

A History of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church  
Renville, Minnesota  
1886-1993

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In June of 1994, St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church of Renville, Minnesota will be 108 years old. This congregation, which was organized in 1886, has seen many years of change and also many challenges, from the weather to wars to economic problems. It has been a member of the Minnesota Synod, then the Synod of Wisconsin and other States. Now it is a member of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod (WELS). St. John's has seen 16 pastors, 14 of which were resident pastors after sharing the first two with Bethany congregation in Emmet township. As we look at the major events of St. John's history, we will subdivide our study according to the pastors who have served this congregation.

### **Pastor Frederick Spindler (1881-1886)**

The town of Renville was surveyed and plotted out in 1878, and when the railway came through, the town got its start. The town struggled until 1884 when many settlers came to the area, making Renville a prosperous town. The religious side of the people also needed attention during the immigrations from 1886 to 1896. During that time 12 congregations were started in the county.

Pastor Spindler was the pastor of the Bethany congregation. He found a group of Lutherans in and around Renville and served their needs. He served this group, as well as his own congregation until 1886.<sup>1</sup>

### **Pastor Gervasius Fischer (1886-1889)**

Pastor Fischer was the next pastor at Bethany. He too continued to minister to the needs of the group in Renville. He conducted services for the Renville group in the public school house. While he was serving this group, they formally organized into the **German Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Church on June 13, 1886**. The charter members were: Carl Diekow, August Penke, Claus Postel, August and Ludwig Hannemann, Wilhelm Goetz, Gustav Dusterhoft, Gustav Hermann, Albert

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor August Sauer. *A History of St. John's Lutheran Church*. Prepared for the 50th Anniversary booklet, 1936. p. 1

Bratsch, Fritz Leistikow, and Michael Zarske. From 1886-1888 the Lord blessed this new congregation by increasing its voting members from 11 to 26. Bethany and St. John's formed a dual parish and were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota which is now the Minnesota district of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod.<sup>2</sup>

### **Pastor Paul Burkholz (1889-1895)**

In May of 1888, St. John's decided to separate from Bethany congregation and go on their own. They formed a dual parish with St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Winfield township and called Pastor Deuber. He returned the call.<sup>3</sup>

Also in the spring of 1888, the congregation bought a lot for \$25, with two more lots donated for building their first church. Along with the land, the only other things that the congregation owned were a church book, a communion set, 1 baptism bowl, 2 candlesticks and a collection bag.

Pastor Paul Burkholz accepted the call late in the year 1888, and was installed on Jan. 6, 1889 as the first resident pastor of St. John's. Soon after he arrived the congregation began building their new church. The cornerstone was laid on **April 28, 1889**. The new church was dedicated on **Oct. 20, 1889**. A farewell service was held in the school house, and Pastors Fischer from Emmet, Deuber from Sleepy Eye and Winter from St. Paul preached the dedication sermons. In late fall of 1889, a parsonage and a barn were built for the pastor.<sup>4</sup>

St. John's had some trouble with the weather in those early years. Fortunately in both instances, Pastor Burkholz and his family were not at home. The first came in 1892 when lightning struck the parsonage, damaging the roof, chimney and walls. The second encounter with weather was more serious. On June 27, 1894 a cyclone hit the town of Renville. The barn and woodshed were completely destroyed, with the parsonage also suffering significant damage. The church, however, suffered minor damage on the outside, but the plaster on the walls and ceiling were badly cracked.

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<sup>2</sup> *God's Story in Our History*: (History in the 100th anniversary booklet, 1986.) p. 4

<sup>3</sup> Pastor August Sauer. *A History of St. John's Lutheran Church*. Prepared for the 50th Anniversary booklet, 1936. p. 2

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* pp. 2-3

Pastor Burkholz suffered little personal loss because his horse, cow and buggy were stored at a local farmer's place. His only major loss was his sleigh.<sup>3</sup>

Another milestone for the congregation came in 1895. The church incorporated under Minnesota law, taking the official name **The Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Congregation of Renville, Minnesota**. Church officers at that time were President Frederick Standfuss, Secretary F. H. Berning, and Treasurer Joachim Schemel. The Elders were William Goetz, Herman Kaatz and Gustav Hermann and the Trustees were William Schufft, C.F. Diekow and Gustav Stern.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Pastor Henry Albrecht (1895-1899)**

Little is known about Pastor Albrecht. He arrived after Pastor Burkholz took a call to Milwaukee in 1895. He served until 1899 when he took a call Litchfield, MN.

#### **Pastor W. Ulrich (1899-1903)**

Once again, not much is known about Pastor Ulrich, as well. He served St. John's until 1900 when he accepted a call into the Free Church of Saxony at Konigsberg, Prussia in Germany.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Pastor Martin Schuelze (1903-1913)**

After calling several times, St. John's finally received a pastor in the person of Martin Schuelze. He was installed into his office on May 17, 1903.

God had blessed this congregation. It had come to point where they had to remodel and enlarge their building. This remodeling took place in 1904. They added a new basement, front vestibule and an altar niche. More seating was also added with a balcony. A one-ton bell was added to the tower. The total cost of the project was \$3,600. St. John's rededicated their building on September 11, 1904 with Pastors

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid p. 3

<sup>4</sup> *God's Story in Our History*: (History in the 100th anniversary booklet, 1986.) p. 4

<sup>5</sup> Pastor August Sauer. *A History of St. John's Lutheran Church*. Prepared for the 50th Anniversary booklet, 1936. p. 3

Albrecht from Emmet and Kohler from Nicollet<sup>8</sup> as guest speakers.

The next major event came on **July 2, 1911**. On that day the congregation celebrated 25 years of God's grace. Pastors Fischer and Burkholz preached.<sup>9</sup> These were the two "first" pastors. Pastor Fischer was their pastor when they formed and Pastor Burkholz was their first resident pastor.

### **Pastor Rudolph Korn (1913-1918)**

Once again, not much information is known about the years that Pastor Korn served St. John's congregation. There is one note of interest. Pastor Korn's infant son, Clarence T.P. Korn (Sept. 17, 1913 - Nov. 14, 1913) is buried in Renville's Fairview Cemetery.<sup>10</sup>

### **Pastor Reinhold Schierenbeck (1918-1929)**

Starting in 1918, information becomes more available. The set of church minutes that I have access to begins on September 6, 1918. The first page records the call extended to Pastor Schierenbeck. It is basically the same call sent to pastors today, with the exception of it being in German. It is interesting to note that Pastor Schierenbeck was given a salary of \$800 a year, plus housing.

