

# DEDICATION

*It is fitting and proper that we use the same dedication from the book "Centennial of St. John's Lutheran Church." The words of dedication continue apply today, fifty years after that celebration.*

**TO THE TRIUNE GOD, FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT**, whose grace and mercy alone has made this Sesquicentennial of joy and thanksgiving possible,

**TO THE FOUNDING FAMILIES**, who, guided by the Holy Spirit, so courageously and fearlessly dared and performed great things for God,

**TO SAINTED MEMBERS**, who rest in peace after years of faithful service to their loving God and Savior,

**TO THE PASTORS, TEACHERS AND LEADERS**, who gave themselves so unselfishly to the Holy Spirit that He might use them in building His kingdom,

**TO THE MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**, who enjoy, share and endeavor to propagate the faith of Christ to those who shall follow,

**TO THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH**, who, under God's grace, will bear the responsibility of carrying forward the message of the cross,

**TO GENERATIONS YET UNBORN**, but chosen of God to be His own in Christ,

**WE DEDICATE THIS ONE HUNDRED FIFTY YEAR HISTORY OF  
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

*A message from the pastor . . .*

**“God’s Unchanging WORD in a Changing World!”**

One hundred and fifty years ago, our congregation was formed to proclaim the Gospel and administer the Sacraments here in Effingham, Illinois. Throughout its long history, it has been faithful in proclaiming, “God’s Unchanging Word in a Changing World!”

My predecessor, Rev. Robert Backhus, wrote on the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our congregation, “It is by the grace of God alone that we are able to look back upon 125 years of living history as a congregation. It is to His praise alone that we have chosen to observe this year in a special way.” And it is indeed true! We thank God for His grace alone. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9). And this is the message we speak, to ourselves and the community, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16).

In this booklet you will find a treasure trove of interesting history of St. John’s Lutheran Church. In it, you will see how our gracious God has blessed and will continue to bless us to be a blessing in our community. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.”

Let us go forward with God’s unchanging Word in a changing world. Let us seek to be faithful to Him who has called us by the Gospel and who has enlightened us with His gifts. To God be the Glory, for the past, the present and for the future to come!

Pastor Ted Gall

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## INTRODUCTION

*By Dean Manuel*

This book is an effort to compile the one hundred and fifty year history of the Lutheran Congregation, known as "St. John's Lutheran Church in Effingham, Illinois" into one document. What does this Sesquicentennial Book contain? It contains the key history of St. John's as gathered and written from the following documents:

- Dedication of St. John's Lutheran Church - booklet – October 27, 1935
- The Diamond Jubilee of St. John's Lutheran Church – booklet written for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1941
- Program booklet of the Dedication Service of the remodeled/enlarged church - 1950
- Program booklet of the Dedication Service of the Christian Education Building – 1955
- The Centennial of St. John's Lutheran Church – booklet written for the 100 Anniversary in 1966
- The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church-Edifice booklet written in 1985
- The 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church – booklet written in 1991
- Church record books recording Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Burials.
- Historical records (letters, newspapers, bulletins, etc.) from church files, and resources from the Genealogy Reference Room at the Effingham Public Library.
- The Record of Voter's Assembly minutes (sometimes called "congregational meetings"). The earliest entry is October 10, 1875. Beginning January 1, 1922 the minutes of the Voter's Meeting were recorded and written in English. For all dates prior, the minutes were written in German. All Voters' minutes were handwritten by the elected Secretary until in later years when the minutes were typed.

## PREFACE

The history of St. John's congregation reveals a record of a family of God working to do what was right according to their conscience, their faith and God's Word. Sometimes it was under seemingly overwhelming difficulties and struggles that they accomplished great things for God's Kingdom.

We continue in that legacy, even if trying and difficult days lie ahead. We do not know what the next 25 or 50 years will bring to our Lutheran Church family specifically or to Christians in general. We do know that the people you will read about trusted Jesus and He was with them. That same Jesus is with us today and into the future. Jesus said, **"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."**

**John 14:23-24**

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As you read this history you will see how in the past, this congregation with members now Sainted, pastors and lay leaders alike "obeyed the Lord's teaching". They all worked, sacrificed and yes...sometimes, were at odds with each other...but the love of Christ prevailed. Thanks be to God! They proclaimed God's unchanging WORD to a changing world. The pure truth of God's Holy Word was preached to the glory of Jesus' name and the edification of His people. The blessed sacraments were administered according to Jesus' command and they were, as today, a source of grace and blessing to many. God give us the strength and wisdom to continue that today and tomorrow. We pray today, as they prayed then: **"Bless us, O Lord, by Your truth, and preserve us unto life everlasting, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen**

## WE GIVE THANKS !

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all you lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord He is God: it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endures to all generations. Psalm 100

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## We begin . . .

It is unknown for sure who provided the early history information as written in the 1941 Diamond Jubilee Booklet. Perhaps, it was gathered by asking some of the elderly members. Some history was recorded in 1916 newspaper accounts when the church celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee and could have been used too.

In searching in the historical files at the church, a paper entitled, “History of St. John’s Lutheran Church – Effingham, Illinois (by Mrs. Emma Wildi) was found. Attached to this record was the following note: “This may be of a little interest to you on our 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I found this among my mother’s papers – a scratched up pencil copy. Mr. and Mrs. Hartman, mentioned, were my grandparents. (signed) Ruth Wildi”. The 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary would have been the year 1961. Mr. Hartman, [*some documents had him named as Karl, Carl and sometimes Charles*] who you will read about later, was the one of the charter members and was instrumental in gathering fellow Lutherans together for worship. After a visit to St. John’s Cemetery to look for clues on the tomb stones in the original section of the cemetery the names and dates on the tombstones tell the story:

Charles G. (Gottlieb) Hartman lived from 1824-1914.

His daughter Emma (Hartman) Wildi lived from 1857-1934. Her daughter Ruth Wildi was born in 1899 and died in 1993. Ruth Wildi’s grandfather was Charles G. Hartman, one of the charter members of St. John’s. Ruth Wildi submitted the “scratched up paper copy” that her mother (Emma) had written. This document from Emma Wildi, this author believes, was most likely the original source of the 1916 Golden Jubilee history newspaper account and then it was used again for the 1941 Diamond Jubilee historical booklet. Emma Wildi’s history, as she wrote it, is as follows:

**“Not until the year 1864 was it that a Lutheran congregation existed in our good City of Effingham. Although a few families had lived in and about the village for some time, who had been born, baptized and brought up in the Lutheran church, these had not yet organized a local congregation.**

**In the year 1864 a man named Carl [*Charles*] Hartman, accompanied by his family, came to Effingham from Shelbyville, Ill. This man, a country man and spiritual descendant of Martin Luther, was the first whose efforts, were directed towards the organization of a Lutheran church in Effingham, and based on the true Lutheran Confessions. Soon after he was settled he searched and pried about (often walking many miles in the country to find such families) especially on Sundays when not impeded by the duties of his occupation, for such that were of the same household of his faith. As soon as he had met with a few Lutherans he invited them to his home. There the small bank of Lutherans, adhering closely to God’s word, assembled for the common cause, the hearing of the Word and prayer.**

**In these assemblings Mr. Hartman served his fellow brethren by reading from a book of Lutheran sermons. Another undertaking for which he also showed much interest was the instructing of the children in God’s word, and to that end instituted a little Sunday school in which he taught them Sunday afternoons. The first class consisted of the older children which were instructed by Mr. Hartman in the Catechism. The second class was instructed in Bible history which Mr. Noller took charge of. The third class was the little ones. Mrs. Hartman taught them to read and told them Bible stories for which she was exceptionally gifted. Quite a number of the children came from the country, from three to five miles distant and walked it every Sunday if weather permitted. This work for Christ and his Kingdom was highly appreciated by his brethren of the same religion and blessed by God.**

**...After the membership increased and the homes could not accommodate them, the meetings were held in vacant store rooms and in the court house . . .”**

Regardless of who wrote the detailed 1941 account, it proved invaluable to discovering much about the first 75 years of St. John’s. We give thanks that those people took the time to record this for posterity...even 75 years later in 2016.

We do know from the record of the January 5, 1941 Voter’s Meeting the following: “a motion was made and seconded that the congregation agree to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Church in September and that the plans and arrangements be left to the Pastor, and the church council. Motion carried.” *[at this time the council consisted of three Elders, three Trustees and the Pastor]*

Here follows the first 75 year history of St. John’s as recorded in 1941. The notes in *[Italics]* are this author’s comments of explanation.

## **DIAMOND JUBILEE 1866 – 1941**

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### **HISTORY OF ST. JOHN’S**

The absence of complete records covering some phases of our congregation’s history has made it necessary to rely to some extent upon the human memory. While endeavoring to preserve accuracy in all details, it has been our purpose to present a picture of a living and working organization, and not mere collection of names, dates, and figures.

### **EARLY BEGINNINGS**

It was in the historic times of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War that Lutheranism had its beginning in Effingham. In the early sixties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lutherans moving into the Effingham area began to inquire for those of the Lutheran faith that together they might make

plans for the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, the instruction of the children and the establishing of the Lutheran Church in Effingham.

Mr. and Mrs. Christian Alt kindly granted the use of their home, located at what is now the corner of Fayette and Mulberry St., for this purpose. Often in the absence of a pastor a service would be held in which a sermon was read, usually by Mr. Carl G. Hartmann, a devout and cultured man who traced his family tree back to the great Reformer, Martin Luther. Mr. Hartman also conducted a Sunday School for the children on Sunday afternoons, teaching them the catechism and Bible stories. Thus it was through the efforts of Lutheran laymen that Lutheranism had its beginning in Effingham.

The Rev. Theo Mertens of Champaign conducted services in Effingham regularly once a month from 1863 till 1866, when he was called to a new field of labor, then the Effingham mission was taken over by the Rev. Carl Meier of Kankakee. Pastor Meier continued to hold services here once a month. When the number of worshippers became too great for a private dwelling, services were held in the Court House. *[The current “old” Court House (now the Effingham County Cultural Center and Museum) was not built until 1871. The church services mentioned here were held in the court house built prior to the existing 1871 structure.]*

In the fall of 1866 a group of men met and resolved to organize a Lutheran congregation here. The exact date when this was decided is not known. On **December 10, 1866**, a Constitution was adopted and signed by the following charter members: G.F. Noller, C.G. Hartmann, Christian Alt, Jacob Bauer, John Lunow, Henry Schulte, John Jahns, and (probably) Fred Kooplin *[this was spelled Koeplin in some documents]*. A number of others joined the new congregation in the next meeting. The name chosen was **“St. John’s German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in Effingham, Illinois”**.

*[What does “Unaltered Augsburg Confession” mean and why was it so important for these lay people to include those words in the name of the church – St. John’s? Again, to know the history is to have the answer. . . (The following is taken from “Ask the Pastor, Unaltered Augsburg Confession”, “Wikipedia – Old Lutherans” websites, the book Lutherans In North America by Clifford Nelson and conversations with St. John’s Pastor Gall. Note: **Old Lutherans** were German Lutherans in Prussia and Silesia who refused to join the Prussian Union of churches in the 1830s and 1840’s.)]*

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession was written in 1530 as a concise statement of belief of the “Evangelicals (Gospel People) as the early followers of Martin Luther were called. The Augsburg Confession separated Evangelical (Lutheran) theology from Roman Catholicism. Its theology also divided the Lutherans from other reformers’ teachings – including those of John Calvin – and from heresies condemned by the Church in bygone days. The confession was written by Philipp Melanchthon (with much input from Luther) and signed by various noblemen

and city councils. These German secular leaders (not religious spokesmen) presented it to Emperor Charles V on 25 June 1530 as their own confession of faith. *[They were called upon and were REQUIRED, time and time again to tell or CONFESS just what they believed.]* It was later incorporated into “Concordia”, the Lutheran **Book of Concord**. “Unaltered” separates the original from any later variation, especially Melanchthon’s “Variata” (variation) of 1540. These later rewrites, by Melanchthon and others, were done to make sections of the confession more palatable to other reformers who disagreed on certain points of doctrine. (Especially having to do with Holy Communion.) Unaltered Augsburg Confession means that a particular congregation has declared that the original document (1530) is a true exposition of Holy Scripture and that any “Variata” is incorrect or imprecise and to be rejected. This (Unaltered Augsburg Confession) is included in our early Church’s name by the charter members which included many who left Germany to avoid a government imposed (Prussian) union with Protestant churches.

In 1817, King Frederick William III of Prussia (*where many of our early church members had been born*) ordered the Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) churches in his territory to unite, forming the Evangelical Church of the Prussian Union. As the uniting of Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) Christians in Germany proceeded, some Lutheran groups dissented and formed independent churches, especially in Prussia, Saxony (*some early church members were from here too*) Hanover and Hesse. These Lutherans held that Reformed (Calvinist) and Lutheran doctrine are contradictory on many points (especially on the nature of the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, Predestination and other doctrines), and that such doctrinal differences precluded altar and pulpit fellowship.

Lutherans in Prussia refused to join the Prussian Union of churches. Prussia’s king Frederick William III was determined to unify the Protestant churches, to homogenize their liturgy, organization and even their architecture. In a series of proclamations over several years the “Church of the Prussian Union” was formed, bringing together the majority group of Lutherans, the minority of Reformed. The main effect was that the government of Prussia had full control over church affairs, with the king recognized as the leading bishop. After more than 20 years of effort, a common liturgical agenda was finally published. The agenda was not well received by many Lutherans, as it was seen to compromise in the wording of the Words of Institution, to the point where the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was not proclaimed. In defiance of this decree, a number of Lutheran pastors and congregations continued to use the old liturgical agenda and sacramental rites of the Lutheran church. Becoming aware of this defiance, officials sought out those who acted against the decree. Pastors who were caught were suspended from their ministry. If suspended pastors were caught acting in a pastoral role, they were imprisoned.

The confessional Lutherans were persecuted during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the state. Many of them were not allowed to hold church services or have their children baptized or confirmed according to the liturgy (observance) of the Lutheran Church. Thus, one of the practical effects of dissent from the State Church by the Lutherans was that one could not be



married legally, and one's children, illegitimate in the eyes of the law, could not join a craft guild or attend a university. One was able to obtain certain jobs with only a Prussian Union baptism certificate...a Lutheran Baptism Certificate would not suffice. In some areas of Germany, it took decades until the Confessional Lutherans were granted religious freedom.

Attempted suppression of the Lutherans led many to emigrate to Australia, Canada, and the United States. Numerous waves of Old Lutherans immigrated to the United States as well during this time period. Among them was a group from Prussia of about 1000 Old Lutherans. They were from Erfurt, Magdeburg and the surrounding areas, led by J.A.A. Grabau. They emigrated to the United States in summer 1839. Grabau and his friends founded the "Synod of Lutherans emigrated from Prussia" afterward known as the Buffalo Synod.

Thousands of other Old Lutherans settled in the Midwest and Upper Midwest of the United States during this period. Other Lutherans came from the German Kingdom of Saxony. Nearly 1100 other Saxon Lutherans left for the United States in November 1838, eventually settling in around St. Louis and Perry County Missouri. They were the predecessors to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

*This history explains why our St. John's Lutheran ancestors were determined not to have any connection with non-scriptural beliefs. In America they were allowed full religious freedom. They had had direct experience with the loss of religious freedom. Many of them had emigrated from Prussia and perhaps settled in Buffalo, New York area, some lived in Indiana (based on census records of children being born there) and later came west to seek better fortunes in Illinois.*

*A search was conducted of the 1870 (four years after the Constitution was signed), 1880 and 1900 Census Record on file at the Effingham Public Library. In addition, several trips to St. John's cemetery provided insight on just "who" the Charter Members were.*

*The answers are revealed to questions such as: What did they do for a living? Where did they come from? How many children were in their home? Was there a high infant mortality rate?*

*After searching and comparing several documents and then cross referencing with dates on tomb stones in St. John's cemetery an answer as to "who, what and where" became clearer.*

*The Census Record named the head of house, age, birth place, occupation, real estate and property value. Also, as part of the census, were the listing of wife, children and their ages. . It must be noted that not all the census records were complete and sometimes it was difficult to research the exact information needed.]*

CENSUS KEY:

**B.P.** = Birth Place; **H.K.**= House Keeper; **R.E.** = Real Estate Value; **P.V.** = Property Value

**Twnshp** = Effingham County Township

**1870 census**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>B.P.</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>R.E.</b>	<b>P.V.</b>	<b>TwNShp</b>
<b>Gotlieb F. Noller</b>	35	Wurtemberg	Shoe Maker	6,000	600	Douglas
Amelia (wife)	30	Pennsylvania	H.K.			
Rosa	8	Illinois				
Charles	6	Ill.				
Augusta	4	Ill.				
Caroline	2	Ill.				
Theophilus	10/12	born Sept.	(age 10 months)			

*[Gotlieb F. Noller is not listed in the 1880 census. Amelia, age 40, is listed as head of the house and widowed. The following children are listed: Rosa 18, Charles 16, Augusta 13, Caroline 12, Gottlieb 10, Paul 8, Frederick 5, Emma 2. Theophilus is not listed and could be assumed that he died before the 1880 census. Amelia, who was now a widow with eight children, had quite a burden to bear in those early days. Mr. Noller, from church records, taught Sunday afternoon Bible History and was faithful attending meetings and church services.]*

**1870 census**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>B.P.</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>R.E.</b>	<b>P.V.</b>	<b>TwNShp</b>
<b>Charles G. Hartmann</b>	46	Saxony	Weaver	2,000	100	Douglas
Pauline (wife)	46	Saxony	H.K.			
Bertha	18	Saxony				
Emma	13	Indiana				
Charles	10	Illinois				
Emily	7	Illinois				

*[It was recorded in the 1903 Souvenir Booklet of Effingham, Illinois "that as soon as he had met with a few Lutheran families he invited them to his workroom, Mr. Hartmann being a weaver, assembling for the hearing of the word and prayer. Some records listed his name as Carl or Karl in addition to Charles.]*

**1870 census**

<b>Christian Alt</b>	48	Prussia	Flour mill	15,000	250 Douglas Twp
Ann (wife)	38	Hesse Darmstadt	H.K.		
John	38	Illinois	Mill worker		
Christian	13	Illinois			
Henry	10	Illinois			
Louisa	9	Illinois			
Freddie	5	Illinois			
Katrina	3	Illinois			
Caroline	9/12 b. August	Illinois	( age 9 months)		

*[The 1903 Souvenir Booklet of Effingham, Illinois, records the following under Christian Alt's picture "A German citizen who gave the milling industry its first important start in Effingham. A man of excellent qualities." ) Christian was born in 1822 and died August 23, 1911 ]*

**1870 census**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>B.P.</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>R.E.</b>	<b>P.V.</b>	<b>TwnShp</b>
<b>Jacob Bauer</b>	34	Prussia	Farmer	800	490	West
Elizabeth	30	Prussia	H.K.			
Otto	11	Mo.				
Caroline	9	Mo.				
Amelia	7	Ill.				
William	5	Ill.				
Frederick	1	Ill.				

