

ST. PAUL'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Town Lomira : Dodge County

Wisconsin

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

1853 dawned indeed as a year of grace unto a number of Lutheran families who had made their homes in the northeastern part of Town Lomira, Dodge County, Wisconsin. By God's grace they henceforth were to be served and strengthened by the Means of Grace, God's Word and Sacraments. In 1853 Pastor Jacob Conrad, pastor of St. Jacobi Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Town Theresa, began to conduct services for them. These services were held in the Friederich Bussewitz home until in 1854 the first house of worship was erected on the Bussewitz farm. It was a modest log building and was located about 50 yards north of the present church. When in 1854 Pastor Conrad was called to serve in another field of God's service, Pastor Johann Bading of Calumet, Wisconsin, accepted the call extended to him to serve the St. Jacobi congregation and the group of Lutheran farmers surrounding Town Lomira. It was under Pastor Bading's guidance and leadership that early in 1855 the organization of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran congregation was effected.

The newly organized congregation was fortunate to have already in its formative years a pastor whose faith and confession was in complete conformity with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions. His confessionalism would prove to be a big plus for this newly-founded congregation in the years to come. In the year 1859 St. Paul's congregation became a constituent member of the Wisconsin Synod. When the Synod in 1860 was assembled in Fond du lac for its tenth annual convention, Pastor Bading was elected to serve the Synod as president, the second one to serve in that capacity since its conception in 1850. Later that same year Pastor Bading received a call to serve the congregation at Watertown, and he accepted the Lord's call. His leadership would be sorely missed.

Under Pastor Joh. Bading St. Paul's congregation grew steadily in spiritual life and in numbers. It was not so fortunate with the succeeding pastor. Pastor Friedrich von Schmidt was installed as the pastor of the St. Jacobi - St. Paul's parish. His ministry in these congregations, fortunately, was of very short duration, for it soon became apparent that his teaching was not Scripturally sound. Pastor Schmidt was filled with the spirit of many sectarians. He was a thorough-going unionist, who admitted that he had no qualms about holding joint services with sectarian ministers regardless of their beliefs and confessions. After his dismissal, Pastor Meumann of Fond du Lac served as vacancy pastor for one year.

In 1862 Pastor Jacob Conrad, who originally had served in this field as pastor, accepted the call again to minister unto the Christians in the Townships of Theresa and Lomira. The original log church soon proved to be inadequate, for the membership of St. Paul's congregation by this time had increased considerably. A new house of worship became a necessity as the members well realized. However, the members residing farther north at that time considered it advisable to build their own church in Lomira Center (now the Village of Lomira), and for that purpose on January 29, 1863, they organized the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran congregation.

This event did not materially change the building requirements of St. Paul's, particularly since the necessity and the blessings of a Christian Day School were being recognized. In 1863 the congregation, therefore, erected its second church building on the present site, an acre of land donated for that purpose by Mr. Bussewitz. A large room at the entrance of the church was arranged for school purposes, and that same year it was put to its blessed use to feed the lambs of Christ on the green pastures of the Word of God. Teacher Pieper is mentioned in

the congregation's minutes as the first one to serve in this school. Having been called jointly by both the St. Paul's and the newly-organized St. John's congregation, Mr. Pieper taught three full days a week in each school. This arrangement remained in effect until 1902. A teacherage, half a mile south of St. John's church, was also maintained jointly. A lack of complete records makes it impossible to indicate the years in which each teacher served. Therefore the following list of their names, given here in proper order, must suffice. Pieper, H. Bade, J. Denninger, H. Hensel, Ed. Lefke, Helena Kilian, C. Wagner, Magdalena Kilian, Bernhard Jahr, and Francis Gruett.