Several changes took place while Pastor Schierenbeck served Renville. The most noticeable would have been the gradual shift from German to English in the worship and working of the congregation. That process began on March 29, 1925 when the congregations made the following resolutions: "II. Motion carried to write the minutes in the German language. Meetings may be conducted in either German or English and if called for, minutes shall be translated into the English language."<sup>11</sup> Later on in that same meeting came resolution VIII, "Resolved to amend resolution No. 2 so as to read that the minutes shall be written in both the German and English

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 4

<sup>9</sup> *God's Story in Our History*: (History in the 100th anniversary booklet, 1986.) p. 5

<sup>10</sup>Renville Genealogical Society, 1985. Presented to St. John's by Jane and Kenneth Rice.

<sup>11</sup>Quarterly Meeting Minutes, March 29, 1925.

languages.”

The next step towards the English language came only two years later. At the quarterly meeting, held on March 27, 1937, the congregation moved to alternate the services between German and English, except for Good Friday which would always be in German. That motion passed by a vote of 23 in favor to 9 against.

Another noticeable change in the worship service came on May 29, 1921. A seven rank Reuter pipe organ was dedicated on that day.<sup>12</sup>

Of course there was also upkeep on the buildings. Nothing major was done to either the church or the parsonage, but it is interesting to see how these repairs were handled, from painting the inside of the church, to repairing the chicken fence in the parsonage barn. In 1926 the ladies of the congregation were given permission, provided they paid for it, to paint the inside of the church. Outside painting was done both in 1927 and 1928. In the first instance, both the church and the parsonage were painted, with each member paying \$3 towards the expense of painting. In 1928 St. John's considered building a new parsonage, but that motion failed, 29 to 5.<sup>13</sup> Instead the trustees were instructed to make the necessary repairs, plus build a cistern under the kitchen. In this case, the congregation assessed its members for the repairs.

The congregation also took steps in organizing the support of the church. In a congregational meeting held on October 11, 1925, the congregation was divided into five financial districts (3 in the country and 2 in town.), with a financial secretary in charge of each district. Paul Dusterhoff was elected as finance secretary for those living north of town, Albert Tolzman Sr. for those east of town and J. Schemel for those west of town. In the town itself, Albert Lembke was elected for those who lived west of Main St. and Henry Schroer for those east of Main St.

The congregation was not running on an offering system like we are today. Instead it operated on a dues system, which is what allowed a system as described above to work. In several annual meetings, the financial secretary stood up, read the

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<sup>12</sup> *God's Story in Our History*: (History in the 100th anniversary booklet, 1986.) p. 5

<sup>13</sup> Special Meeting Minutes, Feb. 12, 1928.

names of those members who had paid their dues, and also those who had not. During these meetings, the financial secretaries were instructed to visit those who had fallen behind and determine why the dues had not been paid. They saw this as a sign that the member might be straying away.

Even though several years have passed between 1925 and now, some things don't seem to change. We always seem to struggle to make ends meet, whether individually, as a congregation, or as a synod. St. John's had that same problem addressed by a resolution at the semi-annual meeting held on July 6, 1925. The resolution reads: "Motion carried to give the president and secretary permission, in case there is not enough money in the treasury at the end of this week to pay current expenses, to sign a note for the congregation for what money is needed." Throughout history, the Lord always provided what was needed.

During his years at Renville, Pastor Schierenbeck received three calls. The first came in May 1928 from Arcoma. In a special meeting, the congregation moved that he not take the call. The second call came one month later, this time from Cedar Mills, MN. At this meeting, St. John's expressed its desire that Pastor Schierenbeck stay, but allowed him to make his own decision. The final call came in March of 1929. On Good Friday, Pastor Schierenbeck informed his congregation that he had accepted the call to Sanborn, MN. After 11 years of service to St. John's, the Lord was going to allow him to serve elsewhere, and bring a new man to St. John's.

#### **Pastor August Sauer (1929-1943)**

With the calling of a new pastor, St. John's and St. Luke's had to decide if they were going to maintain their present arrangement. A joint meeting was held with a committee from St. Luke's on April 1, 1929. A call meeting was set for April 7.

The two congregations met as planned in order to call their new Pastor. Rev. Schierenbeck read the names given to him by the Minnesota Synod President. The names that the congregations had to consider were: Sauer, Kruger, Bast, Schaller, Frey, Guse, Zarling and Korn. After two ballots, Pastor Sauer of Vesta, MN was called

to be their next pastor. The call was written out in the minutes of the meeting, with wording very similar to what Pastors may receive today. The call provided for a salary of \$1700, \$1200 from St. John's and \$500 from St. Luke's. In addition, housing was provided. The call was signed by the elders of St. John's: John Wegner, Paul Breitzkreutz, Aug. Wilcken and Wm. Schemel. The elders of St. Luke's who signed the call were Herman Moje, Fred Dettman, H.T. Seehusen and H.G. Seehusen.<sup>14</sup> Pastor Sauer accepted the call, and in the meantime, the congregation called Rev. F. Zarling as vacancy pastor.<sup>15</sup>

During the 14 years that Pastor Sauer served St. John's there were some changes in how the congregation worshiped, some minor, and some were major changes. One of the minor changes was the change from the "Klingelbuetel" to the collection plates. Along with that decision, the first Sunday of the month was designated as envelope Sunday, with the loose change added to the synod offering. On the other Sundays, the loose change went to the church treasury. That change was made at the Annual Meeting, held on January 4, 1930.

Another change in practice was discussed in 1943.<sup>16</sup> The topic of individual cups came up, but nothing was decided on that matter.

St. John's continued to move closer and closer to the English language as well. The moves made during the time of Rev. Schierenbeck were expanded. At the Annual Meeting in January, 1933, the minutes of all meetings were now to be recorded in English, rather than in German and English. The English language also became the language of the majority of the services. Three Sundays of the month were in English and one in German, with all holy days to be in English.<sup>17</sup> This trend also continued into the Mission Festival Sundays. In 1941 St. John's decided to have two sermons in the morning, one in German and one in English while the afternoon service was to be in English. Yet with all that progression toward English, St. John's couldn't quite take the

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<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Joint Meeting, Apr. 7, 1929.

<sup>15</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Apr. 14, 1929.

<sup>16</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Apr. 4, 1943.

<sup>17</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 6, 1937.



whole step, at least not yet. At the Annual meeting on Jan. 6, 1942, it was moved to go to all English services. The motion failed with 9 in favor and 15 against.