**1870 census**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>B.P.</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>R.E.</b>	<b>P.V.</b>	<b>TwnShp</b>
<b>John Lunow</b>	33	Mec	Wagon Maker			

John has a tomb stone in the St. John's cemetery with the dates: 1837-1916

His wife, Matilda P. Lunow (nee Hartman) has the dates: 1847-1904. She was born in Saxony

Theodore born 1871 infant death (listed on tomb stone)

Wilhelm L. 1873 infant death (listed on tomb stone)

Herman 1879-1884 (listed on tomb stone)

Frieda 1882 (from the 1900 census)

Paul 1884 (from the 1900 census)

Anna 1887 (from the 1900 census)

Heinrick W. 1889 infant death (listed on tomb stone)

*[John Lunow was the last charter member to die. He lived almost to see St. John's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration (1917) but died and was buried just two days before the event.]*

**1870 census**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>B.P.</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>R.E.</b>	<b>P.V. TwnShp</b>
Henry Schulte	28	Prussia	Farmer	1,600	500 Douglas
Mary (wife)	28	Ill.	H.K.		
Theresa	1	Ill.			

**John Jahns** - no information could found in the census record.

**Fred Koeplin** – no accurate information could be found in the census record.

The first Confirmation Class, consisting of eleven children, was confirmed by Pastor Meier in the Court House June 10, 1867.

Since the distance from Kankakee to Effingham was excessive, it was resolved to join with several other congregations nearer to this community in calling a pastor. The call was extended to the Rev. H. Holtermann, who was installed February 9, 1868.

*[This was not St. John's first pastor "of their own" ...as noted above. St. John's resolved to join with several other area Lutheran congregations in the calling of Rev. Holtermann.]*

In January, 1868, the congregation had resolved to purchase property for the erection of a church, school, and house. It was at first planned to build a school immediately, using it also for the time being for divine services. Mr. and Mrs. Alt offered to donate the necessary land, and on July 1 the congregation passed a motion to accept the deed to a tract of land 150 feet square "at the northeast corner of Mr. Alt's farm."

*[This was the northeast corner of the Alt farm, the present corner of W. Jefferson and Cherry St. This tract of land is included in our present property. We know, from reading this history that much of the land surrounding the church property was farm land.]*

Having received as a gift the land, which forms the north half of our present church property, the congregation immediately resolved to erect a church building\* 50 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 12 feet high (inside ceiling), with a small tower, to be completed before Advent. The contract for all carpenter work was let for \$350. Shortly afterward additional property was acquired for a cemetery.\*\*

*\*This church faced east.*

*\*\*Our present St. John's Cemetery. At the time, the cemetery was actually quite isolated, being a couple of miles west of town. Now, 150 years later, it's surrounded by businesses, apartments, hotels and the interstate highway.*

In April 1869, it was resolved to call a pastor to preach and teach school in Effingham exclusively; however there was a great shortage of pastors at that time, and none was immediately available.

In July, 1869 the congregation resolved to build a school 30 feet wide, 20 feet long, and 12 feet high. To pay for this building, every voting member was required to contribute five dollars ---a goodly sum in those days when money was a scarce item.

In 1870 the congregation finally obtained its own pastor in the person of the Rev. G.A. Feustel, who had recently arrived in this country from Germany. He proved to be a very able and energetic pastor, and under his ministry the congregation continued to grow and prosper.

Pastor Feustel having taken unto himself a wife, the congregation proceeded in 1872 to build a parsonage. At the same time the pastor's salary was increased from \$300 to \$400 a year in spite of difficult times and a not insignificant church debt.

In considering the accomplishments of these Lutheran pioneers in our community, we should remember that they were few in number and money was scarce. Financial transactions of that period [1860-1870] form an interesting subject. Fifty cents a day was considered fair wages for a laborer. We have heard how a good-sized building was built to \$350. The church janitor at first received 50 cents a year from each voting member; later this was changed to the flat sum of \$15 a year. The cemetery sexton received 50 cents for digging a child's grave and \$1.00 for an adult's grave. A man was hired to cut all the grass on the cemetery and church grounds for one dollar. Annual contributions of members to the church treasury ranged from \$6 (the minimum set by the congregation) to \$20. Parents paid 50 cents month tuition for each school child; and the congregation voted that the pastor should receive not less than \$2.50 for each marriage performed, \$2 for each funeral, and \$1 for each baptism. A special offering for missions was taken at each Communion Service; sometimes the total would read something like \$3.75 and ½ cents or \$4.88 ½ cents, since coins representing fractional cents were then in use.

It required courage and faith for that little flock to build a church, school, and parsonage, purchase a cemetery, and assume full responsibility for the support of a pastor, all in less than six years after the founding of the congregation. The outstanding features of these early years were the willingness of these people to bring sacrifices for the sake of the Lord's kingdom, and their insistence upon the thorough Christian training of their children. In spite of the comparatively high tuition cost, all parents in the congregation sent their children to the Lutheran school.

Once firmly established, the congregation enjoyed a rapid growth. Almost every congregational meeting saw a number of new voting members enrolled. People were coming to this community in great numbers, some from Europe, and others from older American

communities. Of course, not all of them remained here; some soon moved farther. And not all who did remain became faithful members of the congregation. There were many problems to be dealt with, some of them quite serious ones. The exercise of church discipline was not easy; but in every situation the congregation earnestly sought to follow sound Scriptural principles, and through it all God's blessing rested upon the little flock

Two of the rules adopted in this period [1870's] suggest some of the problems connected with the growth in membership. One rule provided that no person would be accepted as a member until he had attended services regularly for at least three months. Another rule was to the effect that people who had lived in the community longer than one full year (*and were attending St. John's*) were expected to become members of the congregation and contribute to its support; failing to do this; they would no longer enjoy the privilege of receiving the Lord's Supper as "guests".

*[It is noted from historical sources, that the population of the city of Effingham was around 200 in 1860 and by the 1870's the population of the city had reached 3,000. This population increase and related "problems" coincides with some of the concerns connected with the managing of the congregational growth in St. John's early years. The following paragraph is from Transactions of the Department of Agriculture of the State of Illinois dated January 1873. Volume 2, page 311 which states: "The city of Effingham contains a population of about 3000. It has ten dry goods stores, three clothing stores, four drug stores, two iron and hardware stores, ....two newspapers, seven churches of the following denominations: Two Methodist – North and South; Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Christian, all of which have neat and commodious buildings."]*

Having from the beginning supported the work of missions by special offerings on Communion Sundays, the congregation in 1871 introduced the custom of observing the annual Mission Festival. Sometimes this Mission Festival was held in the open (outside), sometimes in the church.

In 1873 the congregation resolved to become affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, commonly called the "Missouri Synod". At first some doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of this course, since most of the members were not well informed as to the nature and purposes of the synodical organization. The matter was fully and repeatedly discussed in a number of meetings, and was favorably voted on three times before final action was taken; the last time it was practically unanimous.

A Ladies Aid Society was organized about 1872. Among the minutes for 1874 there appears a resolution extending a vote of thanks to the Ladies Aid Society for services rendered the congregation; the nature of these services is not stated.

Due to the scarcity of ministers, Pastor Festal was called upon to serve for various periods of time the congregations in Sigel, Watson Tp., and Vandalia. He was obliged to spend four days a week in the school room in addition to his pastoral work. Still he labored with great success until May, 1876, when he was called elsewhere. By this time the congregation had grown to about 100 communicant members. Lutheranism was flourishing in Effingham. After his departure the congregation was vacant for nearly a year, several pastors declining the calls sent them.

In 1877 the Rev. J.C.L. Frese, formerly of North Tonawanda, N.Y. was installed as pastor of St. John's. Under the ministry of this enthusiastic and energetic pastor the congregation continued to grow, and the school enrollment increased to the point where the congregation, in 1879, seriously considered the calling of a teacher to relieve the pastor of his duties in the school. This action was, however, deferred on account of financial considerations.

An interesting item in the congregational minutes at this time is a motion that the congregation purchase six hymn-books for the use of visitors. The elders were given the task of passing out these books as required and gathering them up at the end of the service. All members of the congregation were expected to bring their own hymn-books. Another resolution gave the pastor permission to receive into the school, if he wished, the children of German\* parents not belonging to the congregation, but it was expressly stipulated that no English children were to be admitted.

*[One has to realize that St. John's in this time period (1870's-1880's) was a GERMAN speaking congregation. Many of the members either came from Germany or had direct ties to family in Germany. All worship services, all hymns, all school lessons (both secular and religious), all communication -verbal and written, and all the Voter's Assembly minute notes were written in the German language. Perhaps there was a concern that if English was permitted to be used it would weaken the heritage and doctrine of the church. Although an occasional English worship service was permitted in the coming years, the discontinuation of all German language in the worship services would have to wait for another fifty-five years.]*

Especially noteworthy during this period [1870's-1880's] is the large number of collections the support of church work outside the congregation. Sometimes three or four appeals for help would be presented in a single congregational meeting, and seldom did an appeal go unheeded. Collections were taken to build churches in such distant places as New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, Omaha, Dubuque, Iowa; Danbury, Connecticut; Stillwater, Minn.; Grant Park, IL.; Houston, Tex.; New Ulm, Minn.; and Stockton, California. House to house collections were made for new buildings at our colleges and seminaries in St. Louis, Springfield, Milwaukee, and Addison. A special offering was taken for assistance to the victims of a Yellow Fever epidemic in Louisiana. And of course the congregation continued its regular support of missions and of charitable institutions.

Tribulations and difficulties were not entirely lacking during these years. The first serious rift in the congregation's unity occurred when in 1881 a number of families ceased to attend the church services and held their own services in a private home for several months. By the grace of God the cause of this division was removed and harmony restored in a very short time.

Pastor Frese accepted a call to Champaign, Illinois in October, 1881. A few years later the congregation was saddened by the news that his five children had all perished in an epidemic of Diphtheria.

In January, 1882, the Rev. Wm. Lewerenz was installed as pastor. Again the Lord had blessed the congregation with a pastor of exceptional talents and of great energy and foresight. With the congregation's permission, the pastor immediately began to hold occasional services in the English language. The \$200 of the old church debt was paid by January 1, 1883. St. John's was a financially independent congregation.

In spite of some vigorous objections, the congregation resolved in 1884 to call a teacher for the school. So great was the shortage of Lutheran teachers at this time, however, that it was not until 1886 that the congregation was able to obtain a teacher in the person of Mr. Wm. Krueger, a graduate of the Lutheran Teachers College in Addison, Illinois.

As the congregation continued to grow, the school enrollment also increased. In 1888 plans were made to purchase additional land, build a larger school, and build a residence for the teacher. This plan, however, was abandoned, when the funds subscribed for the purpose fell far short of requirements. It was not until some years later that the congregation purchased the land south of the church [*The wooden church faced east on what would be later known as Cherry St.*] and moved the old school house from its former location on the corner to this new location. [*The "corner" referred to is the present corner of Cherry Street and Jefferson Avenue and where the "front" of our current brick church is located.*]

Besides the congregation in Effingham, Pastor Lewerenz (1882-1892) also served the church in Watson Township (*Immanuel*) and at various times the churches in Vandalia, Sigel, and Humboldt Township near Mattoon. [*In 1952, 29 communicant members from Immanuel (Dutch Lane-Watson Township) were received into membership with St. John's. The Church property and cemetery were turned over to the Effingham congregation. ]*

In order to meet the requirements for the support of both pastor and teacher, the congregation adopted a comprehensive financial system very similar to what in use at the present time [1941]. An annual budget was adopted, and pledges were solicited from all members who



had reached the age of 18 years or over. The system worked so successfully that the congregation was able to increase the salaries of the pastor and teacher.

Pastor Lewerenz remained until 1892. By this time the congregation numbered 55 voting members and nearly 200 communicants.

### DIFFICULT TIMES

The Rev. C.C. Koessel, formerly of Stewardson, Illinois, was called as pastor in 1892, and remained until 1894. Unfortunately during his short pastorate there arose a division within the congregation, due chiefly to reasons of a personal rather than a doctrinal nature. A number of families withdrew and built their own church, St. Paul's, located on Shelby Ave. In the course of time, by the grace of God, the wounds were healed and the congregation was eventually reunited.

In the meantime Pastor Koessel was called to Wisconsin and was succeeded in 1894 by the Rev. Frederick Zagel, a faithful and devoted pastor who served the congregation for seventeen years in the face of serious difficulties. Due to the removal of the railroad shops from Effingham in 1897, many families left Effingham to seek their livelihood elsewhere. The population of the city is said to have been reduced by nearly a third, and the congregation suffered a corresponding loss in membership.

*[ The railroad shops were moved to Terre Haute, Indiana. When the jobs left Effingham the local economy suffered greatly.]*

Teacher Krueger having also been called away in 1894, Mr. Henry Schroeder served as teacher for several years. When he, in turn was called elsewhere, Pastor Zagel assumed personal charge of the school.

In 1896 a tower was added to the church and a bell was purchased. The church was remodeled and enlarged in 1903-04.

*[ This bell was removed from the 1935 bell tower in 1995 and exists on the lawn in front of our present church.]*

### A NEW ERA

In 1911 Pastor Zagel was succeeded by the Rev. Herman Pfothauer, newly graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis. At that time the congregation numbered 133 communicants. Under the leadership of this highly-gifted and energetic pastor, the congregation again made rapid strides forward. The English language was given its place beside the German language in the church services. An English Bible Class was organized. The pastor was relieved of his labors in the school room by the employment of a competent young lady to teach the secular subjects, and the standard of the school work was placed on a level with that of the public schools.

It was during this time [1911-12] that the church was wired for electricity and lighting fixtures were purchased. A pipe organ was installed; and a new altar, pulpit, and pews were

purchased. In all these undertakings a very valuable assistance was given by an extremely active Ladies Aid Society.

On Sept. 10, 1916, the congregation observed it's Golden Jubilee (50 years). According to accounts in the daily paper, the services were attended by 1,200 to 1,500 people; special trains on the Wabash Rail Road brought about 500 from Strasburg, Stewardson, and Altamont. The church was beautifully decorated for the occasion; festive sermons were delivered by District President F. Brandt of Springfield and the Rev. L. Bucheimer of St. Louis.

*[The following article was published in the COUNTY REVIEW –Effingham –September 13, 1916: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of this city, celebrated their Golden Anniversary last Sunday. The weather was ideal and assisted materially in the large attendance. The special train on the Wabash (railroad) arrived about ten o'clock with 427 passengers. Representatives from other adjoining counties arrived principally via automobile and at one time over 150 autos were parked around the Melzer Bros. mill, which is near the church.*

The general arrangements of handling the crowd and feeding them, was perfect. A noon dinner and luncheon, from 3:30 -5:30, was served to over 1400 people. The church was artistically and beautifully decorated under the direction of the Young Men's Bible Class.

The spirit of good will and enthusiasm prevailed throughout the day. Especially so in the kitchen and dining department. Infants hardly tall enough to see over the top of the table were assisting, and from them up to grandmas over eighty years old, did their share of the work.