When in 1867 Pastor Conrad was called to serve a congregation in Pacine, Wisconsin, the three congregations which had been under his spiritual care, namely St. Jacobi, St. Paul's and St. John's, extended a call to Pastor Johannes Kilian of the town of Greenfield in Milwaukee County. January 12, 1868, is given as the date on which he was installed into his office here at St. Paul's. He continued to serve all three congregations until in 1870 the parish was divided. St. Jacobi called its own pastor, and the St. Paul's - St. John's parish continued under Kilian's pastorate. Jointly these two congregations erected, and until 1892 maintained, the first parsonage at St. Paul's on a lot southwest from the church, where the present parsonage is located. Mr. Christian Zedler donated the lot for such congregational use.

On October 7, 1888, St. Paul's observed with thanksgiving to God the 25th anniversary of the dedication of its second church. In the morning of that memorable day Pastor Conrad used as his text Psalm 118:1-5, 22-26, and in the afternoon Pastor Toepel Colossians 2:6-7.

In 1902 Pastor Kilian, because of a prolonged and troublesome throat ailment, considered it advisable to resign his charge and retire from the active ministry. Thereupon St. John's congregation called

Pastor R. Pietz, and the members of St. Paul's, hoping that serving only one congregation would bring relief, called on Pastor Kilian to retain his pastorate in their congregation. He consented to do so, but by 1904 his aforementioned ailment necessitated his retirement from the Gospel ministry. For more than 35 years St. Paul's congregation had been under his faithful pastorate, the second longest in its history.

To the next pastor of St. Paul's congregation belongs the distinction of having served it for the longest period in its existence. This small country church can only recall with gratitude to God the 38 years of blessed labor bestowed on it by Pastor Henry Wolter. In February, 1904, he was called from Woodville, St. Croix County, Wisconsin and was installed at St. Paul's on April 24th by the former pastor, assisted by Pastor R. Pietz. In all faithfulness he continued to serve until his retirement in 1942.

During his pastorate the present church was built. He officiated at the cornerstone laying ceremony held August 15, 1909, and Pastor G. Saxmann of Eldorado edified the congregation with his message based on Isaiah 28:16. February 20, 1910, was the joyous day on which the new church, erected at a cost of a little less than \$8,000, was dedicated to the Triune God. Three festival services were held, in which the following pastors addressed the congregation with the messages of their choice of texts: A. Werr of Brownsville, Luke 1:68-69; F. Bliefernicht of Huilsburg, John 12:26; R. Pietz of Lomira, Psalm 26:6-8.

In March, 1911, the old church, which had been moved farther east to make room for the new one, was torn down, and the good lumber was used to construct a school. It was dedicated on September 3 with Pastor A. Kirchner of Hustisford delivering the message. Further building projects during Pastor Wolter's ministry at St. Paul's include that of the present parsonage, built in 1920 at a cost of \$8,165. It was dedi-

cated December 19th, Pastor Wolter using for his text 1 Samuel 7:12, and Pastor Ph. Koehler Exodus 40:9.

Having administered the Word and Sacraments most faithfully for 38 years to the St. Paul's congregation, and from 1919 to 1927 also to Zion congregation and since 1927 to St. Petri congregation, Pastor Wolter preached his farewell sermon on Easter Sunday, 1942, and retired from the active ministry. The following Sunday, April 12, 1942, Pastor Harvey Heckendorf of Hazelton, North Dakota, was installed by Pastor Wolter.

On Sunday morning, December 9, 1945, the St. Petri church burned to the ground. The members of the St. Petri congregation accepted the invitation of the St. Paul's congregation to worship jointly in St. Paul's church, and in January, 1949 amalgamated with it. Such joint worship made it possible to have divine services every Sunday and festival day both in the English and the German language.

