with him before; he would not fail him now. And he didn't.



CHAPTER 6: FROM ONE CONQUEST TO ANOTHER

Pastor Dammann and the members who followed him in breaking ties with St. Peter's were joined by other Lutherans of un-named origin. Together they went about the work of establishing a new Lutheran congregation. On April 20, 1873, 39 voting members met in the home of a certain Julius Klug for this purpose. In that meeting and those that followed they elected officers, worked out a constitution, and chose the name: Evangelical Lutheran St. Jacobi Congregation.

Already at the first meeting the matter of choosing a location was discussed. A committee was elected to look into the matter. Within a few days they presented their recommendation at another meeting held in Pastor Dammann's home. The area chosen was the block bounded by what would later be West Forest Home Avenue, West Mitchell Street, South Thirteenth and South Fourteenth Streets. Though the area was sparsely populated at the time (wooded areas still abounded), it seemed it would soon be a hub in the quickly developing community. And indeed it was. Although in years to come this location would contribute to a decline in membership, for the early years of the congregation's history it was probably a major factor in its rapid growth. The purchase price of \$3,000 was paid over a period of three years.<sup>39</sup>

The next task that faced Pastor Dammann and his new flock was constructing a house of worship. The energy and enthusiasm with which the congregation went ahead with this project must have been a source of great encouragement to Pastor Dammann. They cleared the earth themselves, hauled in foundation stones themselves, and

even laid out the foundation themselves. For the rest they worked with an architect who presented a plan for a simple Gothic building, 45 X 85 feet, with a front entryway, and a rear chancel extension. This plan the congregation executed for a cost of \$6.000. The cornerstone laying service was held on June 14, 1873.<sup>40</sup>

By October the church was ready to be dedicated. Since the congregation was independent, no outside speakers participated in the services. In the morning dedication service Pastor Dammann preached on Luke 19:1-10; and in the afternoon dedication service he used Exodus 20:24 as his text: "In whatever place I will establish the memory of my name, there I will come to you and bless you." At these services Pastor Dammann remarked that only God could be thanked for the establishment and existence of the congregation and its new building. For God's gift of such a building of such a size there was great rejoicing among young and old.<sup>41</sup>

The new church ushered in a new stage of prosperity and growth for Pastor Dammann's congregation. As the area became densely populated with German immigrants, the congregation grew to become one of the largest in the city. The voting membership, for example, increased from 39 to 79 during the first year and was tripled in less than three years. With this growth in numbers came growth in the congregation's financial resources, even though its members were of little means.

In March of 1879 Pastor Dammann was pleased to dedicate a pipe organ of 500 pipes with 10 speaking stops played on one manual. The organ was designed by William Schuelke and at least part of it was made by Samuel Pierce of Reading, Massachusetts. Recently,

part of the organ had turned up in the home of a certain Mr. Robert Knüepfel of Mequon, Wisconsin.<sup>42</sup>

With the growth in numbers came growth in another area, too. And that was in the school. Already at its very first meeting the congregation considered establishing its own school. Four weeks after its organization, on May 18, 1873, the congregation authorized the purchase of a blacksmith shop for \$100.00 and instructed a committee to remodel it for school purposes. Before the church was completed, worship services had been held here. Mr. Albert Baerwald, only nineteen years of age, was called as the teacher. He began his duties with 57 pupils. A month later the enrollment increased to 72, and within a year it had gone up to 103. In April of 1874 it was decided to build an addition on to the school and to call another teacher. Within ten years, the enrollment again doubled.<sup>43</sup>

On January 1, 1882, trusting only in God's help, Pastor Dammann again led his congregation in another building project: a new school. Architect Philpot was instructed to pattern his plans after the new St. Peter's school built in 1879 (and still in use today as the oldest school building in the Wisconsin Synod). St. Jacobi's new school was erected at a cost of \$8,917 and was dedicated on November 26, 1882. It was a stately structure, designed in classical style, with two large classrooms on each of two floors. In its day it compared favorably with any Lutheran school in the city. With the first-class school facilities, the enrollment swelled even more, necessitating the addition of a fourth class, taught by Miss Louise Dammann.<sup>44</sup> By the time of Pastor Dammann's death,

the enrollment had grown to an all-time high of 344--all in four classrooms! And so in Christian education at St. Jacobi, it was one conquest after another. But Pastor Dammann knew he couldn't take the credit; God and God alone was giving the wonderful increase. Yet, through his unworthy servant and those who worked with him, the Lord was enlarging his Kingdom.