Another big language step came in 1935 with the adoption of an English constitution. That took place on July 14. A few months later St. John's decided that all who had signed the German constitution would also be considered as having signed the English one. The voting members who had signed both constitutions of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, as of 1936 were: Gust Stern, A.C. Paukow, Albert Tolzman, A.L. Bratsch, F. O. Bratsch, F. Wehausen, M. Zaske, C. F. Diekow, Ferd. Leutz, C. Zabel, Aug. Wilcken, Carl Standfuss, Hy Radke, Albert Henning, Fred Stern, John Wagner, Herm. Beinhorn, Ferd. Herman, Aug. Leutz, Wm. Herrimann, Alb. Lembke, Gottl. Schaeck, Aug. Roschild, John Brunner, J. Schemel, Alb. Hoffman, Otto Herman, Haus Klath, Wm. Schemel, Jul Black, John Grafenstein, Herb. Hoffman, Arthur Beyer, Herman Zaske, Robt. Peik, Fred Luedtke, Adolf Alteson, Paul Hermann, Chas. Wolf, Walter Hoffman, Ferd. Leutz, Perry Danielson, John TerEick, John Grabow, Augt. H. Dusterhoff, Frank Klemenhagen, Hugo Tolzman, Oscar Larson, Rudolf Zaske, Mart. Standfuss, E.H. Goetz, Ben Yeschick, Aug. Strey, Louis Gummert, Albert Zaske Sr., Clarence Grabow, Herbert Bratch, Wm. Standfuss, Wm. Grabow, Jesse Grabow, Herman Leutz, Gust. A. Krueger, Alb. H. Grabow, Geo. Rice, Ben Staugr, Wm. Jakel, E. Blauert, Leo Johnson, Aug. H. Grabow, Paul Dusterhoff, F. H. Kluth, Alton Grabow, Alb. J. Zaske, Mart. Tolzman, Louis Bretlin, Emil Strey and Herm. Gummert.<sup>18</sup>

The congregation made several improvements in the physical property as well during these years. First they replaced the parsonage barn with a double garage. It started in January of 1930 when Albert Lembke and August Wilcken were instructed to look into the cost of remodeling the parsonage barn into a double garage. Their findings must have led the church away from remodeling and toward simply replacing the building. In July of 1930, the Board of Trustees was given permission to sell the barn and erect a new garage in place of it if they so desired. A year after the initial

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<sup>18</sup>Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 7, 1936.

idea began, the president of the congregation appointed a committee to build the new garage and dispose of the old barn. The men on that committee were: Albert Bratsch, Albert Tatzman, Wm. Schuft, Aug. Wilcken, Wm. Herman, Carl Zabel and Paul Ereitkreutz.<sup>19</sup>

From 1932 to 1934 other minor repairs and improvements continued to be done. The old organ was given to the congregation in Remer, MN in 1932. In 1933 the Ladies' Aid put in and paid for new lights in the church. The parsonage was repapered and repainted in 1934. Perhaps these improvements were made in light of June 14, 1936. On that day St. John's celebrated 50 years of God's grace. The four previous pastors were invited to speak at this festival. The charge for the meals was 25¢ and 15¢. Several served on various committees to help make the celebration successful. The members on the food committee were: Mrs. Riek, Mrs. Wm. Schemel, Mrs. Klemenhagen, Mrs. Black, Mrs. Danielson, Sophie Hoffman and Mrs. Zabel. The stand committee consisted of: Aug. Wilcken, Albert Lembke, Eckhard Tolzman, Arthur Herman and Adrian Hoffman. Albert Tolzman, Fred Kluth, Joe Schemel and Herb Bratsch were appointed to the place committee.<sup>20</sup>

In his history prepared for the 50th Anniversary booklet, Pastor Sauer recounts some numbers that showed God's blessings on the first 50 years. Up to that time, 607 people were baptized, 437 were confirmed, 116 weddings, 14,151 were communed and 169 were given a Christian burial. At the 50th anniversary there were 325 souls; 230 communicants; 78 voting members. The officers were: President Louis Gummert, Secretary Erich Blauert, Treasurer Albert Lembke, the elders were Ferdinand Lenz, William Schemel and Joachim Schemel Jr., the trustees were Albert Tolzman, August Wilcken and Fred Kluth.<sup>21</sup>

The building improvements continued after the celebration. The two main projects were the church basement and the church itself. In a joint meeting between

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<sup>19</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 6, 1931.

<sup>20</sup> Special Meeting Minutes, May, 31, 1936.

<sup>21</sup> Pastor August Sauer. *A History of St. John's Lutheran Church*. Prepared for the 50th Anniversary booklet, 1936. p. 5.

the council and the Ladies' Aid on November 16, 1939, plans to remodel the basement were laid out. A new stairway was to go into the northwest corner ( which was later dropped) a new concrete floor in the basement and also an addition would be put on in the northwest corner of kitchen. The total cost came out to \$650, less \$35 because of leaving out the stairs for the time being. The basement entrance was also remodeled later.

The other major project involved new "benches" for the church. The idea seemed to catch on slowly. It was mentioned at various times and places, but never much was done about it. It finally came up at a quarterly meeting. It seems as if some didn't want to even talk about it. The minutes read, "The question of buying new benches came up. Motion made and seconded to adjourn. Motion failed to carry. The discussion on new benches continued. . ."<sup>22</sup> Despite the seeming reluctance, the project was accomplished. The funds were gathered and the council got the go ahead to proceed on Aug. 9, 1943. Later that month it was decided to also put a new floor into the church before the new benches were installed.

Not everything was going well, however. Despite the improvements to worship and buildings, despite the thankfulness of 50 years of history, St. John's had some problems with delinquent members. Several times, the minutes of the annual meetings would mention that there are some members who are behind on their dues. The Pastor, the elders and financial secretaries were encouraged to visit these people and see what the problem was. The congregation began taking stronger steps in 1937. A council meeting in April noted that the delinquents had been contacted earlier. Those who had promised to do better towards the upkeep of the congregation were given a 6 month grace period, that is until the October voters' meeting. At that time the congregation would determine whether or not their contributions were satisfactory. This motion was adopted unanimously.

The next step came in September when the elders agreed to send the following

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<sup>22</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Apr. 4, 1943.

letter to members who were delinquent with their dues by two or more years.

Dear Friend,

Our books show that you are not helping us to keep up our congregation. We cannot afford to do this for you either. You are thereby cordially invited to attend our quarterly meeting on Sunday, Oct. 3, 1937, and either pay up as best you can or explain why we should not strike your name from our membership. Please be present.<sup>29</sup>

This letter was sent to 21 people whose names are recorded in the minutes of that meeting. Their intent was carried out, for when the quarterly meeting was held, 8 members were taken off the membership list, as the letter had warned.

Another difficulty that St. John's had to face was the illness of their <sup>P</sup>astor. It seems that Pastor Sauer was ill for about the last two years of his ministry in Renville. Yet the love of the congregation shines through, as they <sup>did</sup> do all they <sup>could</sup> can to help him with his duties.