Pastor Heckendorf served St. Paul's until 1958 when he decided to retire. It was at this time that St. Paul's extended a call to the Seminary for a candidate to fill the vacancy. Christoph H. Weigel was the man the Holy Spirit chose to fill the position as pastor. He was imminently qualified, for he was able to preach and conduct services in both the English and German languages. He was ordained on June 28, 1958. He served the congregation faithfully for six years. I personally remember him as a little German with a very deep accent who was genuinely concerned about Christian education. He constantly stressed the need for a parochial school. His dream was never realized. St. Paul's had a school until the early 40's, but the congregation discontinued it because of lack of students and funds. He never could convince the congregation that it could support such a school. In 1964 he received a call from David's Star in Jackson, Wisconsin. He accepted the call and left in

May of that same year. It was at this time that St. Paul's went two years without a full-time pastor. Pastor Paul H. Huth of Brownsville served as vacancy pastor.

It wasn't until April of 1966 that a man accepted the call. That man was Pastor Walter O. Nommensen. He too was fluent in both English and German. St. Paul's need for a man who could carry out the pastoral office in two languages is why this vacancy was so hard to fill. Pastor Nommensen carried out his duties faithfully until his retirement in August of 1974. It was with deep regret that the congregation granted his peaceful release. He now resides in Thiensville, Wisconsin with his son Arnold.

Because of Pastor Nommensen's advancing years, it became evident to the members that they were going to have trouble in finding another man who could handle the German as well as the English service. This caused a division in our church. Many of the long-time members felt very strongly that the German needed to be continued. St. Paul's had always had a German service every Sunday, and they hated the idea of losing it. The language problem wasn't solved until Pastor D.H. Kuehl of Hartford, Wisconsin, explained to the congregation at one call meeting how long and difficult it would be to fill the vacancy with a qualified man. St. Paul's did not once again want to go through a long vacancy so they decided with some regret to drop the German service entirely.

After Pastor Nommensen's retirement, Prof. Leroy Ristow of Winnebago Lutheran Academy served as vacancy pastor for seven months. In March of 1975 Pastor Martin T. Bradtke accepted the call to serve as pastor for this small rural congregation. He was installed on April 12th. It was during his ministry that St. Luke of Knowles, Wisconsin, asked whether Pastor Bradtke could serve as its pastor in addition to his duties at

St. Paul's. Permission was granted, and Pastor Bradtke assumed these additional responsibilities. This arrangement has been in effect up to the present time. Pastor Bradtke, however, has been experiencing some medical problems. On April 13, 1980, he received a call from Faith Lutheran Church in Elizabeth, Illinois. This congregation offered a much lighter work load than the dual parish he was now serving. Doctors had been telling him to slow down so he felt that it was the Lord's will that he accept the call. He did so on April 27, 1980.

Facing another vacancy, the male members of St. Paul's and St. Luke hurriedly called a meeting for the purpose of issuing a call. They decided with the Lord's help to go with a candidate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and they are eagerly awaiting the Holy Spirit's decision on May 20, 1980.

Concerning future events, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church will be celebrating its 125th anniversary on October 12, 1980. Sons of the congregation who have entered the holy ministry will conduct the morning and afternoon services in commemoration of the Lord's grace. These men include: Pastor Cleone Weigand, Pastor Jerome Enderle, Pastor Richard Zahn, Pastor Norris Baumann, and Seminary Student Mark Neitzel.

In conclusion, the 310 baptized and 207 communicant members of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Town Lomira, Wisconsin, has much to be thankful for. For nearly 125 years they have been permitted to hear unmolested God's holy Word and celebrate His saving Sacraments. It is my prayer that they remain thankful for the blessings God has showered on them. It is my hope that they continue to hear God's way of salvation in all its truth and purity until our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ comes again to take His children to heaven. With hearts turned to the Lord Jesus we pray -

IN THANKSGIVING:

Dear Master, Thine the glory
Of each recovered soul.
Ah! who can tell the story
Of love that made us whole?
Not ours, not ours, the merit;
Be Thine alone the praise
And ours a thankful spirit
To serve Thee all our days.

IN PRAYER:

Now keep us, holy Savior,
In Thy true love and fear
And grant us of Thy favor
The grace to persevere
Till, in Thy new creation,
Earth's time-long travail o'er,
We find our full salvation
And praise Thee evermore.

Amen.