

Dedicated to Louise Fry, whose ability to read the old German script and love for the Savior allowed this author, through her translations of early church documents, to capture some of the joys, struggles, and historical facts of the early history of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, California, Missouri. Her insights from those records in the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century allow one to peer into an era that, for us, is hard to imagine. May God the Holy Spirit, who calls, gathers, and enlightens the whole Christian Church on earth through the Gospel, use this modest document to help us see the imprint of God's grace upon the work conducted here at St. Paul's Lutheran throughout the past 15 decades.

**- Pastor Peter Kurowski
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, California, Missouri**

“150 Years of God’s Grace!” (1860-2010)

A brief history of Saint Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, California, Missouri
By Pastor Peter M. Kurowski

Preface

Church history is at best can tell only a partial story. More often than not they note the red letter days of a church’s life and are filled with dates when something was built, a new pastor came, and a new ministry was embarked upon. “150 Years of God’s Grace” will attempt to follow suit in this respect. However, it will also seek to show some of the struggles of pastors and people along the way and how God’s amazing grace sustain members and ministers along the way. At no time will this modest history seek to cast anyone in a light that is injurious to reputation. Jesus through the Spirit tells us that *love covers a multitude of sins*. What this history of St. Paul’s Lutheran will reveal is how the congregation, though sorely tested time and time again, sought to be loyal to Jesus. Along the way its members and ministers hit a lot of bumps on the road. After surveying the recorded history one sees how overall the sinner-saints of this hospital for sinners were very conscientious, compassionate, Christ-centered and confessional. That last adjective means that they sought to see that the Gospel was advanced in all its articles and the sacraments were administered rightly according to the bidding of Jesus. Through the years there were splits in the congregation, times when members left the church thinking it was too conservative, extreme difficulties in obtaining a pastor, some soap-opera stretches, many times when they could not obtain a quorum for a voters assembly meeting, tragedy and seemingly endless struggles in terms of making their budget. And all these things they were more than conquerors through Christ who loved them. The most important thing for the members was to know that God was gracious toward them and through Jesus Christ loved them dearly and forgave them fully. Thus, they held high Jesus’ arranged means of grace: Baptism, Holy Absolution, Holy Communion, and the preaching of the Holy Gospel. We can learn so much from their struggles, faith and fortitude in the face of our struggles. Both our translator and your pastor agree that Jesus permitted the right number of trials so that we would realize heaven is our real home and the right amount of grace so that we would not despair. After all, Jesus does all things well. Over this century and a half, St. Paul’s has had a rich musical heritage, Gospel-centered teaching tradition, and seen the love of Christ quietly move its members and societies to perform tens of thousands of charitable deeds to the hungry, the hurting, and those in harm’s way. May the word of Christ continue to dwell in us daily, richly and abundantly so that our joy might be full, our thanksgiving abound and that we would be equipped for every good work as we sojourn to the new heaven and new earth to dwell with one another and the God of all grace for all eternity!

In The Beginning

How does one start a mission congregation? Only by grace! The story of St. Paul's Lutheran is a 150-year story of amazing grace. From the struggling beginnings at the time when our nation was on the verge of civil war to today, St. Paul's Lutheran has been a grace place. During its history, over two million people have walked through its doors and tens of thousands, through its radio ministry, have heard the good news of God's pardoning love in Jesus Christ.

In love, in Christ, God, before the foundation of the universe, planned the salvation of His children (Ephesians 1:3-5). Similarly, no Christian congregation ever arose apart from this Divine design. Before the universe was created out of nothing, our divine, omnipotent, omniscient Savior knew that part of the Trinitarian tapestry would be a Lutheran congregation in California, Missouri.

Still, there is also a human component in this drama of grace. God chooses people to be the means for His means of grace. He involves us in the drama of bringing the Gospel to people through Christian congregations. It is all part of the Savior's redemptive sculpturing of people into beings who learn the true meaning of love.

This author knows how difficult it is to plant a mission congregation. Back in 1985 on the West Bank of New Orleans he was called to attempt such a task. After making over 2,000 house calls inviting people to church, there were from these visits only three serious responses. The cheapest land in the area was \$50,000 an acre. Unemployment was nearly 25 percent. Interest rates were nearly 18 percent. Experts told me it could never be done. Yet, God in mercy brought about a miracle, a Christian congregation was born.