In a joint meeting of St. John's and St. Luke's on September 9, 1942, Pastor Sauer offered an option to see to it that the congregations would continue to be served. At this time, supply pastors were being used to serve Renville (St. John's) and Long Lake (St. Luke's). The meeting decided to continue to have Rev. Schmidt (from Danube) serve Renville, and Rev. Leuz serve Long Lake. Pastor Sauer's option was not mentioned specifically in the minutes of this meeting, nor used, at least not at this time. However, they did respect that offer at this meeting, and wanted their pastor to know that "we shall continue to hold up the hands of our Pastor and shall do so until the Lord is pleased to enable him to return into our midst."

A second meeting was held on November 16, 1942. The minutes of the September 9 meeting were accepted with the following correction: "That, Rev. Sauer's proposal for which this meeting was called for, considering Candidate Bade to serve the congregation during Rev. Sauer's illness. Rev. Sauer to pay for his board and room and the congregation to pay him as we see fit to do." It was at this meeting that the congregation took up Pastor Sauer's option, and was moved and carried that

<sup>29</sup>Elders' Meeting Minutes, Sept. 21, 1937.

Candidate Bade help Pastor Sauer until the next annual meeting.

Pastor Sauer was not completely out. He is recorded as having opened and closed the meetings that followed. How much he did do and how much Candidate Bade did is not clear from the church minutes.

The next annual meeting was held on January 5, 1943. Pastor Sauer opened the meeting. At this meeting they again discussed Candidate Bade. It was voted on and passed (17 to 8) to keep Candidate Bade. Pastor Sauer requested that he remain until Easter. It was also determined to pay Candidate Bade \$25 per month from the time he started to assist Pastor Sauer.

Rev. Bade (as he is called in the meetings that follow) continued to serve St. John's until after Easter (Apr. 25). His service was discontinued at the quarterly meeting on April 4, 1943. At that meeting, the congregation set the end of his service as assistant to Pastor Sauer, and thanked him for his help and service. Pastor Sauer then served on his own until September 1, 1943 when he resigned because of his health.<sup>29</sup>

### **Pastor Wilbur Dorn (1944-1955)**

It wouldn't be until January of 1944 that St. John's would receive their own Pastor. After Pastor Sauer resigned, the Council set the call meeting for September 26, 1943. St. Luke's congregation was also to be invited to this meeting. The council asked Pastor Schmidt to be their vacancy Pastor.

The joint meeting with St. Luke's was called on Sept. 26. Pastor Schmidt presented the call list that was given to him by Pres. Ackerman. The list included the following names: Rev. Lallement from St. Paul; Rev. Berwald from Buffalo, Rev. C.A. Hing, Mason City, IA; Rev. A.W. Fuerstenau, Boyd; Rev. K.J. Plocher, Litchfield; Rev. Geo. W. Schutel, Elgin; Rev. Beugstorf, Courtenig, N.D. After 3 ballots, Rev. Fuerstenau was called. The congregations then decided on the salary. St. Luke's

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<sup>29</sup> *God's Story in Our History*: (History in the 100th anniversary booklet, 1986.) p. 5

would pay the new Pastor \$600 per year and St. John's would pay \$120 per month. St John's also decided to have services at 10:45 when the new pastor came.<sup>25</sup>

However, there seemed to be problems with the way that meeting was handled. A joint council meeting decided to set up another joint congregational meeting on October 10 in order to clarify the call. The Joint meeting had two things to clarify. First of all there were corrections that needed to be made to the salary schedule (which have already been reflected above). The other concern was a feeling that the voting had not been handled properly. It was moved and seconded that the voting had not been done properly, but the was ruled out of order by Rev. Traupe of Wood Lake, who was acting chairman at this meeting. Rev Traupe explained that it was not wrong to change the voting from ballots to voting by exclamation, after a majority had already been reached, which is what was done on September 26. After this discussion, the assembly decided to let the call take its course and adjourned.<sup>26</sup>

The call did take its course. Pastor Fuerstenau returned the call. The following names were nominated and added to the call list: Rev. Roy Ristow, New Ulm; Rev. Carl Bast, Raymond, SD; Rev. Leslie Schierenbeck, Darfur, MN; and Rev. Theodor Koch, Goodhue, MN. A time was then set to once again meet to extend another call.<sup>27</sup>

That time was November 13, 1943. The list for this meeting is slightly different than the previous call list. This list presented at this meeting contained the names of Pastors LeRoy Ristow, Carl Bast, Leslie Schierenbeck, Theo. Koch, Herman Scherf (Morgan, MN), W. Dorn (Goodwin, SD), C.A. Hing, Karl J. Plocher, George W. Scheitel and R.C. Lallemant. Rev. LeRoy Ristow received the majority of the votes and it was moved to send a unanimous call to Rev. Ristow. The assembly then decided to choose a second man in case Rev. Ristow returns call. Rev. Bast received the majority votes and was made unanimous that he be next choice. Pastor Schmidt was therefore instructed to send the call to Rev. Bast in the event that Rev. Ristow return

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<sup>25</sup> Joint Call Meeting Minutes, Sept. 26, 1943.

<sup>26</sup> Joint Meeting Minutes, Oct. 10, 1943.

<sup>27</sup> Joint Meeting Minutes, Oct. 31, 1943.

the call.<sup>28</sup>

Even with that planning ahead, St. John's and St. Luke's still had to get together for another call meeting. This one took place on December 26, 1943. The same call list was presented with the addition of two names: Rev. Harold Bode, Madison, NE; and Rev. Traup, Wood Lake, MN. Two names were voted off of the list: Schierenbeck and Scherf. The list was then accepted. After three ballots, Rev. Dorn received a unanimous vote. Rev. Bode was chosen to be their second choice in case Rev. Dorn returned the call. A third choice was discussed, but not chosen.

The Lord finally answered their prayers for a ~~P~~<sup>P</sup>astor when Rev. Schmidt read Pastor Dorn's acceptance letter at the annual meeting on January 4, 1944.<sup>29</sup> A reception was planned for the new Pastor and his family to welcome them to Renville.

During the years that Pastor Dorn served St. John's, there were a few things that changed the way they worshiped. None of them were very major. The council decided in June of 1945 to use the entire liturgy in their services. Another minor change allowed Pastor Dorn to exchange pulpits during Lent.<sup>30</sup>

Another change came at the quarterly meeting on July 6, 1955. At that time, the congregation went to two services until October 1, 1955

Another worship related issue was the Sunday School. Twice the idea came up to elect a Sunday School superintendent. It was discussed for the first time at the annual meeting on January 13, 1948. The position was approved, but no other action was taken. However the motion was rescinded at the next quarterly meeting.

