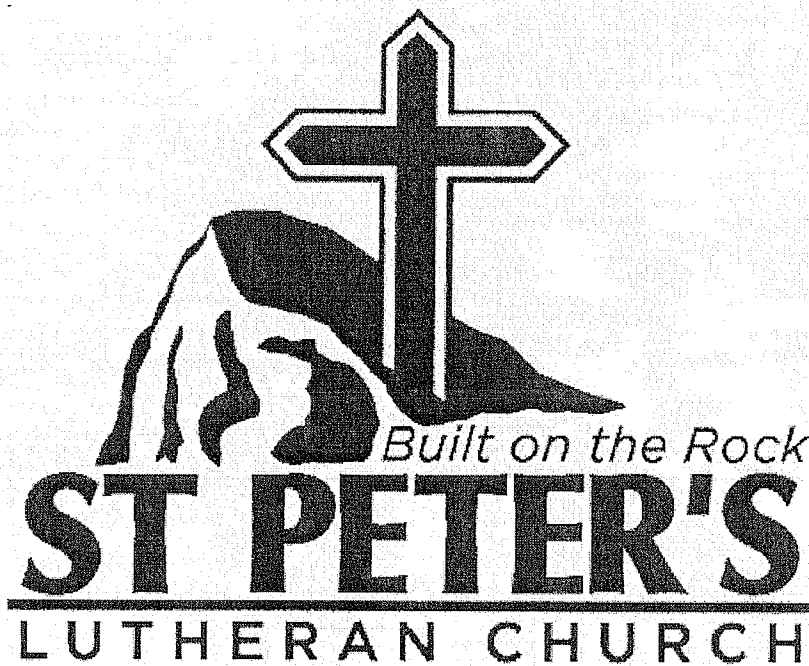


**God's Grace and Blessings to St. Peter's Ev.
Lutheran Church, Mishicot, Wisconsin:**

A brief history of the congregation's major events from 1861-2009



By: Matthew Reis
Church History 3031
December 8, 2009

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church located in Mishicot, Wisconsin has a storied history. The church started in 1861 is now almost 150 years old. Throughout the congregation's history, there have been the ups and downs that most congregations experience. Because of the amount of time to cover, only the important and unique events in the congregation's history are covered. When one looks at the history of St. Peter's in Mishicot, it is fairly easy to see God's grace and his blessings which he has poured on this congregation. Through the many good times to the few bad times, the congregation has been guided by God and his grace and has been blessed every year, through every decision.

The Forming of a Congregation

It was in the middle of the nineteenth century and little Mishicot, Wisconsin was already a busy small community. As with many areas which were unsettled in Wisconsin at this time, the lumber business created the first opportunities for people to settle in the area for a longer time. Mishicot was no different. The Smith Lumber Company was the first to set up their headquarters in Mishicot in 1855.¹

Many of the people who settled in Mishicot were Christians. Even though they came from many different backgrounds and many different countries in Europe, they were thankful that the Lord had kept them safe and had given them a wonderful new place to live. The initial reason for them coming was the lumber company, and some followed the lumber companies as they moved. Many in the small village of Mishicot found that this land was great land for providing food. It was especially good for growing crops and for raising livestock. The people who stayed knew they could raise a family on this land. They could remain in one place and enjoy the work they would pursue.

¹ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.1.

Therefore, the agricultural industry followed the lumber industry in the area. The present day agriculture industry has decreased, but still continues to be one of the major industries in Mishicot.²

As was the case in that day with many areas, a procedure seems to have been set up to keep preachers moving with the various movements of people. The preachers would almost follow these movements so that these various small communities would be served with the Word. "A preacher was sent out to work in a county who seemingly would try to establish a congregation in each township and as it became necessary, have more preachers come to take care of these congregations as they grew so that eventually each township would be able to have its congregation and preacher."³ This method of spreading the gospel played a role in the formation of the congregation in Mishicot. "Undoubtedly the county missionary called on the people of this community a few times throughout the year and would encourage them to speak to neighbors and friends to create a desire for a congregation to be formed."⁴ As was the case in that day, missionaries would walk go by horseback or buggy. This would mean that it would take awhile for the pastor to visit all the congregations in the area or in the circuit. In the early years of this area it contained all the townships in the county, presently known as Manitowoc County. The economic opportunities and how the area was served around the time when St. Peter's Lutheran Church was established, contributed to the future development of the congregation.

A handful of men were influential in the formation of St. Peter's in the year 1861. These men were: John Bahls, Claus Schwiem, Freidrich Schriever, A. Jens, John Sievert, Friedrich George, Louis Barthles, Fredrich Drews, and Carl Wilsmann. The day credited for the establishing of St.

² Ibid, p.1.

³ Ibid, p.1.

⁴ Ibid, p1.

Peter's in Mishicot, Wisconsin is May 20, 1861.⁵ The legal records for the property were filed at the Manitowoc County Courthouse on February 19, 1871.⁶ Because of the early church records from 1861, the congregation retains the May 20th date as the day of establishment. "Many of us noticed that legal recording and records were not done as meticulously and methodically then as they are done now."⁷ The first church services were conducted in a schoolhouse. The initial congregation was served by Rev. Goldammer, who was a pastor of the Manitowoc congregation at the time. Rev. Goldammer was a preacher from the Wisconsin Synod and St. Peter's congregation has been affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod since that time.⁸

The First Shepherds of the Congregation

The Two Rivers congregation was formed shortly after the Mishicot congregation. This is important because the pastor called to serve the pulpit in Two Rivers was Pastor Butels, was also in charge of the Mishicot congregation. He served the congregation from 1863-1865. Pastor Quehl (1865-1868) and Pastor Zuberier (1868-1872) served both the Two Rivers congregation and the Mishicot congregation in the coming years. During Pastor Zuberier's service to the congregation, the Articles of Incorporation were filed. This is also when the formal naming of the Mishicot congregation happened. The congregation was called Evangelical Lutheran St. Peter's Congregation.⁹ The President of the congregation at that time was Carl Wildman. Friedrich Drews served as secretary and also Dietrich Knickrehm. Dietrich does not have an office associated with him in the records. Pastor Zuberier's leadership also produced another important event for the congregation. On April 4, 1871, the congregation obtained the deed to a part of the present

⁵ Cf. Early Church Records from 1861.