The birth of St. Paul's Lutheran similarly was not without quite a few birth pangs. As German Christians with a true Evangelical Lutheran background gathered together, they had prayed in Jesus' name that a congregation could be established in California, Missouri. For a good number of years many of them said their prayers at home, read Luther's Small Catechism in German, and studied the Scriptures. Yet they knew from Scripture that the Lord of the Church desired them to gather together around Word and Sacrament to be a bright beacon in the world (Acts 2:42). They grasped that "Lone Ranger" Christianity is at variance with how the Body of Christ is to work together in concord, love, and community.

Some of these German saints were from the northern Prussian part of Deutschland, while others had roots anchored in the beautiful southern Bavarian sector. From the minutes of those early meetings, you see that in the slight variations of German words chosen for the word "acre." Those minutes also revealed that these settlers were well educated and that Christian education and faith formation was highly prized among them. They knew that Jesus came to people in grace through the Word, so reading and writing were of paramount importance.

The obstacles facing those early believers and charter members of St. Paul's Lutheran were indeed formidable. Money was tight. They had no land. They had no cemetery. They had no place to worship. They had no pastor. Like any minority in a strange land, they felt reticent and reluctant to blend into the mainstream of this new world. Harriet Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, written in 1851, had stirred up a national debate around them. As late as October 26, 1881, there was a major gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona. One can see how the German immigrants were a bit bewildered by this nation that, though one, had so many different facets to it.

A Forgotten Hero in Christ

Nevertheless, pious believers prayed in Jesus' name that God's providential hand would weave a scenario whereby they might plant a congregation in California, Missouri. God heard these prayers. A missionary pastor came out from St. Louis and saw potential among the group of Lutheran immigrants in California, Missouri. The man with missionary eyes was the Rev. **Johann Buenger** of St. Louis, founder of Lutheran Hospital at St. Louis and of Lutheran Orphans' Home at Des Peres. Throughout the early years, Pastor Buenger was so helpful to the members of St. Paul's to get their first pastor and later, to find someone during vacancies to fill in until a pastor could be called. The challenge was always to find a man who would preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and teach at the school. Through Buenger's thoughtful encouragement a Pastor Juengel was called from Liverpool, Ohio, to serve Christians in Pleasant Grove, Missouri, and provide leadership for a potential congregation in California.

Pastor Juengel of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pleasant Grove, did indeed provide godly counsel to the small group of German Lutheran Evangelical Christians. On October 28, 1860, he led the first service for this group of believers who would form the core for St. Paul's Lutheran, California, and Missouri. It was conducted in German.

The grace of God came forth through the Gospel proclaimed by Pastor Juengel. The saints took the name of St. Paul's to remind themselves and their posterity that we are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-10). The two most popular names for Evangelical Lutheran congregations were St. Paul's and Trinity. Each name was highly esteemed in order to hold high the God of all grace – the Triune God and how He saves by His grace, comes to us through His means of grace, and brings to the world universal grace through the atoning death of Jesus for all.

A Wonderful Surprise

One of the early blessings of this fledging congregation is that two local congregations already established allowed these believers in Christ to use their building to worship. At first

the saints of St. Paul's Lutheran used the local Methodist congregation to gather together for worship. They had been established in 1840.

Later, First Baptist, established in 1833, would open its doors for its Lutheran neighbors. After some time, these Lutheran believers would meet in the County courthouse and in a local school. The fictitious separation of church and state had not been manufactured to obscure what thoughtful people recognized then; namely, that our nation's founding is deeply indebted to what the Bible teaches and the true freedom Jesus' Gospel brings.

After about three years of ministry to the core group of believers at St. Paul's Lutheran, Pastor Juengel suggested a bold move. He counseled this core group to seek to call their own pastor. They did. They called in 1863 a candidate from Concordia Seminary, Theodore Gruber, and rented a District School House as a house of worship. Gruber was *ordained* and called at the same time.

One Step Back, Two Steps Forward

Important to this very devout, conscientious fellowship was to secure land for a cemetery. With determination they did. Step by step, the members of St. Paul's Lutheran would advance. One of the challenges in the early years was retention of a pastor. Pastor Gruber received a call from a sister congregation in February of 1864 and was released from his charge at St. Paul's.

Another candidate from Concordia Seminary was called. Pastor G. Lehnick became the second resident pastor in 1864. Health issues shadowed Pastor Lehnick from the very beginning, hindering his work. Ultimately, his physical condition forced him to resign in 1865.