It wasn't until October 6, 1954 that the concept of a Sunday School superintendent came up again. The congregation approved of the position, and elected Mrs. Goetz as the superintendent.

On **June 16, 1946** St. John's celebrated their 60th Anniversary. All the

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<sup>28</sup>Call Meeting Minutes, Nov. 13, 1943.

<sup>29</sup>Rev. Dorn's previous congregation in Goodwin, S.D. is the home congregation of my wife. It was interesting to learn that Rev. Dorn came from her home congregation to my home congregation 20 years before either of us was around.

<sup>30</sup>Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 17, 1947.

previous Pastors were invited and the church asked Pastor Korn to preach in the morning service and Pastor Schierenbeck to preach for the afternoon service.<sup>31</sup> God was praised not just for 60 years of grace, but also for his care over the 33 men and women from the congregation who served during World War II. The statistics at that time revealed 371 souls; 296 communicants; 96 voters. The officers were President W. Markgraf, Secretary Charles Wulf and Treasurer Albert Lembke. The Elders were William Schemel, Albert Hoffman and William Pape. The Trustees were Fred Kluth, A. Goetz and Robert Peik.<sup>32</sup>

The project that filled the attention of most of the people during this period of their history was building the new parsonage. There were other projects too, such as painting and selling the old outhouse,<sup>33</sup> but his was the major project, and the most exciting.

The process began at the March 27, 1944, Council meeting. At this meeting a building fund was started for building and for repairs. This fund soon became the means for building the parsonage. This use of the fund became official at the 1946 Annual meeting. The parsonage was in need of repair, but the voters decided to do only the necessary repairs and begin to build up the building fund for a new parsonage.

The procedure for collecting money for the building fund was two special offerings, usually in April and October. But in 1947 (Apr. 13th Quarterly Meeting) the voters moved to build the fund by having each member contribute the same amount as their church dues to the building fund. But that system didn't last very long! The next year the motion to stay with the matching dues program was defeated. Instead, the congregation went back to the previous method of collecting.<sup>34</sup>

The next step was to get estimates. The building committee was directed to get an estimate for remodeling the present parsonage, as well as building a new one. A

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<sup>31</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 8, 1946.

<sup>32</sup> *God's Story in our History*: (History for the 75th Anniversary booklet, 1961.) p. 4

<sup>33</sup> Council Minutes, Mar. 27, 1944.

<sup>34</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 13, 1948.



special meeting will then be called to discuss the numbers.<sup>35</sup> On November 11, a joint meeting of the council and building committee discussed the numbers. The estimate for remodeling the parsonage came to \$8,000. The estimate for building a new one was \$15,000 with selling old parsonage for \$2500 or \$3000. It came down that to build a new parsonage would cost \$4000 to \$5000 more than remodeling.<sup>36</sup>

The building committee took these figures to a special meeting, held on November 23, 1948. The building planning committee, which consisted of Joe Schemel, Vernon Hoffman, George Rice, Herb Bratsch and Harold Herman gave the report on building a new parsonage. Fred Kluth, Ewald Goetz and Robert Peik reported on remodeling the present parsonage. They recommended that the present parsonage needed more repairs than it is worth. It was moved to collect as much money as possible by Jan, 1949 for the building fund. The following volunteers were asked to help with the collecting: Joe Schemel, Frank Engel, George Rice, Cecil Hinneberg, Vernon Hoffman, Ted Lenz, Alfred Lenz, Will Schemel, and Harm Sietsema. These men are to work with the council. The goal was \$13,000 with each person using their own judgment as how much to give.

The next special meeting continued to deal with the numbers. The building committee updated the estimate of the new parsonage at \$14,000 to \$16,000. There was \$9,998.68 in the building fund at that time. By a vote of 25 to 7 it was voted to spend \$1,000 and fix the present parsonage in 1949. Bill Pape, Albert Hoffman and Alfred Lenz were appointed to attend to the repairs.<sup>37</sup>

The year 1950 brought the congregation closer to the actual building. The Annual meeting passed 19 to 10 to build the parsonage in 1951. Bill Markgraf, Charles Wulf, George Rice, Vernon Hoffman, and Bill Pape were appointed to the building committee. At a special meeting on June 21 the congregation decided to put the parsonage on the south side of the church. In August St. John's moved to begin

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<sup>35</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, July 7, 1948.

<sup>36</sup> Joint Meeting Minutes, Nov. 11, 1948.

<sup>37</sup> Special Meeting Minutes, Feb. 28, 1949

building in the fall. The same committee was kept and given the go ahead according to the plan that had been drawn up. The quarterly meeting on October 8, 1950 backed off on that goal a little, authorizing the drainage system to be put in, but the actual parsonage would be built the following spring.

Early 1951 brought the delegation of the work to various contractors. The plumbing contract was given to Westby and Jones. The wiring was given to Laurence Roelop and the contract to build was given to Mr. Dressow.<sup>38</sup>

With all the preparations and building going on, there was still the old parsonage to take care of. The old parsonage would be sold at an auction. The buyer must have 25% in cash or certified check at the time of purchase and the balance when house is being vacated. Once the old house has been vacated, the buyer has 60 days to move it.<sup>39</sup>

All the hard work came to an end when the new parsonage was dedicated on Sept. 16, 1951. The celebration included an afternoon service with a lunch and open house. The total cost of the parsonage was \$17,000.<sup>40</sup> The building committee was dismissed from their duties at the October 5, 1952 quarterly meeting.

With the parsonage done, the congregation began to look forward to work on the church itself. On October 19, 1953, the congregation moved to begin raising funds to either remodel the church or build a new one. The drive would begin on January 1, 1954 and go through January 1, 1955 with a goal of \$10,000. The annual meeting held in January 1954 also appointed a committee to look into the cost of remodeling.

During the 11 years that Pastor Dorn served St. John's, he received 5 calls. The first call came in July 1950 from St. Paul's in Litchfield, MN. At that time the congregation moved to return the call. The second came in March 1951 from Gibbon, MN. Number three was from Grace Lutheran in Hutchinson, MN in June 1953. The fourth one was from Balaton, MN in November 1954. Pastor Dorn took the fifth call

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<sup>38</sup> Building Committee Minutes, Jan. 9, 1951.

<sup>39</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, June 26, 1951.

<sup>40</sup> *God's Story in our History*: (History for the 75th Anniversary booklet, 1961.) p. 4

which he received in August 1955 from Dallas and Fort Worth, TX. Pastor Dorn preached his farewell sermon on September 25, 1955.<sup>41</sup>

### **Pastor Lloyd Wenzel (1955-1964)**

Unlike 11 years <sup>before</sup> ago when St. John's tried to call a Pastor, Rev. Wenzel was at Renville one month after Pastor Dorn left. The call meeting was held with St. Luke's congregation. The minutes of that meeting do not record the day or the list from which they called. It does tell us, however, that after 3 ballots Rev. Lloyd Wenzel from Winner, S.D. was called. There was a motion to lower the salary to \$2500, but it was defeated. It was passed to keep the salary at \$3000. Rev. Lenz served as vacancy Pastor for St. John's during the month long vacancy. Pastor Wenzel was installed into his office on October 23, 1955.