Seating arrangements were provided for about four hundred adjoining the church, in addition to regular seats in the building, but there were hundreds of people who could not be seated.

The following services were conducted:

Morning services – German, Rev. Brand, Springfield, Ill.

Afternoon services – English, Rev. Brand, Springfield, Ill.

Afternoon services – German, Rev. Bertholt, Danville, Ill.

Evening services – English, Rev. Bucheimer, St. Louis, Il.

*Pastor Pfothenhauer wrote a history of St. John's in the COUNTY REVIEW newspaper for the 1916, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. He listed all the charter members from 1866 and went on to explain that as he wrote the history there was one surviving Charter Member, John Lunow. "As I wrote this history, one member survived, John Lunow, but God also called him, and two days ago we buried the last member of the original seven founders of this congregation. He did not live to celebrate this Golden Jubilee, but was called to participate in the eternal jubilee." [According to the records at Church, John Lunow died Sept. 6 with burial on Sept. 8 – the Golden Jubilee was held on September 10.]*

Pastor Pfothenauer was called to Kankakee, Illinois in January, 1917. By this time the congregation had again grown to a communicant membership of 170 communicants.

The Rev. Paul Roehrs, formerly of East Peoria, Illinois became the congregation's pastor in 1917. The congregation continued to prosper in spite of difficulties arising from war-time conditions [W.W.I] and some differences of opinion arising from the increasing prevalence of the English language in church work. A Sunday School was organized in 1917 with an enrollment of about 100.

The serious shortage of teachers during the World War resulted in the closing of the school for one year, but it was opened again the following fall. A number of the congregation's young men were called to the colors during the war [W.W.I]. The list, as nearly complete as available information can make it, includes the following: Maj. Albert Gravenhorst, Festus Haag, Ernest Woidt, William Woidt, Paul Frankenstein, Ernest Wildi, Karl Alt, Frank Alt, Oscar Alt, Harry Bordieck, Frank Witt, Jr., Louis Witt, and Earl Will.

*[ World War I was simply known as "The Great War" or " The World War" prior to W.W.II. At the time of the Diamond Jubilee Services on September 21, 1941, little did the congregation know that on the horizon was the Japanese Attack of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 plunging the United States into World War II. Again, members of St. John's would be called to service for their country. Because of members, who gave their lives for their country in W.W. II, we have a Memorial that exists in our church today.]*

In 1920 Pastor Roehrs was succeeded by the Rev. Theo. J. Mehl of Paducah, Kentucky. Under his able guidance the congregation continued to grow and flourish. A very large and active Young People's Society was built up, but difficulty in obtaining a suitable place to meet was a severe handicap. Preliminary steps were taken toward the building of a new parsonage, but this was not completed then. Pastor Mehl was called to Danville, Illinois in 1925, and on November 1, 1925 the Rev. P.F. Plunkett, formerly of Pana, Illinois was installed as his successor. At that time the congregation numbered 203 communicant members.

Looking forward to the eventual erection of a new church, the congregation established a Building Fund in May, 1926. In the fall of 1926 a new parsonage was built with funds provided by the ladies Aid Society. The old parsonage was sold and moved to 807 W. Jefferson Ave., where it still stands.

*[It is interesting to note the following in relation to the building of the 1926 parsonage. In a letter dates July 24, 1926, Dr. C.H. and Jennie Diehl offered the following:*

**To the Welfare Committee of St. John's Lutheran Church:**

**A proposition has been made to build a new parsonage for our congregation, and we have been asked to set a price on the lot on the corner of Center and Cherry Streets [note West Jefferson was at one time named 'Center Street'.] Lot to be 50 ft. wide and extend from**

Center St. to the alley. Realizing that my repeated absence from home and my wife's ill health prevent us from taking part in church activities which we would like, we hereby make the following offer:

We will donate said lot to St. John's Lutheran Church, with the stipulation that the lot be used for a site on which to build the proposed parsonage or a new church building.

This offer expires September 1, 1926. (Signed) Dr. C.H. Diehl

Jennie Diehl

Offer accepted by congregation in a meeting held August 8, 1926.

*[A Proposal was written to the Trustees of St. John's Lutheran Congregation as follows:]*

The Ladies Aid of this congregation has \$2,000.00 in cash which they desire to use for the congregation in building a parsonage. Dr. Diehl has offered to present a lot on the corner of Cherry and Center Sts. If the offer is accepted on or before September 1. We offer the following proposals:

1. The Ladies Aid to build the house and assume full responsibility of paying for it.
2. The Ladies Aid to be permitted to receive voluntary donations from members of the congregation for this purpose.
3. The Ladies Aid to select an advisory committee to offer the ladies any desired aid.
4. House to be built on the lot at the corner of Cherry and Center Sts offered by Dr. Diehl for that purpose.
5. House with improvements not to exceed \$6,000.00 in cost.
6. The new parsonage not to be sold without permission of the Ladies Aid.

Proposals adopted and desired permission granted by the congregation in meeting held August 8, 1926. *[Vote: 20 for and 12 against...motion carried.]*

*[On September 4, 1926 Dr. Diehl sent the following letter:*

My attention has been called to the fact that a majority of the members of our Lutheran congregation would prefer to have the new parsonage build on the site of the present one, ]

In view of this fact, I am making a second offer which may be acted upon by the congregation, after they rejected my first offer, should they see fit to do so.

**OFFER #2 (made in lieu of first offer and in its stead)**

I hereby offer to purchase dwelling now occupied as parsonage for the sum of \$500.00. I agree to remove dwelling as soon as necessary arrangement can be made, with least possible damage to the church property, leaving foundation and walks where they are.

*[The Voter's minutes of September 5, 1926 record the following]*

...motion made and seconded and carried for the Council to give the Ladies every Legal Aid necessary for the erection and completion of the new house....motion made, seconded and carried that the congregation take care of the Pastor' living quarters while building the new house . . .

The Young People's Society, reorganized in 1926, became affiliated with the International Walther League\*, and was later divided into a Senior Society and a Junior Society.

*[Note: This 1926 parsonage was removed in 1992 when the current Parish Hall, Church Offices, and multipurpose basement-music-rooms were erected. \*Walther was the first President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod]*

The school had been taught by students for a number of years, but in 1928 Mr. Gerhard Wiebel, a graduate of Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois was called as its permanent teacher. In 1930 he accepted a call to Bunker Hill, Illinois, and no permanent successor to him was called. Because of the unfavorable financial conditions which prevailed and the declining enrollment in the school, the congregation resolved in 1933 to discontinue the school for the time being.

*[ As the economic suffering of the Great Depression encompassed the country and Effingham, St. John's Lutheran Day School was closed. According to Voter's Meeting records, motions were made and approved to "delay the start of the school by for one year due to severe economic conditions". This happened in 1933 and 1934. On October 6, 1935 a motion was made, seconded and carried that "the Council be authorized to sell the present school building, to the best and highest bidder". Information by way of a paper titled "Tidbits of Information for After Dinner Speaker" (perhaps at the dedication of the 1935 brick church) supplied by Mr. and Mrs. Emil Wenthe indicates the following: "The old parish school was sold to Phil Deibel and moved to Shelby Street." Note: It is believed that this building still exists, now as a house with an addition, at the corner of Mulberry and Shelby. ]*

*Additional notes from Mr. and Mrs. Emil Wenthe were also found with the following information: **Members of the church board encouraged the building of a new church, because it wasn't feasible to fix up the old building any longer. The streets were dusty and the dust blew in through the windows and cracks so that one could see on the pew where the worshipper had been sitting. The roof leaked and was in bad shape. The board met in the Sacristy of the old frame church and discussed these matters.***

On Easter Sunday morning, April 21, 1935, the last service was held in the old church building, and immediately afterward ground was broken for the new church. The cornerstone was laid Sunday, June 16, and the new building, erected at a cost of about \$22,000, was dedicated to the service of the Lord with appropriate ceremonies October 27, 1935. It was at this time that all use of the German language for services was discontinued.

Officers of St. John's Lutheran Church in 1935 were:

Rev. P.F. Plunkett, Pastor  
George Engel, Chairman  
A.Goebel, Secretary  
August Stortzum, Treasurer  
Elders: Adam Goebel, George Engel and S.F. Tolch  
Trustees: Wm. J. Esch, August Stortzum, Emil Wenthe

The Church Council consisted of the Pastor, the three Elders and the three trustees.

Finance Committee: Rex Shadley, Ernest Wenthe, Emil Wenthe, August Stortzum  
Synodical Committee: Walter Mueller, Albert Habbe, Lloyd Adermann  
Building Committee: W.J. Wenthe, Wm. H. Melzer, Paul Koboldt, A. Goebel, A.H. Gravenhorst, Wm. Wachtel, Albert Retz, Lloyd Adermann, Charles Esch, J.P. Deibel, Mrs. Henry Reuther, Mrs. Ernest Wenthe, Mrs. Rex Shadley, Rev. P.F. Plunkett

The congregation's growth was favored by its attractive new church building. At the present writing it numbers 310 communicate members. The Sunday school enrollment is about 125, including a number of children whose parents are not members of the church. Since 1935 all services have been held in the language of our country. [*English replaced the German language for all worship service.*])

[ *The building described in the paragraphs above is the "back section" of our existing edifice. Conversely, the outside front of the church is the original section of the 1935 building. If one counts from the back of the church (inside) to the fourth window, this was where the 1935 church ended. According to the 1935 dedication program the seating capacity was 210. This church was enlarged in 1949-50.*]

The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the congregation was observed on September 21, 1941. For this occasion the interior of the church was decorated and the chancel was partially refurnished by the Ladies' Aid and the Walther League at a cost of \$700. Guest speakers for the festival services from Sept. 21-28 were Dr. R.R. Caemmerer, Dr. J.W. Behnken, Dr. Walter A. Maier, Dr. O.P. Kretzmann and former pastors P.W. Roehrs and T.J. Mehl.

During the seventy-five years of the congregations existence more than 800 persons have been baptized by its pastors; 535 persons have been received into communicant membership by confirmation; over 250 couples have been united in marriage; and more than 300 persons have received Christian burial. Sons and daughters of the congregation are to be found in every part of our nation.

"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."—Psalm 126, 3.

“The Lord, our God, be with us, as He was with our fathers; let Him not leave us, nor forsake us; that He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments.” --I Kings 8: 57, 58.

## SERVICES AND SPEAKERS FOR THE 75<sup>TH</sup> DIAMOND JUBILEE

Sunday, September 21, 1941

10:00 a.m. Prof. R.R. Caemerer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

2:30 p.m. (High School\*) Rev. J.W. Behnken, D.D., Chicago, Ill.  
(President of Evangelical Lutheran Synod)

Wednesday, Sept. 24 (High School)

7:30 p.m. Prof. Walter A. Maier, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.  
(Lutheran Hour Radio Speaker)

Friday, September 26

7:30 p.m. Pres. O.P. Kretzmann, Valparaiso University

Sunday, September 28

10:00 a.m. Rev. Paul W. Roehrs, Wausau, Wisconsin  
(Pastor of St. John's 1917-1920)

2:30 p.m. Rev. Theo. J. Mehl, St. Louis, Mo.  
(Pastor of St. John's 1920-1925)

*[\*This is the present Effingham Junior High. It was then the new high school, built in 1939, which the special services were held in.]*

## ANNIVERSARY PRAYER

Accept, O Lord, the humble tribute of thanksgiving and praise which Thy grateful people offer Thee on this happy occasion for the riches of Thy grace, which Thou has so abundantly bestowed upon Thy children in this place for the past seventy-five years.

With Thy precious gospel Thou has revealed to our fathers and to us the way to eternal salvation. Thou hast called the sinner to repentance, comforted the sorrowing, refreshed the weary, strengthened the weak and faint-hearted, restored the erring, and nourished all Thy children with the Bread of Life.

In Holy Baptism Thou has caused the sinful children of men to be born again into Thy heavenly kingdom and received them as Thy own dear children. At Thine altar Thou hast fed us

with the heavenly manna of our Savior's body and blood, given and shed for the remission of sins, that our faith might be strengthened.

Thou hast before our eyes our Savior's Cross of suffering and the Crown of life which He has promised.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, be with us and our children as Thou has been with our fathers; leave us not, neither forsake us. Make Thy Church a constant source of richest blessing until it shall please Thee to gather Thy saints into the eternal bliss and glory of the heavenly home.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

+ This concludes the history as contained 1941 Diamond Jubilee Book. +

*To continue the recording of St. John's history we now gather information as written in the St. John's Centennial Book (1966) and other documents. It was written that "services were conducted throughout the year in observance of the Centennial: Feb. 20, Rev. Dale E. Griffin, member of the editorial staff of Synod's Division of Parish Education and Services, spoke in the interest of Christian Education; May 1, Prof. Herbert Kretzmann, missionary and instructor at the Seminary in Philippines, spoke in the interest of Missions; Aug. 7, the Rev. P.F. Plunkett, pastor of St. John's from 1925-1943, represented former pastors of the congregation; Oct. 2, the Rev. Elwood Tolch, a son of the congregation, emphasized the importance of music and singing in Christian worship and Dr. W.A. Maier, Jr., professor of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, delivered the address for the final service and reception climaxing the Centennial observance."*

*The Centennial History Book continues....*

*Pastor H.E. Zimmermann, pastor during the Centennial, wrote his message in the Centennial book. Reading it today gives insight into his thoughts and concerns in 1966 and can be applied today, fifty years later.*

"This Centennial Booklet contains a brief history of Lutheranism in Effingham during its first century. In today's world just a few years bring tremendous changes. What would our founding fathers say of the changes produced over a century? No doubt they would be astounded by the size of the congregation. The tiny mustard seed they planted, under God, has become a mighty tree. Pleasant surprises would amaze them as they toured the beautiful Church, the comfortable social rooms, the well-equipped educational facilities, the spacious parking lots with the shining cars transporting member to and from the services. How intrigued they would be by the furnishings, the organ, the amplifying system, the fancy lights, the air conditioning, the movie projector and countless other facilities for worship. A German congregation become entirely English would also surprise them. Astounding are the changes of one hundred years.



There is one area, however, in which they would note not change. This is in the area of the Word and Sacraments. God's Word does not change. The doctrines of God's Church must ever continue the same. This is why we have chosen as our Centennial Theme the words of Jesus, 'Continue in My Word': John 8:31.

These words are a confession concerning the past century. St. John's Lutheran Congregation has been a communion of saints founded upon and dedicated to the Word of the living God and the saving Christ. Her Creeds and Confessions by which she proclaims her birthright and identity leave no doubt where she stands in her relationship to God's Word. For one hundred years she has proclaimed the Law and Gospel in all their truth and purity for the convicting of sinners and the saving of blood-bought souls. By the grace of God she has proclaimed a changeless Word with its changeless Christ to a changing world. Her believing dead, who have entered the Church Triumphant, as well as her living members, have been dedicated to the truth of the living God. For this priceless heritage we praise and bless our God.

These words are also a dedicated decision for the present. As Lutheran Christians we have continued in God's Word and we are continuing in God's Word. The great craze of the present generation like that of the Athenians in Paul's day is for something new. The ecumenical movement has added fuel to this destructive fire. God's Truth does not change. The Church must not change in the message which she brings to sinners that they may believe, live and serve the Lord. Thank God that we today are firmly dedicated and wedded to His Word. Neither philosophy, science or anything else dare change us.

These words are also a challenge for the future as we enter a second century of God's grace. The greatest danger threatening the Lutheran Church today is the folly of giving heed to the wisdom of men and forsaking the unsearchable but revealed, tried and tested inspired wisdom of God. If we are to continue to be a dynamic church with a right to proclaim the saving Gospel to a dying world for the saving of sin-lost souls, we must remain true to the Word which alone can accomplish this miracle. We must recognize and rid ourselves of those who would lead us astray. The past quarter of a century bears record to weakness and blundering in this respect in the Synod with which we have been associated since 1873. Our future under God depends on our continued dedication and allegiance to His Word.

These words are also a guarantee of God's continued presence and blessing upon us. God has never and will never forsake those who faithfully continue in His Word. If men are forsaken by God it is because they have forsaken Him. He has promised, 'I will never leave nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5. To guarantee God's presence and blessing upon us we must continue faithful to His Word. Only then can we justify our existence for a second century.

May the Word, which has been our strength and power in the past, continue to sustain and bless us in the present and the future and guarantee us God's blessing for time and eternity. Continuing in the Word we shall continue effective witness in the world.

God's Word is our great heritage  
And shall be our forever;  
To spread its light from age to age,  
Shall be our chief endeavor.  
Through life it guides our way,  
In death it is our stay.  
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,  
We keep its teachings pure  
Throughout all generations.

Pastor Herbert E. Zimmerman, 1966

*The Centennial booklet continues where the Diamond Jubilee book left off in 1941.*

In December of 1941 the United States became involved in World War II. More than 40 young men of the congregation participated. Three, Pfc. Albert F. Hammer, Chaplain Marcus E. Lohrmann and Corp. Olen Marten, gave their lives for their country.

Pastor Plunkett, having served the congregation for eight-teen years, was granted a peaceful dismissal in October, 1943, to become pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana.