Once again a candidate from the seminary was called and ordained in 1865. Through the good Gospel work of Gustav H. Schilling, the congregation began to grow and make strides. This third resident pastor, who had been installed and ordained by the President of Concordia Seminary, the Honorable President Buenger, labored for the cause of Christ at St. Paul's for five years. Work took place on a constitution and bylaws – the ordinances. Articles of faith were formulated.

The first meetings were held to find ways to obtain a building. In 1866, St. Paul's Lutheran bought its first building. The records refer to this building as the “so-called seminary.” On April 16, 1866, this “so-called seminary” became the first house of worship in California, Missouri, for this German Lutheran congregation. On Jubilate Sunday of that year, a Gottesdienst – Service of Divine Worship – took place. Quite a step! For 28 years this old seminary building served the congregation as a house of worship.

Regarding this building, it was a large frame structure. It had no tower or bell. It stood on the same site upon which the church built in 1984 rested. In the building was a room for the school. During the week the benches there were used for teaching the children. Every

Friday afternoon the older children would carry some of the long benches from the school into the church and on Monday morning would bring them back into the school.

The rest of the building property contained a parsonage that was a frame, one-story, four-room building. The rooms were two bedrooms, the kitchen, and a dining room, as well as a study for the pastor. Near the rear of the church was a deep well that supplied the parsonage and church with refreshing water. A pretty white picket fence graced the church property along the street. There were no sidewalks. In the yard were fruit and locust trees.

Joining The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

In the same year a constitution was written, discussed and adopted. The following men subscribed their names to this constitution: G. F. Schilling, pastor; G. H. Meyer, C. Gross, R. Hecht, F. Boeckhaus, H. W. Boeckhaus, George Houser, John Gottlob Scholle, Adam Hinkel and William Bertram.

St. Paul's Lutheran entered The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod three years after its constitution and bylaws were approved. On January 17, 1869, the congregation passed a resolution instructing its pastor to make application for membership at the Delegate Synod in Fort Wayne that summer. For 141 years St. Paul's Lutheran has been a loyal member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Back in that era there were 58 different Lutheran church bodies in America. In general, there was a very liberal Lutheran branch called the General Synod. In reality, they held to very few of the articles of the Gospel and very few of the historic Lutheran teachings. A second group was called the General Council. They strove with much effort to be truly evangelical, truly Gospel-centered. However, they tolerated a number of church fellowships where the person and work of Jesus were compromised. The third group tended to be Lutheran believers who followed the more conservative teachings of the "American Luther," C. F. W. Walther. The Missouri Synod was the bellwether branch of this group of Lutherans.

During these years the members of St. Paul's Lutheran struggled mightily to stay afloat. According to records from back then, the salary for the pastor was \$200. He not only shepherded under Christ the congregation but he taught school. By the late 1870's the pastor was receiving \$300 a year. Each child enrolled in parochial school as a rule had to have their parents pay 50 cents a year for education.

Even amidst these difficult days the church minutes record how the congregation sought to help out a sister congregation up north which had burned to the ground. Back in the 1860's when there was no insurance, outside help from sympathetic souls often made a crucial difference. Each family at St. Paul's was encouraged to try to give 50 cents to help out the congregation up north. It was quite a sacrifice back in those days on many levels to give this generous amount. The saints then had none of our modern conveniences and money was more than tight.

Mercy, Compassion, and Jesus' Love at work

Throughout those early years St. Paul's Lutheran was trying to help many other people and Christians even when they were struggling to meet their own bills. Similar to today, the pleas for help were endless. Out of love for the Savior the members sought to live together as Christians realizing that the church is a hospital for sinners. They took up an extra collection to help immigrants coming through New York. They took up a special collection to help people who could not hear or speak. They sent food to congregations in Kansas who had no food to eat.

Ushers today will be interested in knowing how money was collected in the worship services in the early years of many German Lutheran congregations in America. The ushers would use a *klingenbeutel* to do this. A *klingenbeutel* was a long pole with a soft, velvet purse at the end. It also had a little bell attached. When the ushers collected the firstfruits of the saints for that week, they would pole by pole go down each row ringing the bell and receiving the offerings. Why the bell? It was designed to keep people from giving nothing to the Lord. When a coin was dropped into the purse the bell would make a noise. The custom was designed to encourage the saints to give to the Lord not only firstfruits but also on a regular basis as the needs of the congregation were continuous.

Carefully-written records in the old German script reveal how the members of St. Paul's Lutheran held up each other. They were a close-knit fellowship bonded by a common German heritage and Luther's gospel. From time to time there were internal struggles within the congregation and they sought the best they could to work through them in a manner that was in step with God's Word.