Not long after he arrived the congregation began working harder at what was already begun in 1953. Early in 1956, the congregation decided not to remodel, but go ahead and build a new church building. The huge decision passed by a vote of 31 to 10. At that time, the congregation moved to have 75% of the money on hand before beginning to build. That was passed by a vote of 28 to 13. It was then determined that a five man committee plus the Pastor be on the building committee. They were to inspect other churches and hire an architect for plans. The members of that committee were: Al Grussing, Bill Pope, Charles Wulf, Harold Hoffman, Robert Peik and Pastor Wenzel.<sup>42</sup> At the annual meeting which met on January 14, 1957, four more members were added to this committee: John Bummer, Joe Schemel, Norbert Schroer and Cecil Hinneberg.

While the building committee was doing its work, there were other little details that needed to be worked out, such as, where should the entrance to the new church be? The congregation decided to put that on the northwest side of the church. It was also decided to hold a special meeting before construction began.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid p. 4

<sup>42</sup>Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Apr. 5, 1956.

<sup>43</sup>Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Oct. 15, 1957.

That special meeting took place on October 29, 1957. At that meeting the congregation reversed its 75% rule and moved to begin building in the spring. Yet there was the financial side to be dealt with. That was dealt with a bit later when the church was informed that they would be able to borrow \$45,000 from AAL. With that in mind, John Brummer made the following resolution, "I move that our church mortgage or encumber the church property, lots 1,2 and 3 of lot 20, original plot of Renville, MN, up to the sum of \$45,000 for the purpose of financing our church building program." That resolution was seconded by Alvin Grussing and passed, 28 voting in favor, 5 voting against.\*\* (The church property was later mortgaged for \$56,000).\*\*

April 1958 was a busy month for the congregation. Three meetings were held on the 6th, 7th and 8th. The first meeting determined that the old church would begin to be torn down on April 14. On the 7th, the council again encouraged to move forward. At that time, the estimated cost of building was \$105,000.

April 8, 1958 put the final seal on the project. By a vote of 36 to 13, the motion to build in that year was carried. The council was instructed to decide where to meet while the church was being built. Finally, they decided to proceed to remove <sup>plus</sup> organ from church on Wed. April 9, 1958.

Things began to move along. On April 26, 1958 the council met with Leo Schoenrock (contractor from Garretson, SD.) to go over the plans and specs of the church once again. The Trustees then signed the building contract, making it official.

The last service held in the old church, which had served St. John's for 69 years, was on April 13, 1958. The congregation broke ground for the new church on May 4, 1958, with the cornerstone laid on June 15.\*\*

One year later, on May 3, 1959, the new church was dedicated to the glory of God. Rev. Wilbur Dorn, Rev. Lester Schierenbeck and District President M. Lenz were the preachers. 2000 people were present at the services. The total cost of the

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\*\* Special Meeting Minutes, Feb. 11, 1958.

\*\* Minutes of May 6, 1958.

\*\* *God's Story in our History*: (History for the 100th Anniversary booklet, 1986.) p. 5

new church was \$110,785.<sup>47</sup> The building committee was dissolved with thanks on June 29, 1960.

The next celebration came just 2 years later. St. John's celebrated their 75th Anniversary on May 7, 1961. An anniversary booklet was published with pictures of the old and new church and old and new parsonage, as well as pictures of the organizations, the Pastors who have served and a history of the congregation up to that point. The celebration consisted of three services. The first one was at 10:00 A.M. with Pastor Korn preaching. The afternoon service was at 3:00 P.M. with Pastor Dorn preaching. The evening service with Rev. Lenz was at 8:00 P.M.<sup>48</sup>

Pastor Wenzel served St. John's for nine years. During those years he received three calls. In March of 1961 he received a call from Elkton S.D. In January of 1964 he received a call from Daggett and Carbondale, MI. Then, on May 5, 1964 Rev. Wenzel informed St. John's that had accepted the call to Manchester and Marquette, WI. He expressed his desire to leave by June 1. St. John's once again set out to find a Pastor. They set up a call meeting for May 11, 1964.

#### **Pastor Otto Dreylow (1964-1968)**

St. John's joined together on May 11 for the first of several call meetings. It seems, based on a comment from the May 5, 1964 minutes, that St. Luke's of Winfield was about to dissolve their congregation. The call meetings that follow do not appear to be joint meetings, and several members from the Winfield congregation are accepted into membership. A relationship that lasted for 76 years (since 1888) and served by 9 pastors came to an end.

At this first call meeting, Rev. Schmidt presented a list of five names: Rev. Theo. Frey from Sterling, MI, Rev. Henry Klug from Withrow, WA, Rev. Orville Maach from Yassar, MI, Rev. James Schneider from Goodwin, SD and Rev. Herbert Wackerfuss from Evanston, IL. After three ballots, Rev. Schneider was called. The salary was set at \$5,000 per year. Pastor Engel of Danube was called to be the vacancy Pastor.

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid p. 5

<sup>48</sup>Council Meeting Minutes, Jan. 26, 1961.

It seems that Goodwin, SD was not willing to send another <sup>p</sup>Pastor to the Renville congregation (Pastor Dorn, if you remember, came from this congregation). Pastor Schneider returned the call. St John's once again came together to consider another call list. Rev. Engel presented the second call list with the following names added to previous list: Darryl Bruemmer from Eitzen, MN, Reinhold Roth from Morris, MN and Harold Sauer from South St. Paul, MN. After 3 ballots, Rev. Sauer was called.<sup>48</sup>

This call was also returned, so once again another meeting was called. The third list, considered on July 7, 1964, had these names that differed from either of the first two lists: Philip Kuckhan from Bark River, MI and Arthur Schupmann from Baldwin, MO. After 4 ballots Rev. Maasch was called. The congregation also chose Rev. Frey in the event Pastor Maasch returns the call.

Once again, these two calls came back. The added names to this fourth call list were: Otto Drevlow from Hemlock, MI, Darwin Raddatz from Yale, MI and George Roth from Sturgis, SD. After 4 ballots Rev. Schupmann called. The congregation once again voted on a second choice. That choice was Otto Drevlow.<sup>49</sup>

At the quarterly meeting a letter from Rev. Schupmann concerning the call was considered. The problem, based on the discussion of a previous council meeting, seemed to lie with the salary. The congregation moved to reply by letter that Rev. Schupmann either accept the call as stated or return it.<sup>50</sup> Rev. Schupmann declined the call, but Rev Otto Drevlow accepted and was at St. John's by December.