⁶ Cf. Articles of Incorporation, Manitowoc County. This can be found at the Manitowoc County Courthouse, Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

⁷ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.2.

⁸ Ibid, p.2.

⁹ Cf. Article of Incorporation, Manitowoc County.

property located on Randolph Street in Mishicot. The original lots purchased were the areas presently taken up by the parsonage and open lawn space between the church and parsonage. The lots were purchased from Elizabeth Smith, wife of Daniel Smith, who owned the lumber company in the area. The price of the lots was \$35.00.¹⁰

After the blessings which the Lord gave through the work of his servant, Pastor Zuberier, the congregation was served by Pastor Nietman and Pastor Frankenstein between the years of 1872-1874. At this point the congregation had grown enough to now supply Pastor Frankenstein with a place to live. The pastor's house was also used for instruction before confirmation. Pastor Frankenstein then left and Pastor Jaeger served the congregation. Pastor Jaeger also helped with the Two Rivers congregation and the Gibson congregation. With Pastor Jaeger helping the Gibson congregation, Mishicot became a sub-charge of the Gibson congregation which lasted until 1881, when Pastor Jaeger accepted a new call.¹¹

The Lord blessed the work of the previous servants and also Pastor Jaeger. The visible proof of blessings and growth were evident during the time Pastor Jaeger served the Mishicot congregation. It was during this time that the congregation got the plans rolling for a permanent worship structure where they could hear the gospel. In 1875 the frame structure of the church was built and this served the congregation until 1927. Before 1875, there aren't any notes on where they worshiped. One can only assume that they met in the school where the group organized or other similar places. One could also assume that the reason they thought about a permanent worship place at this point was the group had gotten too large for the place or places they were meeting. This framed structure was built where the open space on the current property is, between the parsonage and the church. Things seemed to be no different with money back in the

¹⁰ One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.2.

¹¹ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.2-3

late 1800s. The cost of the building needs to be met. With the debt from the building and with other expenses piling up, the voters of the congregation set a figure of \$3.00 for membership dues. Some things don't change over time.¹² In 1881, it is also noted that many people regarded the church as a place to go to get married and a place for the funeral, and had very little to do otherwise with the church. On May 26, 1881 there was a special meeting called by the congregation.¹³ This meeting resolved that only church members would be buried by the congregation pastor and from the church. During 1881 and early into 1882, Pastor Prohl served the Mishicot congregations.¹⁴

Over the next twenty years, the Mishicot congregation once again was served by pastors of the Two Rivers congregation. Pastor John Ph. Koehler served from 1882-1888. It is noted that Koehler was later the director of the seminary at Wauwatosa. Pastor A.F. Siegler served the congregation from 1888-1892. From 1892-1902 Pastor Christian Doehler served the congregation. These were pretty quiet years in the history of the Mishicot congregation.¹⁵

In 1902 Pastor Gustav Vater came to serve the people of Mishicot. In 1902, the Mishicot congregation and the Kossuth township congregation (present day Rockwood Ev. Lutheran Church) went together to form a parish to be served by the same pastor. The present day parsonage, although much work has been done on it since, was built during these early years of the twentieth century. In 1906 the compensation of the pastor came into question. The voters of the congregation requested each member provide the pastor with a bag of oats for his horse or give \$1.00.¹⁶ Even though money at this time was scarce, the devoted member would think of the

¹² Cf. 1881 Voter's Meeting Minutes

¹³ Cf. 1881 Voter's Meeting Minutes

¹⁴ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.2-3

¹⁵ Ibid. p.3.

¹⁶ Cf. 1906 Voter's Meeting Minutes.

pastor's needs and give a portion of his produce which many grew on their farms in addition to the small salary paid by the congregation. Pastor Vater and his family stayed here until he took a call in 1907.¹⁷

Pastor E. Ph. Dornfeld served the congregation after Pastor Vater. Pastor Dornfeld served for only a short time as he received a call early in 1911 to St. Mark's in Milwaukee. Pastor Siegler of Two Rivers, who served previous vacancies, also served the vacancy in the congregation at this time. The year 1911 was also an important year in the history of the Mishicot congregation. It marked fifty years of God's grace in the meeting of Mishicot people. It was decided by the congregation to observe the milestone in the fall of 1911 with special services.¹⁸

In 1911 it was also decided that the vacancy should be filled by a student at the seminary in Wauwatosa to be the pastor when he graduated from school. Edward Zell, originally from Minnesota Junction, Dodge County, Wisconsin, would be the next pastor of the congregation. He was ordained into the ministry on July 23, 1911.¹⁹

In November of 1912, Pastor Zell was called to serve the Norwegian congregation at Jambo Creek which is in the town of Gibson. This church was also served by Pastor Zell until it was disbanded in June 19, 1949, with a membership of 24 souls.²⁰

In February of 1913, Pastor Zell received a call to leave the Mishicot congregation. At this time the congregation voted in favor of Pastor Zell remaining the pastor of the congregation.²¹ They also at this time raised his salary \$50 for the entire year. This brought Pastor Zell's salary from \$400 to \$450 for the year. Pastor Zell received two other calls that were recorded during his time

¹⁷ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.3.

¹⁸ Ibid. p.3.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.4.

²⁰ Ibid. p.4.

²¹ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1913.

of service in Mishicot. Both of the other calls he received came in 1924, in the months of April and May.²² It seemed the custom at this time for the congregation to vote on whether they wanted the pastor to stay or not. Each time that it is recorded that Pastor Zell received a call, the congregation unanimously voted in favor of him remaining in Mishicot.²³

It's interesting to note there seems to be a gap in recording information or at least what information was gathered to be put into documents. Starting in 1914, the school starts to get mentioned. It is assumed that the school is started before this, but this is the first time it is mentioned.