There were many reasons for Pastor Dammann to rejoice in his work at St. Jacobi. It seems the dissension and back-biting that made his ministry at St. Peter's miserable simply weren't a part of his ministry at St. Jacobi. If anything at all caused him concern and consumed more of his time and effort than he probably would have liked, it was trying to move the congregation to again join a Lutheran synod. Because since their organization they were independent, they found the logic of joining a synod hard to understand. Fortunately, as time went on, the idea of joining a synod gained more and more support. Many saw that it could only be for the benefit of the congregation and for the Kingdom of God as a whole to carry on the work of the Lord with consolidated strength.<sup>45</sup> So in 1885, St. Jacobi applied for membership in the Wisconsin Synod. Their membership came up at the 1885 convention held at Watertown:

*On the basis of the principles set forth in the Congregation Orders, the committee [for receiving new congregations] recommends receiving into membership:*

1. The Ev. Luth. St. Jacobi Congregation in Milwaukee
2. The Ev. Luth. Christ Congregation in Milwaukee
3. The Ev. Luth. St. John's Congregation in Baraboo, Sauk Co., Wis.
4. The Ev. Luth. St. John's Congregation in Whitewater, Wis.

*The Synod declares these congregations received.*<sup>46</sup>

It appears that Pastor Dammann himself had become reconciled with the synod and St. Peter's sometime before this. Already in

the 1883 assembly he served on a committee that was to "look over existing [Indian] mission societies for one of the true faith and lend it our support." None was found. At the 1884 convention the same committee was instructed "to look for young men of true piety, willing, and according to human judgment able, to devote themselves to the service of the mission among the heathen...."<sup>47</sup>

The men were to begin training in Watertown. The famous John Plocher was one of those pious, willing and able men they found. Thus, Pastor Dammann became involved in the first Wisconsin Synod "foreign" mission program, the mission to the Apaches in Arizona. With his interest for foreign missions renewed in such a positive way, it is no wonder Pastor Dammann hoped his congregation would again reach out beyond their own concerns and needs!

And so for 21 years, Pastor Dammann served his beloved St. Jacobi congregation faithfully and efficiently. His concern for the pure Word of God and Scriptural congregational practice can be clearly seen from the constitution his congregation adopted. In his preaching he was fearless, in his confirmation classes strict, and in his dealing with his members kind, but uncompromising.<sup>48</sup> Four years after his death, Pastor John Jenny, his successor and son-in-law wrote:

*He founded our St. Jacobi Congregation, for whose well-being he worked with untiring zeal, and under his leadership it grew to become one of the largest congregations in the city. Through God's grace he was able to experience one conquest after another, to make one step forward after another, both in church and school. Even in the most serious situations which arose daily, especially in the first difficult years, he led the congregation with a firm hand and brought them to the sturdy foundations which they enjoy today. In everything he undertook, he went to work systematically and maintained strict order as far as the details were concerned. So naturally he had a good influence on the development and organization of the congregation.*<sup>49</sup>

During his time at St. Jacobi, Pastor Dammann baptized 3649, confirmed 1048, married 708, buried 1248, and communed 28,303.

#### CHAPTER 7: FROM THE CHURCH MILITANT TO THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

Despite the triumphs, despite the challenges which tend to keep a pastor moving forward, the storms and stress of everyday life eventually took their toll on Pastor Dammann. In October of 1893 he was no longer well enough to perform the duties his office required. An asthmatic ailment was the culprit. Even before October he had to be careful about the amount of work he took on, and he spent many hours in misery due to the disorder.<sup>50</sup> Fortunately Pastor Jenny was able to be on hand to fill in for him and to care for his own spiritual needs.

Initially, Pastor Dammann and his loved ones still hoped his illness would be only of a passing nature and would go away with the onset of warmer weather. But in December he was overcome by a stroke which impaired his speech and left his right side paralyzed. He never went without regular medical attention and the loving support of those around him. Yet better than this attention and support by far was the attention and support he received from his Lord. It alone made it possible for him to, first of all, resign himself to such inactivity without complaint, and then to bear with Christian patience the burden of his illness.<sup>51</sup>

In spite of all the care and attention he received, it was fairly obvious to Pastor Dammann himself, as well as to his family and the congregation, that it would not be long before the Lord

would relieve his servant and summon him home to his eternal rest. And so the servant prepared to finally meet his loving Master face to face. Shortly before his death, he, together with his family, received the Lord's Supper. Once again, through the priceless Sacrament, God's grace was sealed to him--that grace which he for so many years preached and extolled to his hearers. That grace which he found in the days of his life he now trusted in his suffering and finally in death.<sup>52</sup>