During the years that Pastor Drevlow was in Renville, there seemed to be problems with delinquent members and with the budget. In February of 1965, a member of the congregation was paired up with one of the church officers to visit those members who were no longer active. The stewardship committee was given the same task on July 9, 1967 at the quarterly meeting.

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<sup>48</sup> Call Meeting Minutes, June 17, 1964.

<sup>49</sup> Call Meeting Minutes, Sept. 22, 1964.

<sup>50</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Oct. 6, 1964.

There was also work done on the budget which was experiencing shortages. In order to help get the budget back into the black, the council authorized a special collection on the 80th anniversary celebration on October 23, 1966.<sup>32</sup> A month later at the November meeting it was reported that about 50 families had given from \$15 to \$20 for the anniversary collection. The budget was again brought to the attention of the congregation with two meetings, sponsored by the stewardship committee, held on November 19 and 21, 1967.<sup>33</sup>

There were also strides made toward improving the worship life of the people, especially in regard to the Lord's Supper. The annual meeting on January 13, 1965 resolved to offer communion more often, celebrating it on the last Sunday of the month. The topic of individual cups was also discussed again. The voters left the matter up the council, in conjunction with the other organizations of the church to make a decision.<sup>34</sup>

The congregation also approved the creating of two deacon positions to help with hymn numbers, baptisms and communion. The By-Laws of the Constitution were amended to read as follows, "They are to be nominated from the floor, one for one year term, one for two year term for the first election, thereafter for two year terms."<sup>35</sup> The congregation approved the measure at its quarterly meeting on April 12, 1966.

Little was done as far as buildings and upkeep, except for routine painting and maintenance on the church and parsonage. However there was one larger purchase that deserves notice. The church and property of First Lutheran church was put up for sale upon that congregation's relocation. Because the lot was adjacent to St. John's, the council approved a bid of \$3,750 for the old church and land.<sup>36</sup> The land was obtained, and plans for insurance and removal of the old church were begun.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Council Minutes, Oct. 4, 1966.

<sup>33</sup> Council Minutes, Nov. 7, 1967

<sup>34</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 9, 1967.

<sup>35</sup> Council Minutes, Jan. 4, 1966.

<sup>36</sup> Council Minutes, Mar. 16, 1965.

<sup>37</sup> Council Minutes, Sept. 7, 1965.

After four years of service, Pastor Dreylow presented his call from Bethany Lutheran, Saginaw, MI, at the quarterly meeting held on April 2, 1968. The congregation requested that Pastor stay. However, Pastor Dreylow informed St. John's that he had accepted the call but also that he'd stay through confirmation and Bible School. Rev. Dreylow was granted a peaceful release as of June 2, 1968.

#### **Pastor Wilbert Schulz (1968-1974)**

The call meeting for the next Pastor was held on May 7, 1968. The list presented by Rev. Vathauer of Fairfax contained the following names: Robert Neuman from Rising Star, TX, Roland Scheele of Flint, MI, Wilbur Schulz from Tomah, WI and a Seminary Call. After two ballots, Rev. Wilbur Schulz was called. The salary was set at \$6,000 per year plus water, sewer and telephone.

There were several improvements made on the parsonage before the new Pastor arrived. The council approved to put in a new sink and countertop in the kitchen, a new sink in the downstairs bathroom, to repair or replace some door handles, clean and paint the basement and paint the living room and two upstairs bedrooms and the study.<sup>58</sup>

Not long after Pastor Schulz arrived, St. John's received a letter from Saginaw, MI, concerning Rev. Dreylow's vacation pay. The council instructed the Secretary to reply by letter stating that Rev. Dreylow had been paid up to June, 2, 1968, as was agreed upon at the May 7, 1968 meeting.<sup>59</sup>

In 1970 the congregation undertook a church remodeling project. At the quarterly meeting on April 20, 1970, the voters approved the painting of the social hall, kitchen, ladies' room, narthex, mother's room, south stairway and east hall, as well as patching all cracks and applying two coats of paint. That part of the project had an estimated cost of \$975.

They also approved some painting in the church nave and balcony, but not ceilings. This also included patching all cracks and two coats of paint. This part would

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<sup>58</sup> Council Minutes, June 18, 1968.

<sup>59</sup> Council Minutes, July, 22, 1968.



cost about \$425.

The final, and most noticeable, part of the remodeling was to approve paneling the sanctuary at a cost of \$800. There was also paint for the part of the sanctuary that was not paneled, plus crosses and electrical supplies. In addition, a new organ blower was installed for \$300.

Besides the remodeling, there were some minor changes in procedure. A new draft of the constitution, with corrected amendments was to be drawn up, with 150 copies available by Jan. 1, 1969.<sup>80</sup> In September of that same year, the council determined that a young person should attend confirmation instruction during the seventh and eight grade years. They would be confirmed at the completion of the eighth grade.

Ladies' groups are famous for their hard work and efforts to make most celebrations go smoothly. They are usually the ones who provide the meals and serve those who are at the special occasion. But November 7, 1971 was different. It was the congregation's turn to serve the ladies. That was the day that the Ladies' Aid of St. John's celebrated their 50th anniversary. The day was marked by a special service at 2:30 P.M. and a lunch following. The congregation provided for and paid the expenses for that anniversary.<sup>81</sup> The Ladies' Aid was started on November 9, 1921 under Pastor Schierenbeck.<sup>82</sup>

Pastor Schulz also served the Church in other ways while he was at Renville. In November 1969 the council approved his appointment by President Lenz as School Visitor for the MN District. Later, he also helped out the Echo congregation during a Pastor shortage by taking their Lenten services.<sup>83</sup>

Pastor Schulz completed his six years of service when he was granted a peaceful release to accept the call from Ascension Lutheran Church in Moorhead,

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<sup>80</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, July 23, 1968.

<sup>81</sup> Council Minutes, Oct. 18, 1971.

<sup>82</sup> *God's Story in our History*: (History for the 75th Anniversary booklet, 1961.) p. 9

<sup>83</sup> Council Minutes, Feb. 19, 1973.

MN.<sup>66</sup> A farewell was planned for Pastor Schulz before he left on February 17.

### **Pastor John Miller (1974-1984)**

On February 25, 1974 the congregation joined together to call Rev. John Miller from Bulterfield, MN. The Pastor's salary was set at \$9,000 plus allowances. Pastor Miller arrived in Renville, and was installed into office on May 12, 1974, in a service at 8:00 P.M.<sup>67</sup>

The Men's Club, which had been in existence since October 13, 1954,<sup>68</sup> was dissolved at the annual meeting on January 20, 1975. A formal men's group has not been formed to replace this organization.