A Grasshopper Invasion

Other challenges came their way. One summer they faced severe drought. It caused economic hardships to the point that the congregation could not send a delegate to our Synod's convention. Worse yet, the congregation and community were overrun with grasshoppers. So thick were these hopping insects that the members thought for a while of suspending services.

Keeping a school, keeping a pastor, and keeping their cemetery in good, orderly operation were three important goals of the congregation in those early years. The focus on the cemetery was a custom that came with the German Evangelicals from Germany where cemeteries were kept in excellent shape to honor the remains of loved ones. Keeping a pastor was very difficult for the early members as well as securing a pastor during times of a vacancy.

At times they had to face less-than-diplomatic responses and thoughtful actions when calling a pastor. On one occasion a pastor returned a call saying to the members, “I have much more important problems to take care of where I presently am.” On another occasion one pastor agreed to come but changed his mind when he came. All of these things were discouraging, yet the congregation hung together clinging to God’s promises.

Solving Disputes and Squelching Gossip

The Bible tells us that there is nothing new under the sun. So it was true back then. From the German records we glean how this conscientious congregation sought to work through problems according to the Word of God. For example, there was a case where two brothers within the congregation got into a fierce argument over the inheritance their parents left behind. Whereas a lawyer today would arbitrate over this matter, back then it was the members of the body of Christ who sought to mediate this matter working toward a fair solution by the mercies of Christ.

Gossip was clearly something discouraged in the fellowship. Records indicate examples of people who had passed on false rumors getting up before the whole congregation and apologizing for their sin. Matthew 18:15-18 was equally important. The German Lutherans stressed from the words of Jesus that if a person has a grievance with someone, he or she should go talk to the person first and not go off talking to others. They took very serious Luther’s first thesis of his 95 theses; namely, that the whole life of the Christian is to be one of continuous repentance.

Patient, Persevering, Praying

On one occasion, according to the records, there was a member who openly expressed his hatred for another member of the congregation. This admission caused great sorrow and deep pain in the hearts of the members. They prayed for the man filled with hatred to forgive his brother even as God had forgiven him freely and fully. Members visited him encouraging him by the mercies of Christ not to hold a grudge. In time the Holy Spirit changed the heart of this man and he apologized to the whole congregation. The members were very patient and loving and persevering in seeking to lead this grudge-carrying member back to the pardoning love of Christ.

How to live together in love, show mercy to those in need, and witness to the love of God in Christ were foremost goals for those early St. Paul’s Lutheran believers. It is most fascinating that our newly elected Synodical President, the Reverend Matthew Harrison, has made mercy, witnessing, and life together in Christ as a three-fold apostolic aim for our members once again to ponder anew. He is very much describing the lives of many of the early members of St. Paul’s Lutheran.

Trustees in a congregation are often unsung heroes. They save the congregation much money through their labor of love and take care of God's House. Most of the time people don't realize how much trustees do, quietly working behind the scenes. In those days, as well, the trustees were busy building a shed for the horses that would be parked at church and building a special stall for the pastor's horse. The righteous man is kind to animals, the Bible tells us, and faith in Christ, the giver of righteousness, played this out in this fine fashion.

No Stove For Winter Sunday Services

During those early years these charter members of St. Paul's faced hardships unimaginable to us. During the winter they went to church and there was no heat. It took a number of years before they were able to get a stove. These saints were tough and strong, not spoiled by the conveniences we so easily take for granted. You look at the pictures of their hands and you sense they labored hard and long.

As noted earlier, in the summer of 1869 another significant move was made. St. Paul's Lutheran joined The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Even before this official fellowship took effect, St. Paul's technically had Missouri Synod pastors who in time would steer the congregation toward the good Gospel confession of the Missouri Synod. There was a blessed firmness and flexibility in fellowship matters that served well the Gospel and took into consideration aspects of love with wonderful nuances. On March 2, 1873, the congregation was incorporated. Step by step the fellowship was making headway, enduring hardships, lost members, tough economic times, and the loss of lives of members at younger ages due to the lack of modern hospital helps.

Larger Families

Back in those early days from extant pictures we see that families were larger in number than most families today. The G. H. Meyer family had nine children. The Christ Gross family had five children. The Gross family and Louis Boeckhaus family were two of the pioneer families that allowed their humble homes to use for worship services. If the church is to remain strong today in America, two lessons from the past are vital. Have larger families and adhere to the Gospel in all its articles. Large families provide a forum for people thinking about others, working together, and growing in love. The Gospel is the good news of God's pardoning love which equips us to live for God and our neighbor, avoiding the dangerous web of living for self or falling into the delusion that one by "self" can earn their way to heaven.