In the June 1914 voter's meeting, the voters voted to change the term of the school year from a six month school year to an eight month school year. The curriculum at that time was mainly religious secular studies. The teachers that served the congregation's school at this time were Miss Kirchner and Miss L. Sauer. Miss Sauer later moved to Jefferson, WI and her married name became Mrs. Formader.

A Growing Congregation

In 1915 the congregation once again talked about buying more property. The visible signs that the Lord was blessing the work of the congregation continue to be seen by all involved. Although they talked about buying more property at this time, it was voted down at the meeting.²⁴ There was another meeting held about this subject on October 8, 1916. It was decided at this meeting that the congregation would buy one lot from Eli Peltier Property for \$250.²⁵ Also

²² Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1924.

²³ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Congregation. p.4.

²⁴ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1915.

²⁵ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1916.

interesting to note is that during this time is when the system of giving by envelope and recording gifts was begun.²⁶

In 1915 the pastor's salary was raised by \$100. This was done because the members were no longer giving the pastor either a bag of oats or \$1.00, mentioned earlier.²⁷ The bell that called or reminded people of the worship service broke during this year. The new bell, which is still in use today, was bought at this time. It is made of copper containing alloy and weighs about one ton. The bell consists of the swinging bell with also a hammer situated so it will hit the bell proper to be used for tolling purposes.²⁸

Up to this point in the church's history the only services were services done in the German language. In the year 1920, the English language was started to be used in the church services. When the English services first began, they were held in the evening on the last Sunday of the month. This Sunday evening service only lasted a short time. On October 3, 1920, it was voted to have the last regular Sunday service of the month be an English service.²⁹

Up to this point the annual meeting of the congregation was held in January. On January 12, 1921, the annual meeting date was changed to the second Wednesday in June from January.³⁰ There is no documentation of when the annual meeting was changed back to January, which is now the current day of the January meeting. Also, on October 9, 1921, the congregation celebrated sixty years of God's grace to the people gathering in Mishicot with a special worship service.³¹

Up to this point in the churches history, the constitution and the by-laws of the congregation were just documents. Many members did not know or follow what they said. In

²⁶ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Congregation. p.4.

²⁷ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1915.

²⁸ Ibid. p.4.

²⁹ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1920.

³⁰ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1921.

³¹ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.5.

order to keep the congregation mindful of the rules that were governing of them, a resolution was passed on June 14, 1922, to have the constitution and by-laws of the congregation read at every annual meeting.³²

Beginning in 1923, many physical changes to the property and buildings of the church became necessary. In September of 1923, the voters decided a sewer should be dug to the river to take care of the septic tank and other drainage from the parsonage.³³ This was an important event for the village of Mishicot, as many houses between the parsonage and the river attached their drains to the drain being built by the church.

A New Church Building is Proposed

Also at this time was the first mention of building a new church. The visible blessings of God continued to be evident in the Mishicot congregation. The old church had become small and repairs needed to be made to the building. This left the congregation with a very important decision. The choice was either to repair and put an addition on to the existing church or to build a new church. This was a difficult decision to make at that time. All opinions from the congregation were sought. In fact, people were asked to give in writing the problem and how much money he would be able to give in either decision. In March of 1925, a committee was appointed to make a visit to those members who did not volunteer their ideas for the building program. The process of the leaders showed that they were very conscious to what every member wanted and what it was feasible for them to accomplish. After the visits to the members, we can assume that a majority of the members were in favor of building a new church, because at this time a formal subscription or pledge was asked from each member with how much they could give for the construction of a new building. Things continued to move rather quickly. In May of 1925, the vote came up to the

³² Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1922.

³³ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1923.

congregation on whether to build a new church. The vote was 37 to 1 to build a new church.³⁴ At this time, a seven man committee was formed as the building committee. This committee was given the task of going to look at other churches and plan a way to finance the building and report at the next meeting.³⁵

Things continued to advance quickly. In July of 1925, the choice of stone or concrete block needed to be made by the voters according to the committee's recommendation. This vote was 30 in favor of the stone and 17 in favor of the concrete block.³⁶ The next important decision was when to begin the building project. The choices were either the fall of 1925 or the spring of 1926. Once again, it is noted how quickly the congregation wanted to move with the project. The vote was 31 to begin in fall and 14 to wait until spring.³⁷ A resolution was made at this point to leave all other matters of the project up to the committee. The members of the committee were: George Barthels, Ed Eckardt, George Jindra, Jr., Richard Schroeder, Paul Sehloff, Charles Stechmesser, and Henry Thielbar.³⁸

The decision for the placement of the new church was also a debated topic. It was decided that the church would once again attempt to get property from the Plieters. However there was some issues with having all of the church on the same property A road was in the place where the wished to build the new church. Because of that, a meeting was needed with the Mishicot Town Board. The discussion was to have the road moved over one lot to where the current Elm Street is now located. This means the road would run through the congregation's owned land. The congregation allowed the road to be placed on their lot. As a gift to the congregation, Mrs. Peltier,

³⁴ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1925.

³⁵ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.5.

³⁶ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1925.

³⁷ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1925.

³⁸ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.5.

also a member, gave the land on which the present church building now stands. The negotiations which took place allowed the building project to be started on time in the fall of 1925.³⁹

One interesting ceremony which took place during the building of the new church was the unveiling of the nameplate. This happened in November of 1925. One of the charter members of the congregation was still around. Mrs. Blum was able to witness God's amazing grace and blessings to the congregation in Mishicot. She was able to go through the experience from no congregation in early 1861 to the movement into a second church in 1927 and all of the important parts in between those two dates.⁴⁰