During these years two larger repair and remodeling projects were done. The first one involved the roof above the social hall. Because it was a flat roof, it was prone to leaking. The congregation received three bids to repair the roof. The first estimate was for \$5000. Another estimate was \$9500 for a complete job, or \$676 for just patching. A three year guarantee would cost \$7100. The third estimate included new flashing and new tar and gravel for \$1800.<sup>69</sup> At the quarterly meeting on April 10, 1978, the congregation approved the complete roof job at \$9360.

The second project was to purchase new stained glass windows for the church. This had already been talked about in 1973, but the windows were purchased and installed in 1983.<sup>70</sup>

The year 1986 was looming closer. That was the year to celebrate 100 years of God's grace for St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church. Planning for this big day was begun in April of 1984. The voters agreed to a one day celebration for the 100th anniversary to be held on June 15, 1986. They also set up a steering committee to plan all the activities for that day. The steering committee was to have one representative from

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<sup>66</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 21, 1974.

<sup>67</sup> Council Minutes, June 23, 1974.

<sup>68</sup> *God's Story in our History*: (History for the 75th Anniversary booklet, 1961.) p. 9

<sup>69</sup> Council Minutes, Apr. 10, 1978,

<sup>70</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, Jan. 31, 1983.

each organization of the congregation. Gary Santier was chosen as the representative from the council and John Kvendru was the representative from the congregation.<sup>68</sup>

It was only a few days later that Pastor Miller announced the acceptance of a call to Shepherd of the Lakes Ev. Lutheran Church in Fairmont, MN.<sup>69</sup> This closed his ten years of service to God at St. John's in Renville.

### **Pastor Michael Hatzung (1984-1989)**

For the first time in its history, St. John's received a graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as its next Pastor. The call was sent through the assignment committee. Pastor Michael Hatzung was assigned and was ordained and installed on July 15, 1984 by his father-in-law, Pastor Beckmann from Annandale, Virginia.

Work on the 100th anniversary celebration continued. Funding for the anniversary was given by the council on July 16, 1984. \$1500 from interest on C.D's was immediately given to the steering committee. That figure was later increased by the congregation to \$3,000.<sup>70</sup>

There were other projects as well that were done before the celebration could take place. On August 5, 1985 the council approved the remodeling of the north entrance, which included new rest rooms on the main floor of the church. Later, in Feb. of 1986, it was determined that half of the centennial offering go to a scholarship fund, and the other half to the building fund.

The big day came on **June 15, 1986**. The celebration's theme was "His love endures forever." 688 people attended the two services that were held at 10:30 A.M and 3:00 P.M. Rev. Wilbur Dorn was the guest speaker for the morning service, with Pastors Wilbert Schultz and Lloyd Wenzel as the liturgists. In the afternoon service Pres. Carl Mischke of the WELS was the guest speaker with Pastors John Miller and Michael Hatzung serving as liturgists.<sup>72</sup> The church officers that year were: President

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<sup>68</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, April 16, 1984.

<sup>69</sup> Special Meeting Minutes, April 29, 1984.

<sup>70</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, July 29, 1984.

<sup>72</sup> Centennial Booklet of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, pp. 10-14.

Norman Riediger, Secretary Rodney Hanson, and Treasurer Gordon Schemel. The Elders were Doug Grussing, Gary Santjer and Wilbur Standfuss. The Trustees were Terry Roschild, Gary Wohlman and Dean Williams. The Deacons were Norman Raske and Ariyn Zeitz.<sup>79</sup> Two years of planning went into making this celebration very successful. Other events that took place included a centennial float in Renville's "Sugar Beet Days" parade the day before the celebration, a balloon release and a tree planting.

In 1985 the congregation also began their preparations for the upcoming new hymnal by testing the Sampler from Advent through Pentecost, beginning in November 1986. After testing the Sampler and surveying the membership, St. John's decided to stay with the Sampler.<sup>80</sup>

Pastor Hatzung's service to St. John's came to an end early in 1989 when the Lord called him to Christ Lutheran Church in North St. Paul, MN. He was granted his release at the voters meeting on January 15, 1989. Pastor Dietz of Olivia was called to be the vacancy Pastor as St. John's, for the 16th time in it's history, began the calling process.

#### **Pastor Mark Bartsch (1989 - )**

The Annual meeting of 1989 also served as a call meeting. The call list that was presented contained the following names: Dean Biebert, Livingston, MT, Marvin Doelger, Caledonia, MN, Arnold Lemke, Excelsior, MN, James Lindloff, Forest Lake MN, Roger Neumann, Oskaloosa, IA, Larry Pontel, Peridot, AZ and David Schultz, Aurora, NE. Pastor James Lindloff was called. The salary was set at \$18,414.

Pastor Lindloff returned the call, so St. John's met again on February 16, 1989. This second call list contained these names: Mark Bartsch, Waco NE, Dean Biebert, Livingston, MT, Ellery Groth, Mission SD, Douglas Lange, Phoenix, AZ, Roger Neumann, Oskaloosa, IA, Larry Pontel, Peridot, AZ and David Schultz, Aurora, NE. Pastor Mark Bartsch was called. It was decided to keep the same salary as was

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<sup>79</sup> 1986 Annual Report. p. 2

<sup>80</sup> Council Minutes, June 15, 1987.

proposed for the first call. Pastor Bartsch accepted the call and was installed into office on the evening of June 1, 1989.<sup>75</sup>

During the last few months on 1993, St. John's participated in the "Parish Stewardship Program." The council set the dates for the program for November 27 through December 8, 1993.<sup>76</sup> While the main thrust to the program dealt with offerings, there were other aspects of the Christian life that were also addressed. The council suggested some questions that could be asked during the every member visits that this program called for. Some questions could be: "What things may a member be willing to do to become more involved in church activities? What does the member think may have to be done long range to keep our congregation going? Is it important to you to belong to a WELS church?"

On June 13, 1994 St. John's will be 108 years old. God has certainly blessed this congregation. As of the end of 1993 the communicant membership is 272, with a baptized membership of 342. The present officers of the congregation are President Norman Riediger, Secretary Wayne Tepfer and Treasurer Arlyn Zeitz. The Elders are Randy Hebrink, Gary Link and Orvel Eratsch. The Trustees are William Klatt, Gilbert Westby and Earl Wulf. May God continue to shower his grace in Jesus on this congregation, as they continue to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to their community.

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<sup>75</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes, Apr. 20, 1989.

<sup>76</sup> Council Minutes, May 17, 1993.

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