On Feb. 20, 1944, the Rev. H.E. Zimmermann, Flora, Illinois was installed as pastor of St. John's. Attendance in Sunday School and Church showed a steady increase. It soon became apparent that the Church, erected in 1935, would not be adequate for the growing congregation.

Nov. 5, 1946 marked the beginning of the Lydia Guild, an organization primarily for working ladies and mothers with young children. Its meetings are held in the evenings. Since 1956 it has been affiliated with the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

In 1945 the congregation appointed a Post-War Planning Committee to consider ways and means to provide adequate accommodations for the congregation. However, because of strenuous opposition, it was not until 1947 that the congregation adopted plans for the enlarging of the Church. After considerable delay it was finally resolved to proceed with the enlarging of the Church by an addition to the nave, and the addition of transepts and chancel, doubling the seating capacity of the building. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on July 10, 1949. The building was completed and ready for dedication on July 16, 1950. The entire project, including

new furnishings and a new organ, 15 ranks of pipes and chimes, cost approximately \$80,000. The debt was retired by October 1952.

*[The following is from the Dedication Program of July 16, 1950 and gives a detailed description of the enlarged and remodeled church.]*

**“Architecturally St. John’s Lutheran Church follows the traditional cruciform design. The 2 ½ to 1 ratio of width to length in the nave and the deep chancel carry out the historic plan of the liturgical church and give the worshiper an impressive perspective upon entering the building. The east transepts contain the organ console and the choir. The west transept and a balcony above the narthex providing additional seating for the congregation. The seating capacity is approximately 500. The ridge beam has been carried through to reach the chancel wall, omitting the usual chancel arch, to add to the effective length of the church. The overall length is 110 ft. The furnishings in the nave are of oak in a soft medium finish. The floor is covered with asphalt tile.**

**The focal point of the entire interior is the chancel lancet window, which rises 19 feet above the altar. The theme of the window is “Redemption.” It is fashioned of finest imported glass in rich blues and reds with a touch of gold and green for variety and color. The center medallion is a large crucifix. Below and above the crucifix are symbols of the Savior’s passion. The chancel furnishings representing the Word and Sacraments, the lectern, pulpit, altar and font, are of white oak in a natural finish. Clergy chairs, upholstered in rich maroon, and maroon carpeting add the necessary color. The altar brasses, the cross, the candlesticks, the candelabra, the missal stand, the ewer and the vases are of the finest materials in simple design. Altar rails and paneling complete the chancel furnishings. The walls are of grey brick harmonizing with limestone trim.**

**Adjacent to the chancel are the sacristy for the church office and the choir room. Above these rooms are the organ chambers with openings into the chancel. The organ, built by the Hilgreen Lane Organ Company, Alliance, Ohio, has 15 ranks of pipes, Deagan chimes and a two manual console with 30 stops.**

**The exterior of the church is of variegated red brick trimmed in Indiana limestone. The present building incorporates the building erected in 1935 and is constructed to harmonize with it. In addition to the tower at the east entrance, a spire, surmounted by a cross, towers above the roof where the transepts join the nave.**

**The basement contains an auditorium, 30 ft. by 75 ft., with a stage, a classroom, 13 ft. by 25 ft., and other small rooms for Sunday school and social purposes. There is also a completely equipped kitchen, a furnace room and wash rooms. The building is heated by oil burning hot water furnace. Heat is automatically controlled by three thermostats."**

*The November 6, 1949 church bulletin contained the following information:*

**The Window Committee has placed the order for windows for the transepts and chancel. The transept windows will match the windows of the present building. The chancel window will be a leaded window of the finest imported glass, colored and fired to meet the needs of a beautiful altar window. It will tell the story of Christ's suffering and death in symbols. It is a memorial window donated by Mrs. Garrett Loy and Mrs. Markus Lohrmann in memory of their husbands who met death in World War II. [The transept windows were purchased for \$100.00 each and it was reported that the memorial Redemption window cost \$1,000.00.]**

*In 2010, the story of the Redemption Window and how it came to be was written and is included as follows:*

#### REDEMPTION WINDOW

In Memory of Chaplain Markus E. Lohrmann and First Lt. Garrett W. Loy

Dedicated in 1950

St. John's Lutheran Church – Effingham, Illinois

Written by Marcia Luecke

As the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the addition to St. John's Lutheran Church is fast approaching. I have been asked to record my memories of the circumstances surrounding, and the person in who memory the Redemption Window was given.

My father, Markus Ewald Lohrmann, was born exactly 100 years ago, in 1910, to the Rev. Justus and Clara (Vogel) Lohrmann, the third of 10 children. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and became the pastor of the Lutheran Church in Blue Point, Illinois. He met a member of St. John's, Effingham,-my mother,- Gertrude Wenthe, daughter of William and Mathilda (Wenthe) Wenthe in 1938, at a Zone Walther League Rally where my mother had given a speech in her role as one of the Zone officers. It was apparently "love at first sight" because after only three dates, they become engaged. They decided, however, to delay their wedding because these were still Depression

years, and my father's parents and 3 or 4 of his youngest siblings had moved into the parsonage at Blue Point with my father, as my grandfather was temporarily without a parish of his own, and there was little room for a young bride in crowded quarters.

In 1940, as global hostilities grew, leading up to WWII, my father enlisted in the Army as a Chaplain, and my parents were married on Memorial Day, 1940. They lived on an Army base in Fort Meade, South Dakota, until March of 1942, when my father was deployed to the South Pacific, and my mother returned home to live with her parents and sisters, (Lydia, Minni, and Ella Wente) in Effingham. I was born in August of that year.

On March 6, 1944, my father and a number of other officers and soldiers were out in a small ship in the south Pacific, off of Good Enough Island, when the power on the craft failed, leaving them without the ability to steer the craft, or even to communicate their position to base on land. Concerned that they might drift farther and farther away toward Japanese waters, my father stated that he would try to swim the long distance back to the Island, to summon help. Two others volunteered to swim with him.

When the other two men finally reached shore, my father was not with them. Swimming back, they found his body, pulled it to shore, and tried to resuscitate him on the beach, all to no avail. It was later determined that he had not drowned, but suffered a heart attack in the water.

On the same day, my mother was attending a church service at St. John's Lutheran Church in Effingham. She told me that suddenly, during the service, she felt as though she were going to black out. Having heard that one should put one's head down if one felt faint, she did, but as she struggled to remain conscious, she had a clear vision of a tropical beach, with sand and palm trees, beside the ocean, and she saw men frantically bent over my father, trying to breathe life back into his prone body.

The next day, Reverend H.E. Zimmerman, who had just recently arrived as the new pastor of St. John's, and who had been contacted by the Army chaplaincy Service, came to the Wente home to give her the news of my father's death. But she already knew. She had seen it happen.

Sixth months later, in October of 1944, my mother's sister, Ella (Wente) Loy, received a similar visit. My uncle Garrett Loy, a pilot, had been shot down over Germany. It was my understanding that the Redemption window that was placed in the chancel of St. John's in 1950, was also partially in memory of Uncle Garrett Loy.

How often I wished I might have known my father. But I always thought of him as I sat in church and looked at that window, depicting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins. I thought about how my father had followed Jesus example – had laid down his life for his brothers, so that others might live. My grandfather, then the pastor of Blue Point, said that he believed that my father had been called out of that boat, and out of the water, by Jesus, like Peter, on the Sea of Galilee, and that my father had answered His call, and Jesus had reached out and drawn him up, to His side, in Heaven.

-Marcia (Lohrmann) Luecke

The symbols of the chancel Lancet Window entitled: **REDEMPTION**, as they relate to our Savior's Passion

Wheat – Christ is the Bread of Life

The Cross – Christ gave his life for our ransom on the cross.

The Crown of Thorns – A cruel crown for the King of kings

The Nails – driven into Christ's hands and feet

The Wound – where the spear was thrust into Christ's side

Two Angels Turned Away – Christ is forsaken by His Father in heaven

Two Angels ministering to Christ – He could have commanded His angels if He wished

The Cup – overflowing with His Grace. It can also symbolize the bitter cup that Jesus asked to be taken away with all its guilt and hell-the cup of our sins. To drink that cup meant to suffer our hell. God heard the cries of His son, uttered with tears and bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane, but He did not take the cup away. There was no other way in which Jesus could save a sin lost world

The Whipping Post and Whip – by His stripes we are healed

The Broken Chain – surrounding the entire window – Christ has broken the bonds of sin and death

On Oct. 7, 1951 a resolution was adopted to install a public address system (*this was the first one*) in the Church and social rooms . [*At this time all church functions, receptions, dinners, etc. were held in the basement under the church proper. This is the area referred to as "social rooms".*] The system has been enlarged and improved to meet the needs of a growing congregation.

On July 6, 1952, 29 communicant members from Immanuel Lutheran Church southwest of Effingham, (Dutch Lane), were received into membership with St. John's. The Church property and cemetery were turned over to the Effingham congregation. Immanuel Lutheran Church became a part of St. John's Lutheran Church.

During the early years of the congregation the children attended the Lutheran School it was felt that there was no great need for a Sunday School. An English Bible Class was organized under Pastor Pfotenhauer. It was not until 1917 that a Sunday School was organized. Since that time the Sunday School has been an essential and important part of the congregation's program for Christian education. Eventually classes in the Sunday School were provided for all ages from the Cradle Roll to adult Bible classes.

Classes for the instruction of the children in preparation for confirmation have always been a part of the educational system. At first they were part of the Parish School program. When the school was closed, these classes were continued during the week after school hours.

In the fall of 1944 a Saturday School was organized for children in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades and they had class for two hours. The curriculum included memory work, study of Christian doctrine, Bible study and hymn singing. Children in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade met after school for one hour on Monday and Thursday of each week. Thus a four year course of special study under the pastor in preparation for confirmation was inaugurated. This supplemented the Christian education provided by the Sunday School and Church services.

For years the summer Vacation Bible school courses have also been a regular part of the education program of the congregation.

*[As early as 1934 the Congregational Minutes record the following on April 15, 1934, "Motion made and second that the congregation favor the plan of having four weeks of Summer Bible School, and give Rev. Plunkett, option of having it a longer period, if he so wishes, and that this meeting go on record as unanimous in favor of same. Motion carried.]*

As we draw to the close of the first century of Lutheranism in Effingham, we thank and praise our gracious God for effective means of Christian education which He made available to His Church. May He especially bless the dedicated teachers of the Sunday School and Vacation Bible School for their labors of love.

As the congregation continued to grow it became apparent that proper facilities would have to be provided for the growing Sunday School and Bible Classes. A planning Committee was appointed in October, 1953, to study this matter. A special meeting on May 2, 1954, it was resolved to erect an Educational Building and a parking lot south of the Church at a cost of about \$65,000 including furnishings. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on May 9 at the close of

the morning services. The building was dedicated to the glory of God and the cause of Christian education on Jan. 9, 1955. Final payment was made by August, 1959.

*[In 1955 congregation addressed the immediate and future needs of Christian Education of their youth. This was the “baby boom” years and the records show that many children were being baptized and that the building would serve to address the large increase of children attending St. John’s. The Dedication Service program gives a description of the new building:]*

**"Architecturally St. John's new Christian Education Building is a functional building designed to harmonize with the existing church. The exterior is of variegated red brick trimmed in Indiana limestone. The entrance is made prominent by location and by construction, being entirely of limestone. The exterior dimensions of the building are 32 ft. by 76 ft. It is of one story construction with a parapet roof and full basement. The interior construction is of hadite block with insulation and acoustical tile on the ceiling and vinyl tile on the floors.**

**The structure is heated by a gas burning hot-water furnace, which provides radiant heating in the floors of the building. The heating is automatically controlled by three thermostats. Two large exhaust fans draw air from all rooms, thus maintaining fresh air in the rooms at all times.**

**The primary purpose of the building is for Christian education and training in the Sunday School departments. The basement contains ten Sunday School rooms, two washrooms, and a furnace room. The first floor contains the church office, the secretary's office, eleven Sunday School rooms, a storage room and a wash room.**

**The Sunday School rooms are furnished with oak tables and chairs for the Beginners and Primary departments and with teachers' desks and chairs, and chairs with book rests for the Junior, Intermediate, and Senior departments. Some of the rooms are also equipped with chalkboards. The church office is furnished in walnut and equipped with a church library. The secretary's office is furnished with all metal furnishings.**

**The new building is joined to the present church by a 22 ft. tunnel so that it may be readily accessible in all types of weather.**

**We thank and praise our God for this opportunity to erect, dedicate, and use this building to the glory of His Name and the education and training of the children, whom He has redeemed with the precious blood of His Son. May He here abundantly bless both teachers and children as they study His Word for the strengthening of their faith and the saving of their souls."**



*[The Dedicatory Service also listed a "Procession" as described:]*

**"The officiating pastors will lead the procession, followed by the choir and the assembly. The ushers will direct the assembly, beginning with the center pews and continuing through to the west transept and balcony until all are out of the church and assembled at the entrance of the new building.**

*[The act of Dedication followed]* **Pastor: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost we open the doors of this edifice that it may henceforth be the Educational Building of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, a nursery of our God for the Christian education and training of our children. May our God cause His blessing to rest upon this building, to His glory and to the salvation of many souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen."**

*[Final directions were then given:]* **"All are invited to inspect the building, beginning with the first floor and continuing to the basement.**

**At the close of the inspection all visitors and members are requested to return to the church basement through the connecting tunnel for the luncheon, which will be served "gratis" by the ladies of the church."**

*[The congregation, no doubt, was very proud of this new facility. Within the space of seven years the congregation had remodeled and enlarged their Church edifice, doubling its size, along with building a Christian Education facility. Over the sixty years since this building was constructed, it has been remodeled and modernized with a pitched roof, air conditioning, heating system, new windows etc. It currently is used for Sunday School classes and houses the St. John's Food Pantry.]*

A committee was appointed in April, 1961, to investigate the purchase of additional property for more parking area. On Sept. 11, 1961, the congregation approved the purchase of the Melzer property, two lots adjacent to the Church property for, \$10,000. One of the lots was turned into a parking lot.

By 1962 the Educational; Building was no longer adequate for the growing Sunday School. A committee was appointed to study plans for the enlarging of the building. A recommendation for an addition to the building, which would provide seven additional classrooms, was approved in February, 1962. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on Sunday, March 28. The additional classrooms were completed and ready for dedication on August 5, 1962. The cost with furnishings was about \$20,000.

In 1963, a generous donor made possible extensive improvements on St. John's cemetery property, including a new fence around the property and gates, at a cost of approximately \$4,000.

A recommendation to install air conditioning in the Church was approved at the January, 1965, meeting. The parsonage was air conditioned in 1961.

*[Wall fans and open windows were the mode of cooling the church prior to the air conditioning installed. About ten minutes prior to the start the services, which was at that time, 7:45 a.m. and 10:15 a.m., the ushers walked down each side aisle and switched on the oscillating wall fans which were located in space between each stained glass window. The pastor, when in the pulpit, had a floor fan blowing directly behind him as he preached. This author remembers this because the breeze from the fan caused his robe to “billow up” as he preached, giving emphasis to the summer time sermon. However, the electric fans were an improvement from just having open windows and doors and each member waving a card board hand fan. If you arrived at church early enough, one would choose one from a box. The fans usually advertised local business and many times it would be the local funeral home. ]*

*The Centennial History Book continues....*

A Centennial Planning Committee was appointed to offer suggestions for repairs and improvements in preparation for the congregation's observance of her centennial in 1966. The following are improvements that were made for the centennial observance: Air conditioning of the Church, painting of the exterior and interior of the Church, new carpeting, new pews and hymnals in the balcony, rebuilding of washrooms, reinstallation of the heating system, new ceilings in all basement rooms, new furnishings for the Mothers Room, resurfacing of the parking lots and other changes and improvements.

In closing this history (Centennial) we list the names of those members of the congregation who entered the Christian ministry during the past century: Carl Frankenstein, deceased, Kenneth Frankenstein, Decatur, Illinois, Elwood Tolch, East St. Louis, Illinois, and William Marten, Taylorville, Illinois. At this writing (1966) Dean Wenthe is enrolled at Concordia Senior College, preparing for the Christian ministry, and Gerald Lindsey is enrolled at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois, preparing for the teaching profession. Our sincere apologies for any names that may have been omitted.”

*[The Effingham Daily News reported the following: “Capacity Crowd Attends Closing Centennial Service at St. John’s”* “A capacity crowd of 1,200 people attended the morning service and Sunday School services which climaxed the Centennial year at St. John’s Lutheran church, Sunday. Rev. Elwood C. Tolch of East St. Louis, was the speaker. Special recognition was given to Walter Mueller, church organist for the past 36 years. Mr. Mueller was presented a wrist watch and a reception was held in his honor at Quality Court. Some 600 people attended the evening service with Prof. Walter A. Maier as the guest speaker. Gifts were presented to William Esch, 85, oldest member present who was confirmed in the church; Mrs. Hanna Grede, 87, oldest member present, and Mrs. Emma Lankow, Ft. Hueneme, California, who came the

farthest to attend the centennial celebration. The ladies of the church serviced a luncheon to about 400 people and a social hour followed.”