If one is ever able to visit St. Peter's in Mishicot, Wisconsin, one will notice that the stone on the outside of the church is a beautiful granite stone. The granite stone used to build the church was quarried in Red Granite, Wisconsin. This stone was transported by railroad to Francis Creek, a small village near Mishicot. The members of the congregation then hauled the stone by wagon to Mishicot. The architect for the project was Karl Koehler, a former professor in Watertown, Wisconsin. If one looks at the building from the top, it was built in the form of a cross. The steeple or front part of the church actually forms the lower end of the cross and the wings containing the side entrances formed the cross member. A very unique style was used for the inside of the church. The inside of the church was built in three levels. This gives the sanctuary a 'stadium-style' seating which is very unique to churches. While most churches have one level and maybe a balcony in the sanctuary portion of the church, St. Peter's in Mishicot has three different levels which ascend as you go further back in the sanctuary. The original purpose of the three-level church was to have the two church levels making up the main portion of the sanctuary. The upper level of the church was originally used for overflow church attendance and eventually school purposes. The method of the

³⁹ Ibid. p.5-6

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.6

structure was one used by George Whiting Flagg who designed the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. The actual stone work done on the outside of the church was done by Edward Wegner, a contractor who lived in the village of Mishicot. The woodwork was also done by a local carpenter named Matt Zima.⁴¹

The speed of the project continued. On August 22, 1926, the structure was complete enough to hold worship services inside of the new building. Now the old church needed to be destroyed. The way the old church was taken care of might be somewhat unique. There was an auction held among the members and then the person who bought it could do what they wanted with the old building. This auction method produced a winner. The building was purchased by a member of the building committee, George Barthles for \$380.00. Mr. Barthles was able to salvage enough lumber that it could be kept and used for other construction as he wanted it to be used. In August of 1926, it became apparent the Mishicot congregation would not be able to pay all of the construction bills. At a meeting in August, it was approved to borrow \$5,000 to meet the current expenses.⁴² The congregation at the beginning of the building project thought they could build it without any external financing. This was not the case, although the congregation did make it far into the building project before they needed to go to outside funding.⁴³

Despite holding services in the new church, there was actually no actual floor in the sanctuary but only a dirt floor. The congregation needed to decide if it wanted to hold holiday services inside the new church. It was decided to hold Christmas Eve and all other services inside the sanctuary, despite its uncompleted state. They continued to worship in a space that was not

⁴¹ Ibid p.6.

⁴² Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1926

⁴³ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.6.

completely done even past the holidays. The cement work in and around the premises was not complete until May 14, 1927.⁴⁴

Perhaps one of the more important dates in St. Peter's history comes on June 12, 1927. This was the formal day of dedication of the new house of worship. One needs to remember that this is only the formal day of dedication and not the first actual worship service. Three of the congregation's former pastors were able to participate in this event. Pastor Doehler, Pastor Dornfeld, and Pastor Vater all helped in dedicating the church to the glory of God. The blessings of God's grace continue to flow on this small village church. The second permanent worship place had been completed.⁴⁵

When one thinks of the cost of building a church in the year 2009, the cost of the structure can easily surpass the \$1,000,000 mark. The total cost of the building of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Mishicot completed in 1927 was just under the \$30,000 mark.⁴⁶ In March of 1928 the final stage of the building project was completed. In a meeting the church building was adopted by the congregation from the building committee. The building committee at that point was disbanded.⁴⁷

The congregation had decided earlier in the century to hold services in German except for the last Sunday of the month which was conducted in English. In ten short years, this arrangement of services was once again under discussion. On June 11, 1930, it was decided in a 43-14 vote to have a German service on the first Sunday of each month.⁴⁸ If the congregation chose to have a German service on the first Sunday of each month, it can be assumed that the other Sundays in the month were conducted in English. It is not clear when the next switch took place, but the

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.6.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.6.

⁴⁶ Cf. Contractor's Itemized Bill

⁴⁷ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.6-7.

⁴⁸ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1930.

congregation decided to have all regular services in English and conduct an afternoon service once a month in German. This was the case until 1957 when there are no longer German services being held.⁴⁹

Another Milestone Hit

Another important milestone of the church was hit in the year 1931. The church celebrated seventy years of God's grace on the church. This was celebrated on three separate Sundays. The congregation celebrated on August 30, September 6, and September 13. If one jumps ahead to the seventy-five year mark, it is interesting to note that the congregation only celebrates this anniversary in one service.⁵⁰

Music Ministry is Emphasized

In the year 1932, an interesting event happened in the music history of the congregation. There was a group of girls in 1932 which formed into a girl's choir under the direction of Miss Alice Zell. Later on, Miss Zell also formed a junior choir consisting of seventh to ninth graders and eventually a mixed choir resulted from all of these choirs.⁵¹

Ladies in the congregation wanted to study the Bible more and have a little time together. In 1933 those ladies who were interested assembled together for the first time. It was at this time that the Ladies Bible Hour was formed. The main purpose of the group was to study the Bible with the help of the pastor of the congregation. This group also had offering envelopes separate from their individual offering envelopes for the congregations. Over the years, monies from these envelopes have been used for new furnishings, maintenance, and beautifying the church. In the

⁴⁹ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.7.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.7.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.7.

present day, the Ladies Bible Hour has basically disbanded, although they are still listed as a group of the church. Perhaps someday this group will be resurrected.⁵²

The Congregation Continues to Grow

Things remained pretty quiet from 1936 (the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the church) until the year 1942. In 1942 the congregation decided to increase the church property to double the size it was before 1942. The church bought three lots directly behind (north) the lots which are not owned. The church purchased these lots from Henry Redeker, Jr. and his wife, members at the time. The reason the church decided to purchase the property was because of parking problems which had developed. The members were parking on the highway in front (south) of the church. These lots were to be used as parking lots but they were not used in the years following the purchase of the land. The lots were used at first for a garden and bean fields. The next four years (1942-1946) church activities were quiet. Normal maintenance and repairs were done on the building.⁵³

The congregation celebrated 85 years of God's grace on people gathering in Mishicot, Wisconsin. The congregation marked this anniversary with a special service on November 17. Pastors Kenneth Vertz, George Barthles, Ed Zell, Jr. delivered the sermons. Seminary student William Zell served as liturgist. All of these men were sons of the congregation.⁵⁴

In 1948 the congregation decided it wanted to go ahead and start the process for purchasing a new organ.⁵⁵ The organ in the church at this time was moved from the old church. It had been remodeled from foot-operated bellows to a mechanical blower operated organ. To the non-musical ear the present organ served its purpose, therefore the organ fund grew very slowly.