Pastor Dammann wasn't afraid to admit his unworthiness before God, nor was he afraid to confess his faith in the grace of God. It was simply beyond his comprehension that the Lord would use such an unworthy person like himself to mediate the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of wretched sinners. This feeling of unworthiness before God, bound together with the knowledge of the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus, Pastor Dammann expressed in the hymns he selected for his own funeral. One verse (roughly translated) read:

*Death, devil, hell, the world, and sin,  
Can no longer harm me.  
In you, O Lord, I find salvation,  
I trust your grace.  
Your only Son out of love and kindness  
Paid for all my guilt.*

Another (roughly translated) read as follows:

*Give me rest in your arms,  
There I find grace and peace;  
And entirely out of your mercy,<sup>53</sup> carry me  
Home to you in the fatherland.*

Pastor Dammann's last day on this earth was comparatively easy for him. Without much pain, he slept away to eternal life and went to his Lord and Friend. He had served nearly 34 years

in the ministry of that Lord when he died on February 21, 1894 at the age of 64 years, 6 months, and 15 days.

The funeral was held on Sunday February 24 at 2:00 in the afternoon. Not only was it attended by family, friends, and members of his beloved congregation; many of his brothers in the ministry also attended, including several pastors of the Missouri Synod from the Milwaukee area. Because the funeral was on a Sunday, only a few synodical brothers from out of town were able to make it to the funeral: Rev. Prof. Ernst, Dr. Notz, Pastor Brockmann Sen., Pastor Vogel, Pastor Thurrow, and Pastor Jaeger.<sup>54</sup>

After a short ceremony in the home led by Pastor Bading, with a peal of bells from St. Peter's church (remember, Pastor Dammann had still lived next to St. Peter's), the mortal remains were brought to St. Jacobi Church. The church was so filled to overflowing that only with the greatest difficulty was it possible to bring the casket through the crowd. Four church leaders and two school administrators served as pallbearers. The crowd was so large that those present were hardly able to even catch a straining glimpse of the departed for the last time.<sup>55</sup>

The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Jaekel. His text, chosen by Pastor Dammann himself, was 1 Timothy 1:15--"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst." In choosing the text, Pastor Dammann made it abundantly clear that he should be spoken of as nothing more than a poor sinner. In the sermon, the confession of the Apostle Paul in the text was presented as the confession of Pastor Dammann, the confession of



a true Christian and a true Lutheran pastor. The sermon demonstrated to Whom such a confession gives the honor, what end it serves, and on what it is founded. Throughout the service, fitting funeral anthems were provided by the mixed choir of St. Jacobi, as well as by the children's choir of the congregation, both under the direction of Principal August Haise.<sup>56</sup>

The final resting place for Pastor Dammann's mortal remains was at Pilgrim's Rest Cemetary where, over the course of the years, he had himself testified at so many graves: "Christ is the resurrection and the life;" and "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. They rest from their labor and their works follow them." On the second Sunday after the funeral, a special memorial service was held at St. Jacobi, in which Pastor Jenny preached on the words of Hebrews 13:7--"Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."<sup>57</sup>

EPITAPH: SEELSORGER THROUGH STORM AND STRESS

And that brings us back to the plaque that hangs in the lower level of the third St. Jacobi church building. "Remember...consider... imitate." How could we forget the hardships our fathers like Pastor Dammann endured in coming to a new and strange land, equipped "only" with the gospel of Christ? How could we not be mindful of the firm stand they took on Scripture, and the battles they were willing to fight for the pure, unadulterated gospel which Luther taught? How could we fail to consider the outcome of their way of life:

a synod of congregations grounded in the pure Word of God; hundreds of thousands of people united in confessing Jesus as Lord; missionaries sent to the corners of the earth, as our forefathers, like Pastor Dammann, were themselves sent to the corners of the earth? How could we not imitate their faith, recognizing we are but unworthy servants, by God's grace entrusted with the precious good news of salvation? How could we not imitate their faith, realizing that whether through us, or in spite of us, God's Kingdom comes? And how could we not imitate their faith, trusting that through storm and calm, stress and conquest, our Savior, THE Seelsorger, stands ready to take us to himself when our tasks are finished here? Epitaph: Seelsorger through storm and stress, the Rev. William Dammann, 1829-1894. Remember...consider...imitate. And give God all the glory!

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