So a century of God’s grace and mercy on Lutheranism in Effingham came to a close with thanksgiving and praise to God for His great goodness and His manifold blessings. At the close of the century the congregation numbered approximately 700 communicants, 158 voting members [*Only men were voting members at this time.*], 960 baptized members. The Sunday School had an enrollment of 430.

It is our fervent prayer that the Triune God, the loving Father, the gracious Savior and the sanctifying Spirit, will be with His people and abundantly bless and prosper the Lutheran Church in its second century in Effingham.

+ *This ends the 1966 Centennial Book Section.* +

*[In 1967, St. John’s Lutheran Sunday School celebrated its 50 year anniversary and the following was history was written.]*

The year 1967 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sunday School as a teaching agency in St. John’s Lutheran Church. It is readily understood why during the first 51 years of its history the congregation had no Sunday School when we remember that traditionally the Lutheran Church maintained a parochial school system for the educating of the children, in which both religion and secular subjects were taught. However, as a result of World War I and as a result of able leadership it was recognized that the Sunday School could and should become a part of the educational program of the growing congregation in order that it might more readily fulfill its responsibility for the Christian education of the children, extend its mission outreach and follow the example of other Churches, who, almost without fail, maintained Sunday Schools. An English Bible Class had been conducted already during the pastorate of Pastor Herman Pfothner. The Sunday School had its beginning under Pastor Paul Roehrs who came to Effingham in 1917. It had an enrollment of about 100 pupils. So the Sunday School became a part of the education system of St. John’s Lutheran Church and continues to play a most important role today.

God has blessed the Sunday School during the past 50 years. At the close of a half century it has an enrollment of 400, with 32 teachers and 20 substitute teachers, some of whom have been teaching for more than a quarter of a century.

Officers of the Sunday School are: Senior Superintendent, Junior Superintendent, Secretary and Treasurer.

Sunday School Superintendents known to have served during the past 50 years [*1917-1967*] are: Emil Melzer, Festus Haag, Lloyd Adermann, Elmer Martin, Rufus Schormann, Kenneth Freeman, Lloyd Budde, Lindy Huelskoetter, Gerald Broom, Harold Hartman and Jack Klay. Teachers serving at the present time [*1967*] are: Beginners: Marilyn Schaefer, Leah

Schmohe, Terry Slifer, Carlene Holste, Carroll Stuckemeyer, Herietta Lindsey and Irene Esch. Kindergarten: Kathryn Higgs, Louis Schlechte and Selma Hooten. Primary: Jean Slifer, Ruby Giesler, Donna Marxman and Darlene Wagner. Junior: Madge Lane, Irene Wenthe, Louis Huelskoetter, Esther Marten and Regina Esch. Pre-teen: William Fox, Ralph Stuckemeyer, Walter Hoppe and Rudy Ewald. Jr. High: Lindy Huelskoetter, Warren Schlechte, Victor Wenthe, E.A. Marten and John Huelskoetter. Bible Classes: Alfred Potts, Warren Habbe and Gerald Broom. Senior Bible Class: the pastor.

At the close of a half century (1967) we thank and praise our gracious God and Savior for the blessings he has bestowed upon St. John's Lutheran Church through the Sunday School. We gratefully acknowledge the fine work done by officers and teachers. May the Lord of the Church, Whom they have so faithfully served, bless them for their labors of love. . .

*[In 1969, the CID NEWSLETTER published following: **Members of St. John's celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rev. H.E. Zimmermann, as their pastor and his 38-year ministry celebration...at the social reception, after Sunday evening Vesper service, the congregation presented the pastor and his wife with cash gifts. The Sunday school teachers and children presented a special gift, a color TV set.]***

*[Four years after the Centennial, Reverend H. E. Zimmermann died on June 23, 1970 at the age of sixty-three, as he was trimming the shrubbery on the east side of the church. He was planning to retire within two years and the congregation had agreed to call an assistant pastor to work with Pastor Zimmermann in anticipation of his retirement. His funeral was held at St. John's and this author had it reported to him that the organist, Walter Mueller, had said he could not hear the organ as he accompanied the singing of the hymns, due to the great number of people in attendance. Pastor Zimmermann had performed 674 Baptisms and Confirmed 593 members during his 26 years at St. John's. At a congregational meeting, it was agreed to allow Mrs. Zimmermann to continue living in the Parsonage as long as she needed until arrangements were made to move to Minnesota where she and Rev. Zimmermann were originally from.]*

A Carillon was purchased from the memorial fund set up in memory of Pastor H.E. Zimmermann who served St. John's for 26 years. The original brass plaque, located in the balcony next to the carillon, reads as follows:

**In Memoriam**  
**The Rev. H.E. Zimmermann**  
**Beloved Pastor of St. John's**  
**From**  
**February 20, 1944 to June 23, 1970**  
**This Carillon was given by members and friends of the congregation**  
**Soli Deo Gloria**  
**Christmas 1973**

*[In the year 1991 St. John's celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A booklet was written and the following information is taken from that booklet.]*

On September 13, 1970, the Rev. Harlan C. Wendler of St. Paul in Addison, IL was installed as pastor of St. John's. . *The Effingham Daily News reported: **On September 12, 1971 St. John's celebrated Rev. Wendler's twenty-five years in the ministry. Relatives and friends from a distance joined the group for the dinner and program which followed.***

*Pastor Wendler worked with the youth in planning, what was then called a "Youth Service". Several "Youth Services" were held with favorable response from the congregation.*

Pastor Wendler served our congregation until his retirement in 1987. In July of 1972, Mr. John Krueger was installed as the first Director of Education, Music and Youth. Mr. Krueger served St. John's until 1975. He was director of all the choirs: Senior, Teen, Children in addition to assisting with confirmation class instruction. A choir concert featuring all the church choirs was held during his Directorship. Once a month, Mr. Krueger accompanied the high school youth group Mark's Shelter Care where they visited, sang and played games with the residents. Mr. Krueger accepted a call to Wisconsin and later went into the Holy Ministry.

Mr. John Baginski of Elkhardt, Indiana was installed in September of 1975 as Director of Education, Music and Youth. Mr. Baginski served St. John's until 1980. On July 26, 1981, Rev. Michael A. Koschmann was installed as assistant pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church. While at St. John's he assisted the senior pastor in the holy ministry and helped with Christian Education and Youth Programs. Rev. Koschmann served St. John's until 1987.

*[In the early 1970's a study was conducted with the purpose being to gather information for the replacement and/or repair of the church's organ. The organ in place [1970] was installed in 1950 with the enlargement and remodeling of the 1935 church. The organ pipes and chimes were installed in the two chambers above the chancel/altar. The organ included pipes from the 1935 organ in addition to additional ranks of new pipes and chimes from the 1950 addition. After study and consideration the congregation voted to install a new electronic Allen Digital organ. The pipes and chimes from the old organ were removed from the chambers above the altar area. Placed inside this space were the required speakers for the organ along with additional speakers located above the balcony. This organ "installed to be of use into the next century" was dedicated in December of 1975. As of this writing, a campaign is underway to replace that organ with a new one in time for the December 11, 2016 Celebratory Service.]*

The Braille Center was established in July of 1983 and in August of 1984 the women who signed the Church Constitution became members of the Voter's Assembly.

In May of 1985, St. John's congregation purchased the Langston property at 907 W. Jefferson, just west of the parsonage, for \$58,500. The property consisted of a dwelling and a small apartment with a one car garage in between. The apartment was remodeled to provide a work center for the local Braille unit, which produced Biblical material for the blind.

*[On October 27, 1985 a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dedication of the original 1935 Church-Edifice was held. A booklet, concerning the history of the 1935 brick church was published. . Much of that history has already been discussed previously in this 150<sup>th</sup> book. However, some interesting points from that 1985 booklet are written as follows:]*

**Officiante and Liturgist:** Rev. Harlan C. Wendler, Pastor

**Lector:** Rev. Michael A. Koschmann, Asst. Pastor

**Preacher:** Prof. Dean O. Wenthe of Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana

**Crucifer:** David Ziegler

**Choir Director:** Judy Wendling

**Trumpeter:** William Braasch

**Church Council:** Howard Haake, Donald Turner, Jeff Stremming, Jack Klay, Charles Braasch, Charles Meyer, Sr., Ernest Schottman, John Jackson, Warren Schlechte, Royal Kyle, Robert Marxman, Ed Brandt, James Kopplin, Marlin Alwardt, Earl Mueller, Dennis Lading, Ronald Lading, Alfred Potts, Lyle Tolch, Terry Long, Robert Kirchoff, Dean Wetherell, Stanley Moeller

**Fiftieth Anniversary Committee:**

Victor Wenthe, Gilbert Blom, Sue Habbe, Eldon Joergens, Judy Wendling, Lisa Doedtman, Esther Marten

Following Pastor Wendler's retirement in 1987, Rev. Lester Bischoff of Altamont, IL served as vacancy pastor until February of 1988. On February 7, 1988 Rev. Robert Backhus of St. Peter's, Morrison, IL accepted a call to St. John's. The era of the parsonage came to an end as Pastor Backhus was the first of the pastors at St. John's to own his home.

*[For the 125<sup>th</sup> (1991) Anniversary Booklet Pastor Backhus wrote the following:]*

It is by the grace of God alone that we are able to look back upon 125 years of living history as a congregation. It is to His praise alone that we have chosen to observe this year in a special way. It is to His glory that we dedicate this historical anniversary booklet.

However, this is not the end! The history of St. John's Lutheran Church of Effingham, Illinois, has not yet been fully told. The final manuscript has not been completed. You cannot enter a new year, a new dedicate, a new quarter-century, or a new century with a proper perspective of the future without a backward glance at the past. The present course of our congregation has been chartered by the decisions and actions of the past. Knowledge and understanding of this heritage will be the foundation upon which the hope and faith of the future

will be constructed. Remembrance and response make an excellent anniversary pair. How appropriate, therefore, that the general theme for our 125 year observance is “Praise for the Past! Faith for the Future!”

Beginnings are always marked with enthusiasm and with difficulties. A look at the history of this church as summarized in the following pages of this booklet reveal the hopes and aspirations of the congregation as it was founded. Often the new congregation is faced with difficulties that either help or hinder its success, and the historical record likewise reveals this aspect. Those first and historic chapters of St. John’s have now been written for us to read and review. The task that lies before us is to write our chapter of the book in a most God-pleasing manner. We dare not rest of the laurels of our forefathers or upon our own past achievements. We must forge -

“On to broader fields of noble vision,  
On to loftier heights of faith and love,  
Onward, upward, apprehending fully,  
All for which He calls us from above.”

Although a historical overview of necessity charts the course of events primarily around pastoral leadership and its facility, the supremely important aspect is the mission and ministry of the congregation whereby the members grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, and share their faith with those who yet do not know and accept Jesus as personal Savior and Lord.

A brief historical overview of a congregation cannot acknowledge individually the host of men and women who have served faithfully in various capacities throughout the years. All such service was and continues to be both necessary and appreciated.

We thank God also for those young men and women of St. John’s who were called into various fields of professional church work throughout the past 125 years.

If special years are meaningful because they recall beginnings and give understanding of the past, they are also meaningful because they are years of rededication to the future. Knowing from where we came enables us to better proceed into the future. Today we have the heritage of our past, given to us by many consecrated men and women, and we rejoice in that legacy. But more than that, we rejoice in the mercy of God which He has shown to St. John’s these past 126 years. St. John’s Lutheran church of Effingham has ample reason to praise God for the past. The history of our congregation clearly shows that in spite of our own unworthiness, in spite of many weaknesses and infirmities of the flesh, which at times even hindered the building of Christ’s Kingdom in our midst, God has heard the prayers of His people and has crowned our labors with success.

We would not boast and glory in what we have done, but rather in what the Lord has done among us. We rejoice in His mercy, that He has preserved the Gospel among us – the timeless message of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We rejoice in His mercy, that He assures the future of our church as long as we are faithful to Him and His Word. How appropriate the general theme of this 125<sup>th</sup> observance to be Praise for the Past! Faith for the Future!

Pastor Robert Backhus

Mr. Larry Brandt, Director of Christian Education, was installed in January of 1989. Before coming to St. John's, Mr. Brandt served at Trinity, Villa Park, IL for 18 years.

Over the past several years, St. John's congregation has been the recipient of many gifts and donations from members and friends.

Memorials include: painted pictures, stained glass windows, altar candles, piano, hymnals, Bibles, padded seats, outside bulletin board, crosses, handbells, chalice, as well as monetary and floral gifts.

The operation and function of St. John's has been facilitated by the purchase of the following: a bus, computers, sound system, organ, drapes, carpeting, conference room and other furnishings. These additions were purchased by the congregation or organizations within the congregation.

Recently, our congregation was given title to a tract of land in Effingham by a generous donor. This donation offers great potential for expanding the work of the kingdom in our area. A decision on how the property will be used will be made by the congregation in the near future.

In 1989, a radio ministry was begun. Sunday morning services are taped for broadcasting over a local radio station. This program has been a blessing for shut-ins and others unable to attend services. The broadcasts are financed through sponsorship donations from individuals.

After a humble beginning 125 years ago, St. John's congregation has experience bountiful blessings from Almighty God. Our membership now includes 814 communicant members and a total 1055 baptized souls. While this is a commendable number, there is still a great deal of work to do in bringing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers here and throughout the world. Our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary motto of, "Praise for the Past!...Faith for the Future!" implies our trust in God's promise of rich blessings on our efforts.

On behalf of everyone at St. John's, we warmly welcome everyone into our midst and pray for God's blessings upon you.

Following is a list of current officers in the congregation in this 125<sup>th</sup> year:

**President:** Jeff Stremming, **Vice-President:** Charles Braasch, **Secretary:** Kendall Lading,

**Treasurer:** Dennis Lading

**Elders:** Wilbert Schaefer, Howard Janis, Warren Habbe, John Huelskoetter, Alvin Siebert

**Board of Finance:** Irvin Wendte, Harold Hartman, Ron Boggs,

**Board of Trustees:** Harold Esch, Jim Bailey, Lee Hartmann

**Board of Stewardship:** John Jackson, Dick Hulskotter, Gerald Niccum

**Board of Education:** Dave Althoff, Dave Budde, Rick Keller, Don Latch, Ray Hartman

**Early Service Head Usher:** Mark Marxmann

**Later Service Head Usher:** Steve Endebrock

+ This Ends the history from the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet +



*[The following events and dates are “recent history” from St. John’s Lutheran Church and bring us to the 150<sup>th</sup> year anniversary.]*

Beginning in 1988 the Parsonages at 905 and 907 West Jefferson were used for Christian Education and Youth. In 1989 a Hand Bell Choir was organized with the donation of Bells in Memory of Rose Haake. Linda Marxmann was its first director.

St. John’s voters approve the purchase of house property at 900 W. Jefferson St. in 1991. In June of 1992 the Reverend Paul Zimmermann was installed as Assistant Pastor of St. John’s. He remained as the assistant until 1996.

In February of 1992 the congregation approved a resolution to build a fellowship hall, meeting rooms and offices. A “Building For Tomorrow” building fund campaign begins in October 1992 to fund the project. On May 23, 1993 the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the fellowship hall was held. The Dedication Services for the Atrium connecting the church proper and fellowship hall, meeting rooms, offices and furnishings was held on Sunday, August 28, 1994. The old parsonage, built in 1927 was sold and relocated to the Moccasin/800 area north of Effingham, to make room for this addition which included an enlarged parking lot with covered entry. Many improvements were made as a result of this project including the flow of “people traffic” into and out of the Church building for worship services.

The year 1994 saw the congregation vote to purchase the house and property at 107 North Cherry. In addition, the Television Ministry began.

In 1995 a memorial was built on Jefferson Avenue to house the original bell purchased in 1896 and the St. John’s Brass was organized.

In the fall of 1995 the Board of Education conducted a survey of members with children of preschool age to inquire of the interest of beginning a Christian Preschool. The Board of Education then formed a Preschool Research Committee which held its first meeting in March of 1996. Committee members included: Dennis Lading, (Board of Education), Larry Brandt (DCE), Cheryl Pruemmer, Sarah Ziegler, Kelly Stanfield, Sara Sandifer, Jeanette Worman and Ruth Rhodes.

After much research, meeting with Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for licensing requirements, visiting existing Lutheran Preschools it was decided that the “old” church basement would be the best location for the preschool. The name “St. John’s Eagle’s Nest Preschool” based on Isaiah 40:30-31. “Even children become tired and need to rest, and young people trip and fall. But the people who trust the Lord will become strong again. They will rise up as an eagle in the sky; they will run and not need rest; they will walk and not become tired.” In addition, the EAGLE is the symbol of St. John the Apostle our namesake.

Detailed job descriptions were written for the teacher/director by DCE Larry Brandt. An Open House was held in April of 1997. Mrs. Karla Holtz was installed as the first Director of Eagle's Nest Pre-school in July of 1997. The pre-school begins with thirty-three (3-5 year old) students in September of 1997.