⁵² Ibid. p.7.

⁵³ Ibid. p.7.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.7.

⁵⁵ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1948.

By 1954, the organ's condition had deteriorated to the point where everyone knew there was a need for a new organ. At this time it was decided when the fund reached \$2,500 a new one should be purchased.⁵⁶ A committee was formed at this time to price and examine various organs. In 1955 the new organ is finally purchased. It was the third organ in the congregation's history.

The year 1953 brought about many physical changes to the church's property. Iron railings were placed on all steps and on the wall in front of church. Also in 1953 it became evident the seating in the sanctuary was not satisfactory. Two longer pews were placed near the back of church. Also at this time the garden and bean field finally was turned into a parking lot. The congregation used flood lights in the parking lot for evening services and other events held in the evening. This would make it unnecessary to park on the highway in front of the church.⁵⁷

The Ending of a Faithful Ministry

The congregation showed their thanks to their spiritual leader at this time. The congregation presented Pastor and Mrs. Zell with keys to a brand new car. It was a gift from the congregation celebrating the couple's 41st wedding anniversary. Pastor William Zell preached at this service.⁵⁸

The year 1954 a major remodeling project was done in the kitchen in the parsonage. The members wanted to put many of the modern conveniences into the parsonage which they were already enjoying in their own homes. Also at this time sidewalks and a blacktop driveway were also improved around the parsonage.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1954.

⁵⁷ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.7.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.8.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.8.

On June 9, 1956, the church voted to purchase a public address system.⁶⁰ This gave the opportunity for the newly formed Sunday School room to have access to the church's sound system. At this time the basement of the church also was provided with sound from the church.

A special church service was held on July 23, 1956. The service honored Pastor Zell. It was the 45th anniversary since he was installed as pastor of the Mishicot congregation. Edward and William Zell, his sons, served as liturgists. Pastor Tills, a son of the Rockwood congregation, preached the sermon.⁶¹

Pastor Zell preached his last sermon on January 26, 1958. Pastor Zell's health continued to deteriorate and he was hospitalized on February 1st. Pastor Zell, who served the congregation faithfully for 47 years was called home on the last day in February. This left the congregation with an unnatural feeling. Because Pastor Zell served 47 years, this was the only pastor that many in the congregation knew or remembered.

A New Shepherd to Lead

The vacancy left by Pastor Zell's death was filled by Pastor Brelling. Pastor Brelling was serving at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Two Rivers. Pastor Brelling served the vacancy until Pastor David Worgull was installed as pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church.⁶²

In the year 1958, the voters of the congregation authorized the pastor to purchase a mimeograph machine.⁶³ This machine would be used for church bulletins and for other uses deemed necessary by the church.

On June 14, 1959, the church approved the building of a new garage for the parsonage.⁶⁴ This task was accomplished in 1960. Don Shimek, a member, removed the old garage. Wm.

⁶⁰ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1956.

⁶¹ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.9.

⁶² Ibid. p.9.

⁶³ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1958.

Thielbar, also a member, built the new two-car garage. It was attached to the parsonage by an enclosed breezeway.

The church council in 1960 authorized a renovation of the landscaping around church. They removed all the old trees and shrubs which were fairly old. This was done because of the advice they received from the landscape advisor. The new landscape included new lawn, trees, and shrubs. At this time a church sign was also placed in front of the church. This was given to the church from various memorials. A centennial anniversary committee was formed also at this time to plan a God-pleasing anniversary service of 100 years of God's grace on those who gathered in the Mishicot around the Word of God.⁶⁵

Pastor Worgull served the St. Peter's Mishicot faithfully until he received a call in 1965 to be pastor in Menasha, Wisconsin. Pastor Worgull accepted the call and left for Menasha. After Pastor Worgull left, the congregation decided to do some work on the parsonage. The work was done at a cost of \$10,500. There was a vacancy in the congregation until November of 1966. Pastor A. Schmeling served as vacancy pastor.⁶⁶

Youth Education Becomes a Focus

In November of 1967 Pastor Herbert Kesting of Gibson, Minnesota, was installed as pastor of the congregation. Pastor Kesting wanted to focus on the youth in the congregation and that was evident early on in his ministry at St. Peter. In 1967 a joint meeting of the Rockwood and St. Peter's Young People's Society (what churches would now call youth group) was once again convened. The

⁶⁴ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1959.

⁶⁵ Anonymous. One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation. p.10.

⁶⁶ One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Grace. p.7.

young people's society is really not mentioned before this, but it assumed there was some form of a youth society before this.⁶⁷

In 1968 it was decided there could be help with communion. The voters thought communion could be done quicker if there was an assistant helping the pastor during communion. The assistant was to be a leader of the congregation in good standing.⁶⁸ It is interesting to see St. Peter's using an assistant at communion in 1968. It seems earlier than most people would think for a conservative Midwest congregation.

The voters once again decided there was normal maintenance which needed to be done in the parsonage and in the church. The upstairs of the parsonage had not been updated in many years and it was time for that area of the house to be remodeled. The voters approved the remodeling of the upstairs of the parsonage in 1969.⁶⁹ Also at this time, the old furnace in the church was failing. The congregation decided to replace the furnace. They replaced the furnace with a brand new gas-fired furnace.⁷⁰

In 1970 normal maintenance continued. There was a new bathroom which was placed in the parsonage. Also at this time, it is noted in the church records that there were light fixtures bought for the church. It was at this time that these light fixtures were dedicated. Also in the notes for the year 1970 was the recommendation to have a Board of Education. This resolution was passed by the voters in the same year.⁷¹

God continued to bless the congregation's work in Mishicot. The congregation in 1971 realized the need for more room for the school. The school was growing and the space was limited.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.7

⁶⁸ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1968.

⁶⁹ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1969.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1970.

The voters realized this and approved a large addition to the church. This addition was added to the north part of the building. The voters of the congregation also decided at this time to pursue the first ever pictorial directory for the church. The congregation also celebrated in a special service the 35th anniversary of Pastor Kesting's ordination.