Due to overwhelming response, afternoon classes were added doubling the maximum enrollment for the 1998-99 school year to 80 students. Seventy-nine students are enrolled. In 1999 the first "preschool family" joins St. John's Lutheran Church. A Board of Early Childhood Ministry is approved and adopted by the congregation. In December of 1999, due to God's continued blessings on our preschool, the decision was made to offer afternoon classes in the downstairs classroom for the next school year. This increased the maximum enrollment to 140 students. This was reached the following school year. Since God's blessing of a waiting list for the preschool, approval was given by the congregation to move the downstairs classroom to the choir room. This allowed for the increase from 12 to 20 students per class. The 2015-2016 school year enrollment was approximately 90 students.

A call was extended to and accepted by Reverend David Wiist who was installed as the new Assistant Pastor in July of 1997

The "Welcome Center", located in the Atrium, was begun in 1998. In August and November of 1998 the congregation voted to purchase two lots located on W. Jefferson Ave.

The year 1999 also saw the unfortunate end of St. John's Television ministry as the local T.V. station changed ownership. The October 26, 1999 Voter's meeting minutes report 1261 Baptized souls, 928 Communicants and 135 Voting members. In November of that same year, Rev. Wiist was given a peaceful release from St. John's as he accepted a call to Onalaska, Wisconsin.

In 2000 Rev. Backhus resigned as Senior Pastor and accepted the call as Assistant Pastor of St. John's thus allowing for the calling of a new Senior Pastor.

The records of the Vacation Bible School of June 2000 show over two hundred children attended.

The Board of Social Ministry began a project of using the altar flowers after each Sunday. Faye Tomkins and Anna Mae Gibson began this ministry in 2001. The wording on the card, given with each small bouquet to various shut-ins and those who need a positive message reads in part... "These flowers have been on the altar at our church. They've heard the hymns sung, the prayers offered and the sermon preached. Now they come to share God's love with you. That's one blessing that will never wither away ." *[This author has been the recipient of one of these bouquets.]*

In February of 2002 the Assembly of God Church invited St. John's to send a lay person with them to complete a mission project for one week in Belize. On March 14, 2002 the congregation extended a call to Reverend Theodore C. Gall to become Senior Pastor. On April 9, Rev. Gall informs St. John's that has accepted this call. Pastor Backhus preaches his farewell sermon, (the ending to all his sermons... 'As always in the church to God alone be all

the glory') to the congregation on April 28, 2002 and a special service is held at 1:30 p.m. in his honor. Rev. Dick Krenzke, Shelbyville, Illinois becomes the vacancy pastor. On Sunday, June 2, 2002 Reverend Theodore C. Gall was installed as the thirteenth pastor of St. John's since 1870.

Mr. Larry Brandt, Director of Christian Education, resigned as full time DCE on June 30, 2002 due to his illness. He remained on a part-time basis. Until January 1, 2003 when he retired as DCE at St. John's. Larry went to his heavenly home with Lord on May 27, 2003. *[Larry was especially remembered for his gifted ability to obtain volunteers to serve in which ever capacity they were needed in areas of Christian Education and youth. This especially held true when new members joined the church and he immediately "put them to work for the Lord". A book, entitled "Relevant" was discovered with a special dedication to him and reveals his high respect. It reads in part... "This book is dedicated to the memory of **Larry Brandt** and Jack Giles. They were mentors, modeling compassion and discipleship." The author, Tom Couser, of the book further explains: "I am daily challenged to carry on the legacy of the these two giants in the field of Christian education. Their heritage continues to motivate me to pass the torch of faith." Larry Brandt was greatly missed at St. John's and we are thankful for his "worker in the vineyard" example.*

In February of 2003 the Voters approved plans for the renovation of the interior of the church. The project called "A Light for Our Path", included moving of the altar to the front of the chancel, new wiring and lighting, replacing the cellotex ceiling with dry wall, insulating same. Updating the HVAC system, all recessed radiators located under each window on each side aisle were removed. The carved oak paneling was extended on both sides of the altar area whereas before it was only on the wall under the Redemption Window. All the brick around the Redemption Window was hand painted individually to harmonize with the brick in the transepts arches. A new communion rail was built duplicating the same design as the original from the 1950 expansion of the church. No longer are there steps to navigate when going to the altar to receive Communion. A padded kneeling rail completed the altar area remodeling. The balcony was enlarged with seated risers and the organ console was moved to this location. Painting of the entire sanctuary and ceiling along with the installation of carpeting was also part of the project.

In February of 2003, St. John's sends five lay persons to Belize for a one week mission project. Karla Holtz resigns as Pre-school Director/Teacher in May of the same year.

The "A Light For Our Path" construction begins. Services are held in the Parish Hall during this project. In July the Voter's Assembly approved adding \$260,000 to the mortgage to finance the repair of the roof, the tuck-pointing of the church exterior and repair of the "tunnel" to the Christian Education Building. The chancel project completed, a Dedication to the Glory of God was held at all three services, on September 6/7, 2003.

The Board of Social Ministry began the St. John's Food Pantry about 2003. At first, a small furnace room was used in the basement which included three shelves for Food Pantry use.

Faye Tomkins and Anna Mae Gibson were in charge of the pantry. The first time the Food Pantry was open they assisted one person. Gradually the need increased and more space was needed and it was moved to what was called the "Guild Room". (This room is in the basement and located under the west transept of the church.) Today the St. John's Food Pantry is located in the Education Building with a separate entrance and ramp. Jerry and Matilda Niccum supervise "The Pantry" and it now provides food and necessities for an average of 217 families every three months. [ *We remember what our Lord said, "...for I was hungry and you gave me food...."* ]

In August 16, 2003 Mr. Dan McClure was installed as Director of Christian Education along with his wife, Beth McClure who was installed as Pre-School Director/Teacher.

The year 2004 saw the following Voter' Assembly actions: The approval of beginning a "Stephan Ministry" with training for Nancy Marrs as the first one in the congregation to receive such training. The approval of selling property at 107 North Cherry Street. The Voters did not approve buying property at 108 South Oak Street or selling properties located at 900, 902 and 904 West Jefferson Ave.

On Sunday, June 27, 2004 – St. John's congregation celebrated Pastor Gall's twenty-fifth year in the Holy Ministry with a program and potluck meal. The message Pastor Gall had written on the front the program is as follows:

**"In church we are all family. We are in the Lord's ministry together. It has been my pleasure to be with you all – to live, work, play, laugh and cry together. Now I thank you for sharing in my life and the celebration of twenty-five years administering God's Word and Sacrament -Pastor Ted Gall**

At the Voter's Assembly meeting of January 25, 2005 the congregation gave the Board of Trustees and Executive Board the authority to sell the house at 107 North Cherry Street.

On July 17, 2005 St. John's receives Vicar Earl Brown for the 2005-2006 seminary year.

The Voter's Assembly approved the exchange of its property at 107 North Cherry Street with property located at 201 South Cherry Street plus \$12,000 and received the property at 201 South Cherry Street in exchange for property located at 107 North Cherry Street plus \$12,000. These actions took place, respectively, at the August 9 and September 29 meetings. In the final month of 2005 St. John's received a \$250,000 gift to reduce the building fund debt to \$58,000.

On Sunday, January 24, 2005 St. John's congregation Voter's assembly approved a resolution to call an Assistant Pastor. On the following Sunday, January 29, St. John's officers

burns the mortgage held on the 1993-94 Parish Hall addition to the church. Then, in February 2006, St. John's pays the remaining loans on properties at 902 and 904 West Jefferson Ave. using approximately \$35,000 from Board of Early Childhood Ministry treasury.

At the June 25, 2006 church service, Reverend Earl Brown was ordained and installed as Assistant Pastor.

Good news was received by St. John's that the congregation was the recipient of a \$50,000 gift from the George and Jocye Danks Charitable Trust which was used to renovate the Education Building.

The Voter's Assembly, on July 25, 2006, approved paving the lot, located at 102 S. Cherry, and removed the house and garage on 904 W. Jefferson. The records indicated that membership at that time was: 1122 Baptized Souls, 918 Communicant and 137 Voting Members.

Due to the resignation of Dan McClure, DCE and Beth McClure, Preschool Director the congregation approved hiring Mrs. Sandy Esker as Preschool Director and a resolution to call a DCE at the respective August and October, 2006 Voter's meeting.

January 23, 2007 saw the approval, by the Voters, of a resolution to begin a capital campaign to raise funds to renovate the fellowship hall kitchen. The renovation was completed on March 4 and the campaign goal of \$28,000 was reached by July 10.

Mr. Chris Imes was installed as Director of Christian Education at worship services on June 17, 2007.

The sound and video systems were upgraded in August of 2008.

On March 15, 2009 an LED message board located north of the Fellowship Hall on Jefferson Avenue was dedicated at all services in memory of Dyanne Haake. Due to a lightning strike the Memorial Carillon was replaced and rededicated in March 2009. Additional items were added to the front lawn of St. Johns, when on July 4, 2009 the lighted flag poles with the United States, Illinois and Lutheran Church Missouri Synod flags were dedicated.

In the months of December 2009 and September, 2010 respectively, St. John's was the recipient of a more than \$400,000.00 bequest from Wendell Poe estate. In addition, a bequest of over \$100,000.00 was received from the Anna Marie Storzum estate. (The Voter's assembly established a Building Fund based on these bequests in July of 2012.)

A new 14 passenger bus was purchased in May of 2011. A building committee was appointed to address the facility needs of the congregation. St. John's purchased the property at 108 S. Oak Street, July 2012.

The following Voter's Assembly actions took place at meetings on March 25 and July 2014, respectively. The proposed Preschool and Multi-Purpose/Youth Center was not approved. The architect plans were approved for a one story Preschool and multipurpose/ Youth Center and bids sought and construction is to begin once a favorable bid is received. On July 22, 2014 the Voter's Assembly approved the demolition of the house located at 108 S. Oak St. Demolition began on December 6, 2014.

2015 saw the Voter's Assembly approve the selling of three lots located on Jefferson Ave to the Teutopolis Bank as they planned to build a branch bank. The profits from this sale were used to purchase the buildings and lots on Oak Street.

In June and July of 2016 the brick apartment house and wooden garage located on Oak Street were razed. This greatly added to the area of land adjacent to the church for future space to enlarge the Kingdom of God.

### **The Lutheran Church – the Singing Church:**

*[The following information was obtained from the Centennial Book, Dennis Lading and various documents and sources.]*

Music and songs have always enjoyed an important place in the worship of God's people. St. John's, Effingham, has not been an exception in this respect. Throughout the history congregational singing has always been prominent in her services. She has been a singing Church.

Choirs and soloists have helped to beautify the services and edify God's people as they assembled to worship and praise their God. While there are not specific records of early choirs, Lutheran tradition indicates that they did exist and function.

### **Choirs**

Over the past one hundred and fifty years the Church has had various choirs and groups: Senior Choir, Girls Choir, Boys Choir, Gloria Dei Choir, Praise and Worship Choir, Cross Tones, Trinity Singers and many soloists and groups. Directors of those choirs have been some of the Called Director of Christian Education leaders.

Most of the time it was volunteer directors:

Joyce Miller, Becky Manford, Esther Martin, Anita Backhus, Judy Wendling and Dean Manuel. Holly Bray is the current Director of the Praise and Worship Choir. In recent years an "Easter

Cantata” has been performed for the congregation and the community. A Cantata Choir provided choral music while members of St. Johns in Biblical costume displayed scenes from the Lord’s Passion, death and resurrection. Over sixty members would be involved in the production of the Cantatas.

### **Organs and Pianos**

At first reed organs were used to provide music for the worship. A pipe organ was purchased and installed in preparation for the Golden Anniversary (1916) of the congregation. In 1950 a 15 rank pipe organ with chimes was purchased and installed in connection with the enlarging of the Church. An Allen Digital Computer organ was installed October 5, 1975 and dedicated on December 14 of the same year. This organ replaced the Pipe Organ installed in 1950. As of this writing a fund drive is underway to replace this forty year old organ with a new instrument. Organists over the years included some of the called Directors of Christian Education. Other organists include: Walter Mueller, Irene Esch, Jamie Lotz, Dana Keller, Dean Manuel, Jerry Starner, Linda White, Norma Doedtman.

Two Pianos have been given to the church in memory of Elmer and Edna Hammer and Norman Witteborg.

### **Bell Choir – Jubilate Ringers**

Shawn Bourland and Sandy Wieneke currently share the director duties of the Jubilate Bell Choir.

### **St. John’s Brass Ensemble**

In 1995 the St. John’s Brass Ensemble was formed and initially accompanied the choir and performed during church services. Initial members of the group were Glenn Lewis, Jared Lewis, Brian Milleville, David Ziegler and Dennis Lading. The group branched out to other musical styles including classical, pop, Dixieland, jazz and patriotic numbers, and started playing for weddings, receptions, benefits, fund raisers, banquets, reunions and festivals. In 2001, the group was invited to play at the Great American Brass Band Festival in Danville, Kentucky. A 3-day festival that featured top international brass band ensembles on the campus of Centre College. Other highlights were playing for over 100 weddings in the area, including St. Louis and Chicago. Players came and went, but the core musicians for many years were: Trumpet: Glenn Lewis, Jim Miller; Tuba: Brian Milleville; Trombone: Scott Chalfont and Dennis Lading. Saint John’s Brass played their last performance, a wedding, in 2010.

### **The Praise Band**

In January 2005, the idea for a Contemporary Service was born. Dennis Lading and Amy Kohnert were called upon to play and sing. They started with a keyboard and a few songs. In the years to follow, more musicians and song leaders joined in as the ensemble grew. A PA system, guitars, a bass and drums were added. The tambourine and a mandolin make an

appearance now and then. Songs were added regularly and the list is over 200 currently. Through the years these men and women have led the St. John's 10:30 worship in songs of praise.

**The Band:** Dennis Lading, Rick Keller, Jim Wallin, Jeff Stremming, Brad Dial, Jon Perry, Mike Kremer, Brent Budde, Dr. Kelly Stanfield, Tommy Quance and Randy Esch.

**The Song Leaders:** Amy Kohnert, Andrea Wendling, Erin Wendling, Meghan Scott, Melissa Mellendorf, Kylie Bonhoff, Holly Hulksotter, Meredith Wendling, Brent Budde, Ammon Probst, Leigha Weber, Julie Vahling, Dana Keller, Treva Brandt, Jessica Fritch, Jessica Johnson, Jill Beck, Jill Hecht, Keith Knight, Lexi Walker, Nancy Marrs and Chris Rogers

God bless the efforts of The Praise Band. Rock on for Jesus into the next 150 years!

#### **An interesting note:**

In the late 1930's the church sponsored a "Church Band" or "Orchestra" this consisted of trap set, stringed and brass instruments. A picture shows them posing in front of the organ with their instruments in the 1935 church. There were nine members of the group including the conductor. The names listed are: August Sturtzum, Theodore Reuther, Richard Frankenstein, Charles Melzer, Fred Stephen, Seneca Wolf, Festus Haag, Albert Wenthe, 'Director' Swartz.

#### **THE WAR LETTERS**

The following are excerpts from monthly letters written by Pastor H.E. Zimmermann and sent to all members of the congregation who were serving their county in the Armed Forces.

**March 14, 1944 (WW II)** [*The first letter written after Pastor Zimmermann's installation at St. John's.*]

. . . This is my first opportunity to address a letter to the men in service. I have been visiting the homes of members. I have inquired about you of your parents. It has been my good fortune to meet at least four of the men who were home on furlough during the past weeks. For many of you furloughs home are no longer possible since you are on foreign soil. I hope and pray that, the Lord willing, you may all soon return home to stay.

I want to assure you that of all the members of the congregation, I am most proud of you who are doing so much for our homes and our country. I know that you will always remember that you are not only members of the armed forces of our country but also soldiers in the army of Christ. I know that you will so conduct yourselves as to do honor to your country and to Christ your Savior. God grant you the necessary courage and strength at all times.

We are present in the most holy and blessed season of the Church year – Lent. You will be remembering again the great sacrifice which your Savior made to save you from your sins. As you read the pages of you N.T. and call to mind the familiar scenes from Gethsemane to Calvary I would call your attention especially to one of those soldiers who sat beneath the cross



of Jesus. When he saw the silent sufferer offer himself so willingly for the sacrifice, when he heard those deathless sentences which Jesus spoke while he hung upon the cross between heaven and earth, despised by men and accursed of God because of your sins and mine, when he saw how victoriously he died, when he saw the miracles that accompanied the crucifixion, he could not but cry out, "This was a just man, truly this man was the Son of God." Mark 15:39. He was a soldier. What a glorious confession he made in the presence of his fellow-soldiers. We hope that today his soul is with Jesus in heaven. You, too, are a soldier, a sailor, a marine, a member of the air corps, a chaplain. As you stand beneath the cross almost 2000 years later I know that you will lift believing eyes to Jesus and cry with that soldier, "This man is the Son of God. This God-man Jesus is my Savior." If thus you confess him he will be with you wherever you are. He will hear and bless you. May you find fullness of peace and joy in him even in the midst of war.