Plans moved quickly for the large addition and there was an Easter groundbreaking service planned for the Education Wing in 1972. Once again, additional land was purchased north of the building for more parking. The dedication of this large addition took place in a special service on October 22, 1972.⁷²

Miss Alice Zell started the choir back in 1943. Now in 1973 Miss Zell was recognized by the congregation for directing the choir for 40 years. The congregation appreciated her service to the church. During this year, the Ladies Bible Hour also celebrated its 40th anniversary. During the year, the concept of 'greeters' at the church exits appeared in the congregational notes. It is not known how well this was received.⁷³

More cosmetic work needed to be done to the buildings in 1974. At this time the parking lot was blacktopped. In the southwest part of the church is a baptistery. It is a special 'side space' built into the church where there are two separate small candles, a small cross, a small altar, and also where the baptismal font is located. At this time, the voters of the congregation realize this also needed to be remodeled. The voters approve the renovation. Also at this time the music program of the congregation received another boost, and the congregation decided to purchase a new piano for the Choir room.⁷⁴

⁷² One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Grace. p.7.

⁷³ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1973.

⁷⁴ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1974.

Pastor Kesting's interest in the youth of the congregation continued to be blessed by God. In 1976 the voters approved to start a Sunday School for the church. Under the leadership of Pastor Kesting the youth society restarted and Sunday School became a weekly session. It was truly a great time to be a youth in the congregation because there were ample opportunities to gather around the Word of God. In early 1976 the voters also approved early to start Monday evening services. These services were held during the three summer months (June, July, and August). This was done to give another option for those people working on the weekends and also give families another option during the summer months if they were gone on vacation.⁷⁵

The next year brought about more repairs on the again church. In 1977, with water coming leaking into the building because of the bell tower, the voters approved to repair the bell tower. Also during this year Kathy Barthles, a long-time member, was commissioned to serve as a missionary nurse in Africa.⁷⁶

The next two years of the church's history were fairly quiet. The voters acted on a few items. In 1979 the voters approved the church interior to be renovated. At this time red carpeting was laid in the sanctuary, carpet which remains there to this day. Also at this time Lenox windows were installed over the stained glass windows to protect the windows. The church also decided to add a phone inside the church.⁷⁷

Things once again remained quiet in the church over the next couple of years. In 1982 deterioration was noted on the roof over the educational wing of the church. After making this discovery, the church decided to repair the roof. It was also decided that a new public address system was needed inside the church. The public address system was installed later in that year.

⁷⁵ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1976.

⁷⁶ One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Grace. p.7.

⁷⁷ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1979.

Also in 1982 the organ once again was starting to fail. It became noticeable to the common ear. The voters decided another organ fund should be started. It is in this year that Sunday School was focused for those families outside of church or those families who did not come to church often. The church introduced materials for Sunday School entitled 'Reaching Out'. Pastor Herbert Kesting continued a youth emphasis even in the late years of his ministry.⁷⁸

A Day to Rejoice

In 1983 the day had finally come. The day when the mortgage which the church took out to help pay for the building of the church and various other additions was complete. The church held a special church service to thank God for the grace he had shown to the Mishicot congregation all these years, and to thank him for the blessings received in order to pay off this debt. This mortgage burning service was held on June 26, 1983. At this time an electronic Carillon was purchase and donated by Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Eisenmann. The electronic Carillon was dedicated at that time. The Eisenmann's have since donated a modern Carillon, one that is run by computer and is easy to change along with the church seasons. This was purchased in the early 21st century. Communion in 1983 was held once a month. This was until voters decided to add an extra communion service per month. The new communion service was placed on the 2nd Sunday of each month. This service featured individual cups. The normal last Sunday of the month communion service was still held with the common cup.⁷⁹

After 18 years of faithful service at St. Peter's congregation, Pastor Herbert Kesting retired in 1984. His emphasis on youth was noted in the start of Sunday School and restarting the youth society at the congregation.

⁷⁸ One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Grace. p.7.

⁷⁹ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1983.

After Pastor Kesting's retirement there was a short vacancy at the church. The voters unanimously called Pastor David Waege to be the next pastor in Mishicot. Pastor Waege was currently serving in Valentine, Nebraska. Pastor Waege accepted the call and was installed at the church on March 3, 1985.⁸⁰

The voters, under new pastoral leadership, debate whether the Monday evening service, now held during the three summer months, should be extended throughout the year. In 1985 the voters decided to extend the Monday evening services throughout the year.⁸¹

A New Shepherd and a Continuing Focus on Youth

Pastor David Waege continued the emphasis on youth in the congregation. The voters over the next couple of months debated if they should open a school. In 1986 the school became a reality. The voters approved the opening of the school starting out slowly. The school was to open in the fall of 1986 with the grades K-2. The congregation extended a call to Miss Bonnie Enter of Green Bay.⁸² Miss Enter accepted the call and became the first teacher of the new school. Pastor Waege helped out the school at the beginning by also being a part-time principal and helping the school. The Board of Education in turn helped out Pastor Waege by doing much of the ground work that the principal would be expected to do.

The year 1986 also brought another big milestone to the congregation. The church's 125th anniversary would be held throughout the year. The church decided to mark the anniversary from May through November. There was one service each month which featured a special anniversary service and had a special guest preacher on that day.⁸³

⁸⁰ One Hundred Twenty-five Years of Grace. p.7.

⁸¹ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1985.

⁸² Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1986.

⁸³ One Hundred Twenty-five Years of Grace. p.7.

Things remained quiet in the church over the next couple years. God blessed the congregation with a moderately growing school and a congregation which was slowly growing. In 1989 the congregation decided to help the staff of the school out as they called Mr. Jason Muench from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. The call was to be a full-time principal, the first in the congregation's history. Mr. Muench accepted the call and became the first full-time principal of the school.