The entire congregation was saddened when news was received that Chaplain Marcus Lohrmann was drowned off Good Enough Island March 6. As a faithful soldier he willingly gave his life to keep the message of the cross with the armed forces. His body rests in a strange land awaiting the call of the resurrection. His soul is at home with God in heaven. Even in the face of death we are not dismayed if we believe in Christ.

By the time this reaches some of you Easter may already be past. May it fill your hearts and souls with joy as you behold your risen and victorious Savior and hear him say, "Because I live ye too shall live."

I would enjoy hearing from all of you though it be but a card. In the Walther league News Letter, which will be sent out toward the end of the month, we shall try to print the addresses of all men in service. As you find time and opportunity write to some of them. Please notify me immediately of any change of address. Do you still have your Communion Cards? If any have been lost or destroyed let me know and I will send a new one. When the one you have is filled sent it to me so that your attendance at the Lord's Table can be recorded in the church records. I know that you will avail yourselves of every opportunity to attend services. We receive communion only from our own Lutheran Chaplains or pastors. God speed the day of victory and peace so that we can be together once more.

Your pastor and friend,  
H.E. Zimmermann

#### **April 5, 1944 (WW II)**

. . . Mrs. Ann Miller, mother of Lowell Miller, asked permission to donate a service flag, with a star for every member of the congregation in service, to be displayed in church as a reminder to the congregation of these absent members. There will be 34 stars at the present time. *[Each star represented a member of the congregation who was in the military.]* I am sure that Mrs. Miller would be pleased to receive a letter of appreciation from the boys represented by these stars if you have opportunity to send one. Her address: Mrs. Ann Miller 815 Railroad Ave.,

Effingham, Illinois . . . Sunday was a big day at St. John's. Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Wachtel celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. The congregation had a surprise for them. It was a big success in every way. After the morning service everyone went to the basement for a big dinner and afternoon of fellowship. In the evening a bunch of us went over to the house to make the day complete with a charivari. The parsonage got rid of all its tin cans. Maybe we can do the same for some of you fellows ones of these days.

. . . We could use some of you strong-armed men around here at the present time. The congregation is going to take down the old shed in the rear of the parsonage. A new garage will be built between the parsonage and the church and a concrete drive from Center Street [*Jefferson Avenue was at first named Center Street.*] along the east side of the parsonage. That certainly will be a big improvement.

. . . Yesterday the tolling of the church bell reminded us that God had taken another one from our midst. Mrs. Geo. Mascher departed this life at the age of 83 years, 11 months and 14 days. Truly a good old age. She will be granted Christian burial Good Friday afternoon. I am sure many of your remember her. "Lord, teach us to number our days."

#### **December 28, 1944 (WW II)**

. . . Effingham County is one big skating rink these days. We had rain and sleet a few days ago. As a result streets, sidewalks, lawns and everything else was covered with ice. These are good days to stay home whenever possible. Fortunately this didn't come until after our holiday services. Christmas was a grand time here at St. John's. The only shadow to mar an otherwise perfect holiday was the absence of so many we love from our homes and church. We remembered you not only in our thoughts but also in many fervent prayers. If God wills maybe you'll be with us next Christmas. Our Christmas Eve service was a success in every way. We had a candlelight service. Had four trees in the chancel. The altar was decorated with many candles. Candles holders were made for the pews so that you walked into the church with candles on each side of the aisle. The church was beautiful. The ushers manage to squeeze in 381 people. The rest had to leave. Used all the lights again for our Christmas morning service at which we also had a full house. . . . [*This was before the church was enlarged in 1950*]

#### **September 6, 1945 [*WWII had ended and VJ day declared Sept. 2*]**

. . . This is my first opportunity to write you since we are no longer a nation at war. I know that you will have thanked God many times by now for this great blessing of victory and peace which He has granted us and our allies. That which was humanly impossible has happened. A war, which our greatest military strategists estimated would continue for years, continued for only a little more than 3 months after victory in Europe. Truly God has been good to us. He has heard and answered our prayers. May we prove ourselves worthy of His goodness.

. . . Here at St. John's we had our Victory Service Wednesday evening, Aug. 15. It was a beautiful service of thanksgiving. A six foot cross of white asters and lilies stood before the chancel. The chancel itself was filled with flowers. We had a printed program supplied by the families of those represented by gold stars on our service flag. *[A gold star represented a member that had died in the service of their country.]* They also sent the cross. The sermon topic was "Our Victory Prayer". It was a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the victory He had granted in answer to our prayers. It was a prayer of deepest humility in which we acknowledge our sinfulness and unworthiness of this great blessing of victory and peace. It was a prayer in which we asked God to make us worthy of this blessing. America has a tremendous responsibility among the nations of the earth. May God give us the wisdom, courage and strength to full it? It was a prayer for the future. We know that this is not the last war. But we pray that under God we may be preserved from the terrors of war for many generations to come. Our church was filled to the doors with 346 worshipers. Some had to leave because there wasn't even standing room any more. Pray God that we may soon have a church big enough for all occasions. Certificates of Recognition of Loyal Military Service to God and Country were presented to the families of each of the men on St. John's Honor Roll . . . We have information that Charles Esch is on his way home with an honorable discharge. Hope more of you will follow soon. . .

The weather here is hot in the day time, cold at night and dry. Crops around here don't look too good. The peach crop was excellent. Sold fast and the price was good. We paid \$3 per bushel. Canned 72 quarts. . . . We close this letter with the prayer that the days of letter writing will be soon be over. The Lord keep you safe.

*[The following was one of the last letters Pastor Zimmermann would write to the servicemen. Little did he and the congregation know that, in less than four months, his work on earth would be completed and he would be called into heaven. It is included in its entirety.]*

**Letter to the Servicemen in Vietnam dated March 2, 1970**

Dear Friends,

As you can see from the enclosed calendar March promises to be a month full of activity. Holy week and Easter are both included in it. We have a confirmation class of 21 children this year. They will have their examination before the congregation on March 15. Most of you were baptized and confirmed by me. I hope you remember much of the instruction you received during the 4 years of Saturday School and Confirmation Class. This is the truth that makes you wise unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. Only as you know and believe in Him can you be saved. Be sure and study your Bible and Catechism as long as you live. They, with our hymn book are the most important books in your lives.

Jim Jackson is off to Viet Nam. May the Savior bless and keep him and all others who are there. Joe Kyle received his discharge. He got out a few months early because of the death of his father. He is the only son still at home to care for his mother.

Our Lenten services are moving along nicely. The teen-age sound films, in color, that we are showing this year are very good. Wish you could be here to see them and participate in the worship with us. We sent you our Lenten schedule last month. During Lent we remember Jesus and His prayers in Gethsemane. He walked the way of the cross because there was no other way by which He could save us from our sins though He sought it with bloody sweat and tears. Even God could provide but one way to save sinners, the way of substitution. Remember the dreadful sins of Judas by which he betrayed his Savior because of his love for the world. No heart can have Jesus and the world. Don't make the mistake he made and end in hell. Peter's denials also remind us of the danger of trusting in self. Self is man's worst enemy as far as spiritual things are concerned. Trust in God and His Christ. There is a sure and certain foundation. We remember also the hate of the Jews against Jesus and the dreadful trials and mockery to which they subjected Him in their determination to destroy Him. We recall the weakness and folly of Pilate, who bowed to the will of the Jews lest his position be challenged. The terrors of the scourging of Jesus and the mockery of the soldiers come to mind. Then we see our Savior staggering off to Calvary where, nailed to the cross He suffered our hell. Bring to mind the seven words which He spoke from the cross and realize the significance of each one of them as He worked out our salvation. Thank God that He is the perfect and complete Savior who has done all that you might have forgiveness, peace and heaven. Behold the grave where they laid Him. Thank God he has turned our grave into a quiet resting place. Then rejoice as you hear the Easter message and see the living Savior who endured sin, death and hell that we might have forgiveness, life and heaven. Believe in Him and thank God for all the blessings you have in Him. Make March a month of worship and praise to God for the full and free salvation you have in Christ Jesus.

I believe we had had about 35 inches of snow this winter. That's a lot of snow for Effingham. We have endless variety in temperatures. Our heating bills have been terrific. The worst should be over. We are hoping for an early spring. Some flowers are beginning to appear. Soon the robins will be back.

Don't forget to write to your parents at least once a week. They love you and are concerned about you. We commend you to the gracious Savior and His Love. May He bless and keep you all.

In His Name,

Pastor H. E. Zimmermann

#### **FROM THE VOTER'S (CONGREGATIONAL) MEETINGS:**

##### **Meeting after Church January 15, 1925**

. . .in regards to a teacher for next year . . .we have school for the year 1925 and 1926, nine months, and pay \$70.00 per month and the Teacher to play the organ . .

**Meeting after Church January 10, 1926**

This meeting was to ask the congregation for permission to have a colored Pastor, to give a Lecture on Negro missions in the south, the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1926. Motion made second and carried that we have the Lecture.

**Special meeting held after Church, April 26, 1931**

A motion made and second that a special committee be appointed to solicit the members of the church for subscriptions to cover the expense of this work. Motion carried. *[The work was to reroof the steeple of the church and paint the tower of the church down to the roof level. Cost: \$86.00.]*

**Regularly Quarterly Meeting Held, January 3, 1932**

. . .Motion made and second that the Lenten Services be held on Sunday evening. Motion carried.

**Regular meeting held January 8, 1933**

. . . motion made and second, that the 20% of the general receipts, formerly which was set aside for Building and Loan fund, be omitted for one year. . . motion carried.

**Regular meeting held January 6, 1935**

. . .that the building committee shall first obtain sufficient pledges to make it reasonable certain, that a (new) church can be financed . . .

**Regular Meeting held April 7, 1935**

. . .motion made and second that we have our Sunday evening Services during June, July and August changed to Sunday morning Service at 7 o'clock a.m. on account of the extreme heat. Motion carried.

**Meeting (continued) Friday, April 12, 1935 - 7 p.m.**

Motion made and second that the Reverend and the church council arrange with Mr. Spaulding to have church services in the theater building during the time of construction of the building of the new church. . . motion carried.

**Regular Meeting held January 5, 1936**

Summary Report of Treasurer of Building Committee - 1935

Receipts:

Pledges for new church _____	\$ 4108.60
Sale of Memorial Windows _____	353.00
Building & Loan stock from men _____	4450.54

Building & Loan stock from ladies _____	4602.76
Corner Stone laying collection _____	80.40
Proceeds from meals served by ladies on Dedication day _____	200.00
Dedication Collections – Five (5) Services _____	500.00
Dedication Book _____	120.00
Loans from First National Bank August 9, 1935 _____	2500.00
Loans from First National Bank Sept. 9, 1935 _____	1800.00
Loan from Church Extension Fund October 5, 1935 _____	5000.00
Miscellaneous Rebates _____	8.50
Wm. Melzer – sale of furnace _____	10.00
Albion Brick Co. – rebate _____	<u>43.50</u>
	\$23,779.36

Expenditures:

Hagerman & Harshman on Contract _____	\$16,803.79
St. Elmo Brick & Tile Co. _____	390.73
Karl Alt – Plumbing _____	288.76
George Ramey – Architect Fees _____	415.00
McKeown Bros. – Trusses _____	496.00
Benoist Bros. Supply Co. – Furnace _____	1050.00
Norbert Brumleve – Wiring _____	380.00
Jacob Art Glass Co. – Windows _____	492.15
First National Bank on Loans _____	2856.20
Miscellaneous _____	\$23,518.29

Balance on Hand.....\$261.07

**Regular Meeting held July 7, 1940**

. . .motion made and second that the congregation designate the last Sunday in the month of July to have a special collection for the needy in War, Suffers in Europe . . . motion carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 1940**

RECEIPTS		DISBURSEMENTS	
Balance, Jan. 1, 1940	\$ 204.04	Pastor	\$1362.64
Loose Offerings	465.31	Janitor	156.00
Envelopes	1814.48	Organist	120.00
Synodical Envelopes	173.00	Light, Water, Gas, Tel.	106.10

Lenten Offering	166.25	To Synodical Treasurer	662.41
Valparaiso Offering	40.15	Pension Fund	82.80
War Sufferers Offering	60.32	Building Fund	510.07
Ladies Aid –Building Fund	100.00	Fuel	85.87
For Orphans’ Home	10.00	Note and Interest	135.85
Christmas Eve Offering	34.46	Miscellaneous	<u>413.18</u>
Sunday School – Missions	15.00	TOTAL	3634.92
Mission Festival	293.69		
Anniversary	<u>410.07</u>		
TOTAL	3786.77		

Balance, Dec. 31, 1940. . . \$151.85

Jan. 1, 1940	INDEBTEDNESS	Dec. 31, 1940
\$3000.00	Building Fund	\$2500.00
<u>300.00</u>	General Treasury	<u>180.00</u>
3300.00	TOTAL	2680.00

### **Regular Quarterly Meeting, April 4, 1943**

. . During the absence of the Pastor the chairman stated the action of the council at their meeting, in which they recommended that the congregation pay the Pastor’s Hospital and Doctor bill of \$163.36. The matter was discussed, and later a motion made and seconded that the bill be paid from the congregation Treasury. Motion Carried. Upon his return to the meeting, the Pastor expressed his heartfelt thanks to the members . . .

### **Regular Quarterly Meeting, April 13, 1965**

. . Your church Council recommends that Howard Haake and Charles Knight be authorized to make necessary plans to have a softball team in the Church Softball League, all expenses to be paid by the congregation . . .Your Church Council recommends that the trustees be authorized to get bids and have a white shingle roof put on the Church and have the tower roof repaired. . .

*All of the early Voter’s Minutes (Congregational Meetings) were written in German. One of our members, Ursula Polzin, who can read and speak German, translated selected minutes. Here is the minutes from a congregational meeting held on October 7, 1917*

- Treasury Report: \$229.23 was in the treasury and \$238.78 was spent resulting in a negative balance of \$9.55.
- \$5.00 was allotted to clean up the church grounds.
- A new furnace for the church had been purchased in the amount of \$95.73.

- It was motioned and approved that a committee be formed to visit those people who pledged (for the furnace expense) but have not given their pledge so the bill can be paid in full.
- The new constitution would be written and published in both German and English.
- Permission was given for the pastor to purchase four dozen English Hymnals.

**Notes from the construction of the 1935 original Church building:** . . .the basement for the brick church was dug with horses and scrapers and the builder mixed his own cement.

. . .Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Leppin were married right after the cornerstone laying on June 16, 1935. Hundreds of people stayed after the cornerstone laying service for the wedding ceremony, so it was the largest attended wedding in the history of the congregation. Mrs. Annabelle Bales, current member, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leppin.

**. . . FROM CHURCH BULLETINS OF THE PAST . . .**

**April 11, 1948**

*[Evidently there was a group of members who did not believe there would be any need to enlarge the 1935 church after World War II. A postwar planning committee had been seeking ways to accomplish the addition. This message, most likely authored by Rev. H. E. Zimmermann, is the response to an increase in attendance.]*

**\*SERVICES\*** Beginning next Sunday, April 18, [1948] two services will be conducted every Sunday morning until adequate space can be provided to return to the regular schedule of services. The early service will begin at 7:45 A.M. Sunday School will be at 9 A.M. as usual and the regular service at 10 A.M. We rejoice in the fact that the calamity howlers, who in their negative thinking foresaw an empty church again at the close of the war, have proved to be false prophets and that the love for the Word continues. We have a positive Christianity in which there is no room for negativism except in the plans of the devil. Truly God is to be praised for the blessings he grants to the preaching of His Word. God is doing His part, let us be doing ours. Let us pray God that we may soon be able to enlarge His house to provide adequate accommodations for His growing family. Away with the prophets of gloom. Forward in the Light of our Lord Jesus Christ.



**April 11, 1948**

**\*FLOWERS\*** Now that spring is here we hope to have flowers regularly for the altar. If possible bring them Saturday afternoon or evening. Pick as long of stems as possible. . .  
*[Flowers were not from the florist, they were from local flower gardens. . .]*

**April 9, 1972**

**December 3, 1972**

**\*FAMILY NIGHT\*** All members whose last names begin with initials A-G are requested to reserve Sunday night, December 17, and plan to attend the Family Nite Fellowship here at St. John's at 6:30 P.M. The various organizations in our congregation plan to make this an evening to be remembered! Others times for the rest of the members will be planned.

**July 17, 1949**

**\*SUNDAY SCHOOL\*** Because of the building program *[enlarging the church building]* Sunday School classes will have to be conducted at various places near the Church. The opening exercises will be held as usual in the Church and basement. Classes will be held at the parsonage and the homes of Mr. Wm. Esch, Mrs. Gertrude Lohrmann and Mr. Walter Hoppe. Let's all work to keep our Sunday School at the 200 level.