At this time, St. Peter was in a dual parish relationship with a rural congregation in Rockwood. In the year 1990 the Rockwood congregation requested a candidate from the seminary to lead their congregation. In May of 1990 Pastor Rodney Rixe was assigned to this rural congregation. This formally ended the dual parish relationship. The two congregations remain single parishes to this day.⁸⁴

Once again, things remain fairly quiet over the next couple of years. The next big decision the voters needed to make came from another area church, St John's Lutheran in Gibson, Wisconsin. The enrollment at St. John's school was declining to a point where it no longer made sense for them to have their own school. St. Peter's school was surviving with its own students, but could use the extra students. Therefore, these two schools, St. John's in Gibson and St. Peter's in Mishicot decided to merge in 1993. The church functions were to remain separate but the school would be jointly funded by both churches. The new school is named East Twin Lutheran School.⁸⁵

The organ fund which was started in 1982, finally was blessed with enough money to purchase a new organ. Once again, much of the money donated to the fund came at the end when the need for the organ was more apparent. The organ which was purchased was one that could transpose keys with a switch so it would be easier for instrumental accompaniment with hymns and

⁸⁴ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1990.

⁸⁵ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1993.

choral pieces. It was an electronic organ which was hooked up through the organ speakers which were built into the ceiling of the sanctuary. This same organ remains to this day.⁸⁶

Normal maintenance on the church continued over the next couple of years. The replacement of the blacktop parking lot was the biggest item the church took on between 1994-1995. It was also decided the congregation could use more help on the pastoral side, yet the voters were concerned that they could not pay for another pastor. The congregation decides to enter the vicar program of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In May of 1995 Vicar James Price is assigned to the congregation. As part of his education, he studied under Pastor Waege and did many of things Pastor Waege did. Vicar Price focused much of his work on the youth of the congregation. Vicar Price served from August 1995 through August 1996. He was the only vicar the congregation has had to this day.⁸⁷

In 1996 Pastor David Waege accepts a call to serve the church at large as a planned giving counselor for the Minnesota District. The congregation then unanimously called Pastor Daniel Drews to serve as their next shepherd. Pastor Drews was serving on the faculty of Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin at the time. Pastor Drews accepted the call to Mishicot. His installation service was held on August 4, 1996. While there was a vacancy, the congregation put new vinyl replacement windows in the parsonage.⁸⁸

Turbulent Times Hit the Church

During 1996 there was some issues which affected the school. The principal was accused of poor behavior in the classroom toward the students. After further investigation by the various boards and committees it was determined that the accusations were correct. Therefore, the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1995.

⁸⁸ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 1996.

principal was asked to resign and the congregation now needed to fill the vacant principal position. This principal would have a hard task as he needed to help heal the rifts which were happening because of the school issues. This was the beginning of the toughest couple of years in the congregation's history. These were years that truly showed God's grace and blessings through all actions of his sinful children. The church body became closer and more focused on the mission of the church.

The congregation unanimously calls Jonathan P. Meyer of Fond du Lac, WI to serve as principal of East Twin Lutherans School. Because the vicar program was no longer at St. Peter, the congregation decided to also add Minister of Youth Education to Mr. Meyer's call.

After only a couple of months at the congregation, Mr. Meyer was placed into some awkward and difficult situations. Mr. Cliff Lagerman, a teacher at East Twin Lutheran School, was suspected of embezzling funds from the school. After further investigation, those accusations were proved true. Mr. Lagerman resigned due to the embezzlement of those funds. The school had a difficult year. A principal and a teacher who needed to resign because of the situation in which they put themselves.⁸⁹

Over the next couple of years, the disturbing situations in the church and school settled down. God blessed the school and the church despite these difficult situations. The church had many new spiritual growth programs start under the leadership of Pastor Drews. One of the items that Pastor Drews and Mr. Jon Meyer restarted was the youth group. After Vicar Price left and the vacancy of Pastor Waege, the youth group did not meet for a while. Now with a youth ministry leader and a pastor who loved starting new programs, the youth group and various other Bible studies were started.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Trouble hit the church again in 1999. Mr. Meyer noticed Pastor Dan Drews acting weird one morning and mentioned that he was not acting normal. On a Thursday afternoon after school, Pastor Drews confessed to Principal Meyer that he had inappropriate relations outside his marriage.

It was close to the weekend and the schedule was tight for someone being able to preach for that weekend. Mr. Meyer told Pastor Drews he was to preach on Sunday and there would be a special council meeting after the service on Monday evening. Pastor Drews did preach that Sunday and Monday, but instead of greeting people in the narthex of the church as was customary, he walked out of the sacristy door at the back (south) end of the church. Monday night, after church, Mr. Meyer called the council together. Mr. Meyer told Pastor Drews to be at the meeting and Pastor Drews did attend the first part of the meeting. Pastor Drews then confessed to the council what he had done. At that time, upon Mr. Meyer's and eventually the council's (after they all heard from Pastor Drews) recommendation that Pastor Drews tender his resignation. Pastor Drews obliged at that time and tendered his resignation. A letter was sent out that week from Dan Drews to all the members of the congregation informing them of his actions and that he was no longer to be their spiritual leader. The actions of the pastor shocked the congregation and hurt them greatly. Yet, the ministry of the church was to continue.⁹⁰

The next day Mr. Meyer decided it was wise to call a meeting between Mr. Steve Jaeger, member and congregational president at this time, Pastor Bill Zell, a retired pastor and member of the congregation, and Pastor Ernst Wendland, also a member of the congregation and retired pastor. This was a meeting of guidance for Mr. Steve Jaeger and Mr. Jon Meyer on what to do next and what the congregation needed to do next.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Taken from Personal Interview with Jon Meyer.

⁹¹ Ibid.

After this meeting with Pastors Zell and Wendland, Mr. Meyer and Mr. Jaeger decided it was time to go to the circuit pastor who was in Brillion to start planning how the congregation was going to deal with the vacancy. Pastor Hoppe, pastor of St. John's Gibson, served as vacancy pastor. Between Mr. Meyer and Pastor Hoppe, there was a schedule set up for other pastors to preach at the congregation. Mr. Meyer would read the sermons on Monday night when the visiting pastors were not able to be at the church.⁹²

The congregation still had some issues with Dan Drews' family to think through in this time period. The congregation decided to allow Mr. Drews' wife and kids to stay in the parsonage and also to give the wife a couple of months of Dan's pay to help them transition to the next stage of their lives.⁹³

Fortunately, the congregation's vacancy lasted only about nine months. The congregation's first call was extended unanimously to Pastor Steve Soukup. Pastor Soukup declined the call. Then, the congregation unanimously called Pastor Robert Johannes who was serving in Minnesota at that time. Pastor Johannes accepted the call to be the next spiritual leader of the congregation. He accepted the call in the middle of a school year and asked the congregation if he could delay the move until the school year was done because he did not want to disrupt his children's school year. The congregation approved his request and Pastor Johannes was installed as pastor at St. Peter's Lutheran Church on June 11, 2000. The Lord brought the congregation closer through this difficult time and the mission of the congregation of the church became more focused.

The Lord Blesses Difficult Decisions

Pastor Johannes would have a difficult task. With the Lord's help, he needed to start the healing process in the congregation. Many members were angry and disappointed at the actions of

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

their previous spiritual leader, and they did not know what would come from all of this. But, once again, the Lord blessed the congregation richly. Pastor Johannes, a man who is gentle and evangelical in his approach, was just the type of spiritual leader the congregation needed.

Yet, difficult decisions were not behind the congregation. The enrollment had dropped in the school to where the staffing was greater than the needs of the school. This forced the congregation to terminate the call of one of their teachers. The voters decided to terminate the call of long-time teacher, Mrs. Marlene Bruss. Shortly after her call was terminated, Mrs. Bruss received a call to teach at St. John's in Maribel.

In 2002 Principal Meyer was called to be a staff minister of St. Paul's Church in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. Mr. Meyer accepted the call and left Mishicot in July of 2002. This left East Twin Lutheran School with a vacancy at principal. The voters decided to call East Twin teacher, Mr. Steven Hahnke to be principal of the school. Mr. Hahnke accepted the call to be principal.⁹⁴

Things continued to move along with both the church and school over the next couple of years. It was a welcome break for a congregation which dealt with many difficult items within five years. Yet, the difficult decisions were not over for the congregation. Mr. Hahnke received a call to teach at Manitowoc Lutheran High School in 2007. Mr. Hahnke accepted the call and left the school that summer to go to the high school. This left the congregation once again with a vacancy at principal. It was at this time that the congregation decided to look at the viability of the school. The enrollment had dropped into the thirties and St. John's in Gibson, the other congregation associated with the grade school, said they were no longer going to support the school as they only had one child attending the school. With the reduction in support from St John's Gibson, the congregation needed to decided if they wanted to run the school by themselves. Over the course

⁹⁴ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 2002.

of the next couple of months presentations were made to the members of the congregation concerning the school. In spring of 2007, the congregation decided to keep the school open and to change the name of the school from East Twin Lutheran School to St. Peter's Lutheran School. Now the congregation needed to fill the vacancy of the principal position. The congregation unanimously called Mr. Eric Lange to be principal of the school. Mr. Lange accepts the call to serve as principal.⁹⁵

In 2009 it became evident that the school was once again overstaffed as the enrollment of the school dropped to about 30 children. This forced the congregation to do some shuffling. The congregation decided to terminate the call of Mr. Eric Lange effective June 30, 2009. They then called Mr. Josh Wendt, a teacher at the school already, to become the next principal. They also called Mrs. Destinee Feicko to be a half-time teacher. Both Mr. Wendt and Mrs. Feicko accepted the calls.⁹⁶

Throughout the almost 150 years of St. Peter's history the Lord has guided this congregation through many different situations. The Lord's grace and his guidance has never failed this congregation continues to reap the blessings of its gracious Lord. To God be the glory!

⁹⁵ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 2007.

⁹⁶ Cf. Voter's Meeting Minutes of 2009.

Bibliography

Articles of Incorporation. Manitowoc County, Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

Anonymous. "One Hundred Years of St. Peter's Congregation." unknown (after 1961).

Authors, Multiple. "Voter's Meeting Minutes from 1861-2009 as They are Available." 1861-2009.

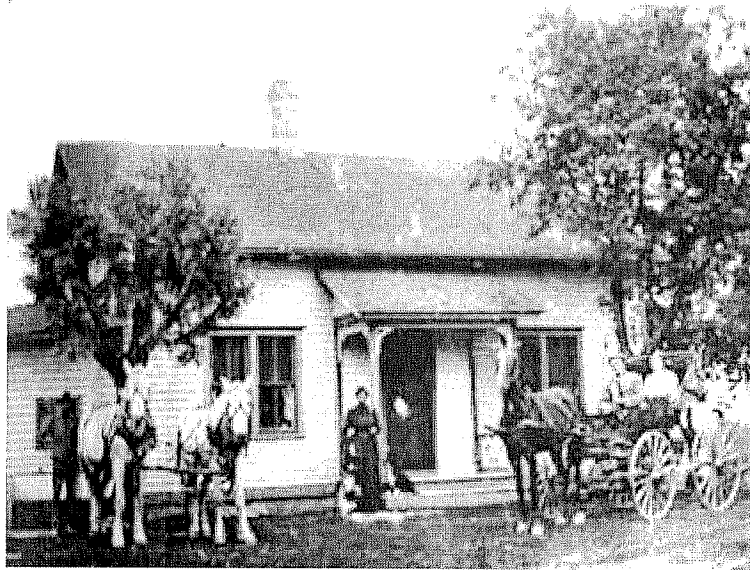
Anonymous. One Hundred Twenty-Five Years of Grace. St. Peter's Lutheran Congregation, 1986.

Meyer, Jonathon P. Interview by author. December 4, 2009.

Addenda



St. Peter's Lutheran Church in the year 2009 (picture taken from the south looking to the north)



Diedrich Wenholz

Sephis Carstens Wenholz

Rev. Edward Zell and Ida Wenholz

Picture taken in front of Wenholz house where Pastor Zell lived before he was married.