**April 9, 1972**

**\*HI-LITES OF THE VOTER'S MEETING\*** . . .The following Committees were appointed: Picnic Committee: Robert Wendling, Noel Potts, and Gilbert Wendte. Organ Music Committee: Warren Schlechte, Noel Potts and Walter Mueller. Nominating Committee: Robert Bushue, Kenneth Freeman, Jerry Lindsey and Edgar Hoffmeister. Auditing Committee: Ed Freeman and Jack Klay. The Constitutional amendment of extending the franchise to 18 year old (male) was passed. It still must be ratified at the next Voter's Meeting.

**July 24, 1949**

**\*BUILDING\*** Our first services during construction worked out very well. We hope that all will continue to cooperate so that services will go on with as little disturbance as possible. We are especially looking to the organist and the choirs for their capable assistance. The organ was removed last week due to the construction and addition. Our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Esch who made it possible for the congregation to have the use of a grand piano until construction is completed and an organ installed.

**\*FAIR\*** The Effingham County Fair will be held the first week in August. The ladies have leased a sandwich stand on the fair grounds. They will sell sandwiches, cake, pop, ice cream etc. Do all that you can to help the ladies in this undertaking by assisting them with the work and by patronizing them.

**November 6, 1949**

**\*CONCERT\*** We are happy to announce that the Baganz Trio, playing the harp, marimba, vibraharp and chimes, will be present at our Church for a sacred concert on Friday, Nov. 11, at 7:30 p.m. The Trio needs no introduction since it has been here before. Invite your friends and neighbors.

**February 11, 1973**

**\*CHILI SUPPER\*** The last Sunday of this month our Men's Club and Lydia Guild will be sponsoring a Chili Supper in the church basement. Non-members of these groups, who would like to donate chili or pies, may contact Mrs. Paul Wending at 342-6053.

**November 20, 1949**

**\*WINDOWS\*** A transept window has been donated by Mrs. Julia Melzer. We herewith acknowledge this donation and thank the donor. There are three more windows available as donations or a memorial windows. The price of the windows is \$100 each.

**May 17, 1953**

**\*CLEANING\*** The ladies of the congregation are asked to meet at the Church on Tuesday, May 19, for the spring cleaning of the Church. This is everybody's job so all ladies are asked to be there at 9:00 A.M. Bring buckets, cloths, pails, ladders, etc. The entire basement and Church have to be cleaned. Also bring a covered-dish for a lunch at noon. The following committees are in charge: Cleaning committee- Mrs. Ed. Donsbach, Mrs. Henry Genaust, Mrs. Louis Voelker, Mrs. Martin Wenthe; Dinner Committee: -Mrs. Charles Hanke, Mrs. Wm. Melzer, Mrs. J. I. Miller; Committee to send out notices – Mrs. Esther Marten & Mrs. H. E. Zimmermann. Be there.

**Jan. 1, 1950**

**\*CROSS\*** The new cross that towers above our enlarged Church has been set in place. The cross was made and donated by Mr. Elmer Hammer and Mr. Wm. Laskowski. May it be a constant reminder that our Church is dedicated to the crucified Christ and to the preaching of His cross for the salvation of sinners. *[This was placed on the roof where the transepts intersected with the main part (nave) of the church. It was removed in 1993.]*

**April 16, 1950**

**\*DELAY\*** The delay in the building program has been caused by the fact that the brickyards are on strike and will deliver no brick until the strike is over. Work on the church cannot continue until the chancel brick have been replaced. The new lights have been delivered. The organ is ready for installation. The furnishing will be ready whenever the building is completed. We hope the strike will be over soon.

### **December 30, 1973**

**\*WALTHER LEAGUERS\*** are reminded they will be entertaining the people at Mark's Shelter Care with a Christmas Party this afternoon at 2 P.M. Remember to bring some food and decorations, too! Please meet at the church at 1:45 P.M.

### **March 7, 1954**

**\*SIGNS\*** There was a time in American history, even of recent date, when certain days and hours and times were counted as Church time, reserved for services and worship. Men, recognizing the importance of Christian worship honored and respected religion by arranging their programs, the schedules of schools, organizations, business, etc., accordingly. Today, however, little, if any, thought is given to America's spiritual program in relation to the secular schedules. Too often the Church, if considered at all, is merely tolerated as a necessary evil. This is but another of the countless signs of the utter worldliness into which the American people are drifting. It is the beginning of the handwriting on the wall of our once great American democracy, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." What kind of program do you and your family follow? Does God and Church come first? Remember this changed attitude toward spiritual things has come because of the complacency and indifference of the people in these matters. One of the most memorable experiences in my ministry (*Rev. H. E. Zimmermann*) was this, in arranging for a meeting with a contractor on a certain night he said, "I cannot come then because we always go to Church on that night." He put first things first. Have you ever said that? Remember the nation and the people who neglect God and His Word are marked for destruction.

### **March 7, 1954**

**\*NOTES\*** A collection for the members of the Clarence Esch family, who were seriously burned in an explosion some weeks ago, will be gathered at the door next Sunday after morning services. . . . PLEASE do not lock Church doors when you leave the Church unless they are doors which you have unlocked. The Church doors are to be left open every day of the week from early morning to late evening.

### **April 18, 1965**

**\*CEMETERY\*** The Cemetery Committee has chosen Saturday, April 24, as cemetery cleanup day. Members of the Walther League and the Men's Club are asked to help. All others are invited and welcome. Bring a broom rake, basket and, if possible, a truck. There is much work to be done. Be there at 8 A.M. Help keep a beautiful resting place for those asleep in Jesus.

### **June 28, 1970** [*the Sunday following the death of Pastor Zimmermann*]

**\*REST IN PEACE\*** "It has pleased Almighty God. . ." Once more we must say these words. In His gracious, good wisdom, He saw fit to call His servant home. His work is finished; ours must go on. God used him as His servant to bring the Word to us, to comfort, instruct, warn,

correct, uphold, and bear many to their heavenly home. Now he has found that same rest. We would rather that he were still with us to lead and inspire us to the work. But God would have it otherwise, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Is. 55:8,9.

God has called the shepherd home, but there is still work for us in the Kingdom. We ask God’s blessings upon all that our dear pastor gave to us, and ask Him to continue to give us the faith and know that there is no strength but in the Lord, and while we walk in this world, there “is but a step between me and death.” How important that we all make ready for the appointed hour when our Lord shall call our name.

But to God alone be glory! He gave us the work and dedication of this man for over 26 years. Now He has taken him to his eternal rest. We thank Him. Services for Pastor Herbert E. Zimmermann were held at St. John’s, Effingham, on Friday, June 26, and at St. Paul, Minn., on Saturday, June 27. Interment at St. Paul, Minn.

## **PASTORS OF ST. JOHN’S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Circa 1860 Layman, Carl Hartman, read sermons in homes where services were held.  
*[Carl Hartman was not a pastor but he is included at the beginning of this list as he was an instrumental layman in the beginnings of St. John’s.]*

1863-1868 Rev. Theo Martens traveled from Champaign for monthly services. When he left, the Effingham mission was taken over by the Rev. Carl Meier of Kankakee St. John’s joined with several other congregations and extended a call to the Rev. H. Holtermann, who was installed February 9, 1868.  
Services held every month and moved from homes to empty stores and then to the Court House.

1869 Congregation resolved to call a pastor. However, at that time there was a great Shortage of pastors and none immediately available.

1870-1876 Rev. G.A. Feustel, recently arrived from Germany, installed as St. John’s first Resident Pastor.

1877-1881 Rev. J.C. Frese

1882-1892 Rev. Wm. Lewerenz

1892-1894 Rev. C.C. Koessel



1894-1911 Rev. Frederick Zigel



1911-1917 Rev. Herman Pfothenaur



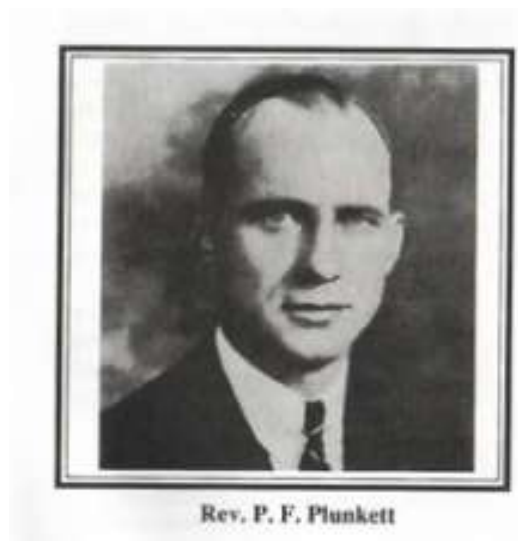
Rev. Herman Pfothenaur

1917-1920 Rev. Paul Roehrs



1920-1925 Rev. Theo. J. Mehl

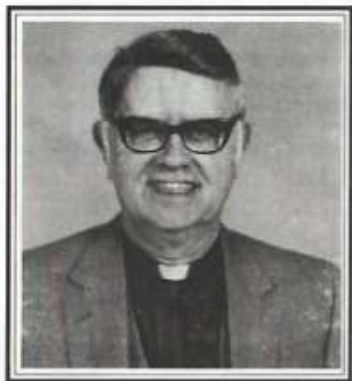
1925-1944 Rev. P.F. Plunkett



1944-1970 Rev. H.E. Zimmerman



1970-1987 Rev. Harlan C. Wendler



Rev. Harlan C. Wendler

1988-2000 Rev. Robert Backhus



Rev. Robert Backhus  
Pastor

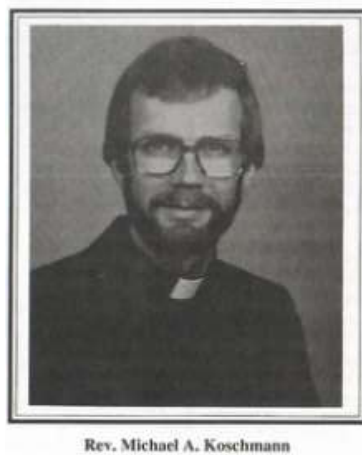
2002 – present Rev. Theodore C. Gall



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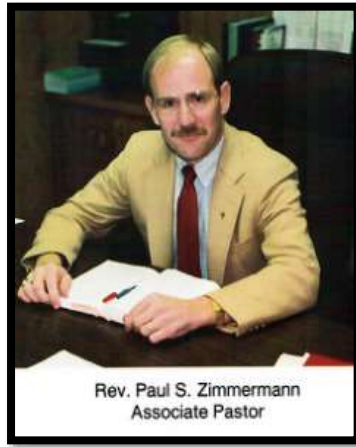
ASSISTANT PASTORS

1981-1987 Rev. Michael A. Koschmann





1991-1996 Rev. Paul Zimmerman



1997-1999 Rev. David Wiist



2000-2002 Rev. Backhus

2006 – present Rev. Earl Brown



DIRECTORS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

1972-1975 Mr. John Krueger



MR. JOHN W. KRUEGER, DCE

1975-1980 Mr. John Baginski



Mr. John Baginski, DCE

1989-2003 Mr. Larry Brandt



Mr. Larry Brandt  
Director of Christian  
Education

2003-2006 Mr. Dan McClure

2007-2015 Mr. Chris Imes



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#### PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS

1997-2003 Karla Holtz

2003-2006 Elizabeth McClure

2006 – present Sandy Esker



## THE STATISTICS OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

- 1866** Estimated members: 25
- 1876 Communicant members: 100
- 1917** Communicant members: 170 (one year after) **GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY – 50 years**  
Sunday School enrollment: 100
- 1925 Communicant members: 203
- 1935 Communicant members: 264
- 1941** Communicant members: 310 **DIAMOND JUBILEE – 75 years**  
Sunday School enrollment: 125 (including a number of children whose parents were not members)
- 1966** Baptized souls: 960 **CENTENNIAL YEAR – 100 years**  
Communicant members: 700  
Voting members: 158 (men)  
Sunday School enrollment: 430
- 1991** Baptized souls: 1,055 **QUASQUICENTENNIAL – 125 years**  
Communicant: 814
- 1999 Baptized souls, 1,261  
Communicant members: 928  
Voting members: 135\*
- 2003 Baptized souls: 1,132  
Communicant members: 989  
Voting members: 141\*
- 2016** Baptized souls: 1,016 **SESQUICENTENNIAL – 150 years**  
Communicant members: 832 [record as of 7/31/16]  
Voting members: 148\*

\*Women signed the Church Constitution and become voting Members in August of 1984

**“Official Acts” of St. John’s 1866 - 2016**

*[The following statistics are as accurate as record keeping and the recording of such are accurate. The numbers do, however, give positive perspective of the Official Acts over the past 150 years at St. John’s]*

**2, 265 Baptisms    1,978 Confirmations    923 Marriages    983 Burials**

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**Elected and Appointed Officers/Board Member  
St. John’s Lutheran Church  
2016**

President – Rick Keller  
Vice President – Todd Martin  
Treasurer – Ruth Bray  
Secretary – Sandy Wieneke

**BOARD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Erick Hanks, Chair, Jamie Lotz; Shawn Bourland, Treasurer; Treva Brandt, Secretary, Appointed; Erin Wendling, Appointed; Don Wendte, Appointed

**BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Emily Lotz, Chair; Brent Budde, Vice Chair; Nancy Johnson, Appointed Secretary; Kiley Bohnhoff, Appointed; Sara Sandifer, Appointed; Andrea Wendling, Appointed

**BOARD OF ELDERS**

Gayland Bourland, Chair; Ray Hartman, Secretary; Don Latch, Howard Haake, John Jackson, Jeff Stremming, Jerry Pruemer

**BOARD OF EVANGELISM**

Marilyn Schaefer, Appointed Chair; Marlene Walker, Secretary; Rosie Gibbons, Dena Willis, Dave Worman

**BOARD OF SOCIAL MINISTRY**

Lonni Weis, Chair, Scrip Director/Treasurer; Jerry Niccum, Benefit Account Director; Marla Jackson; Dana Keller, Appointed; Mattie Niccum, Appointed, Food Pantry Director; Chris Niebrugger, Appointed, Coffee Hour Director; Marilyn Schaefer, Appointed, Golden Eagles Director; Kathy Stremming, Appointed, Golden Eagles/Coffee Treasurer; Marty Vail, Appointed; Sandy Wieneke, Secretary, Appointed; Linda Marxmann, Appointed

## BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

David Wall, Chair; Fred Bray, Secretary; Jerry Lindsey, Financial Secretary; Jerry Bloemer, Appointed, Wade Bloemer, Appointed; Jeanette Worman, Appointed

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dave Althoff, Chair; Warren Schlechte; Jim Bailey; Al Siebert, Appointed, Secretary

## BOARD OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Amy Kohnert, Chair; Holly Bray, Treasurer; Sonja Martin, Kara Koester, Appointed; Donette Ohnesorge, Appointed; Christina Niebrugge, Appointed; Tabitha Bailey, Appointed; Julie Zeigler, Appointed, Secretary, Jessica Budde, Appointed

### **The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee**

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the first meeting was held of the Anniversary Committee in order to begin the planning and organizing for St. John's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Members were: Pastor Gall, Brent and Jessica Budde, Todd Martin, Chris Niebrugge, Marilyn Schaefer, Jeff Weis, Judy Wendling and Dean Manuel, Chairman. Meetings were held every month for the next fifteen months. An anniversary theme was chosen and many ideas were discussed. Then began the planning and working out the details. All wanted to cause success for all the events and have a celebration to honor and give thanks for and to our history, our faith and our God. The following is a list of events and activities that were planned and took place over the year long celebration:

“Windows To Past”, selected history, was published in the EAGLE each weekend.

Anniversary Church Float was constructed and was in parades around the county

150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banner for the Church Sanctuary constructed by Valena Soltwedel

Anniversary Quilt Constructed

Micro History of the Church filmed with members of the congregation interviewed

Anniversary Cook Book published – Memorabilia Items Sold

April 9/10 guest speaker, Rev. David Wiist

May 14/15 guest speaker, Rev. Paul Zimmermann

June 11/12 guest speaker Rev. Michael Koschman.

July 23/24 guest speaker, Rev. Gary Fortkamp

August 13/14 guest speaker, Vicar Timothy Gall

August 27/28 guest speaker, Rev. Josh Frazee

Sept. 17/18 Speaker: CID President Mark Miller w/lunch following

Sept. 24 St. John's history display at the Effingham County Old Settler's Reunion

Sept. 25 Youth present at the worship services

Oct. 1/2 Speaker: Rev. Dr. Wayne Hoffman w/lunch following

Nov. 10 Historical Lecture (ECCM) at the old Court House featuring the history of St. John's Lutheran

Dec. 11 Festival Service of Praise and Thanksgiving, 10:30 am - Speaker: Rev. Dean Wenthe; Liturgist: Vicar Tim Gall 10:30 a.m. Dinner in Parish Hall, 12:30

+ + +

As the 150 year history chapter of St. John's comes to a close we give praise and thanksgiving for the past: **"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Psalm 126: 3**

We look to the future and pray: **"May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to Him and keep his commandments." I Kings 8: 57, 58**

May we always remember: **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16**

+ SOLO DEO GLORIA +

*[Latin]*

+ LOBE DEN HERREN +

*[German]*

+ **To God Alone Be All The Glory** +

**Amen! Amen! Amen!**