On July 13, 1870, Candidate H. Willie was called. Once again St. Paul's would have an *ordination* since its pastor came from the St. Louis Seminary. This young pastor worked hard at encouraging families to hold together and work out problems in a God-pleasing

fashion. His ministry was one marked by efforts of reconciliation, confession and absolution, and through the Gospel bringing peace and mending fences. He remained until August 1874.

Organizational Advances, Mission Outreach

After a vacancy of almost a year, Candidate B. Sievers was called in 1875 and he served until 1886. Once again, an *ordination* occurred. Pastor Sievers was a strong pastor in terms of leadership and was eventually called to serve at a Lutheran congregation in Cape Girardeau. During his time at St. Paul's, Pastor Sievers and the members of our congregation sought with "all their strength" to stand by a struggling sister congregation in Jefferson City. The congregation in Jefferson City is not named in the record book. Also, notable about the ministry during Sievers' tenure was the emphasis on Christ-centered Bible studies where the saints would gather together on Sunday afternoons and learn about God's greatest revelation to mankind: the person and work of Jesus!

Evidently Pastor Sievers was an energetic pastor who had the gift of order. He systematized the school system and organized how the cemetery was to have things done in a clear manner. He had a deep interest in missions and the Congregation helped congregations in Kansas, Ohio, and many other places. It was a productive five years in so many ways.

Ironically one of the criticisms of Pastor Sievers arose because he worked so hard. Teaching at the school, assisting other mission church settings, and organizing the congregation life were demanding. Imagine riding a horse on a regular basis to Sedalia to preach above and beyond one's regular Word-and-Sacrament responsibilities. Because he was stretched hither, thither, and yond, criticism arose from parents of children in the school that he was not doing enough for the school. Church leaders graciously fielded and contextualized these criticisms, educating these saints who were unaware of all the other good Kingdom things taking place.

An Exceptionally Rough Stretch

Pastor J. G. Griebel replaced Reverend Sievers when he took a call after five years of vigorous labor for the Lord. The next seven years were filled with tears, tumult, and turmoil. The spirit of this world through the devil's filthy crew seeped into the congregation in such a fashion where the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and His grace-giving gifts were at times severely overshadowed by wrangling, arguments, false accusations, and attacks on God's Holy Word.

For our German translator this section of our history was so painful to read. It was recorded in the official minutes how one member in particular who would write Pastor Griebel scathing letters loaded with charges without foundation. The man was a nitpicker who did not grasp that Jesus had given the congregation a faithful Gospel preacher and *seelsorger*—caretaker of souls. Pastor Griebel was older than the young vibrant Reverend

Sievers and it is likely that the harsh law critic wanted a more forceful, dynamic preacher. That often happens. A gentle pastor frequently will meet opposition from strong personalities who take gentleness as a sign of weakness.

Along with the demoralizing, harsh criticism, there was a member who publicly mocked God's Holy Word. This, too, was so shameful and painful. Eventually the man would come to his senses, publicly confess his sin before the whole congregation, and a measure of healing took place, but not before a lot of damage had been done and members left due to these loveless displays.

Nevertheless

During this time special meetings took place on Sunday afternoons once a month where a question-and-answer Bible study took place. The goal was simply to build up, lift up, and encourage the saints by the mercies of Christ during this difficult stretch.

Amazingly, the congregation amidst all these internal afflictions gave generously for missions, helped other congregations facing famines, and supported a Negro congregation as well.

Bear in mind that in those days there was a wild, rough edge among people who knew not God's pardoning love in Christ. There were people known to burn Bibles and to hold drinking orgies mocking the Christian Lord's Supper. Fortunately, with the light of God's love coming into the area through a stream of Christians from the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Disciples of Christ tradition, as well as the Evangelical Reformed and Lutheran traditions, civility, a fruit of the Gospel, arose in culture. In this way the Gospel gave a hidden strength to freedom to fend against anarchy and totalitarianism.

Endless meetings were spent on trying to keep peace. Pastor Griebel, through a faithful pastor, endured the false accusations by one family of not being faithful in his visitation duties. Like the prophet Jeremiah, he suffered through the episode of the one member of the congregation openly poking fun of the Bible. Between the false accusations, the false doctrine, and in-house quarreling, the Gospel – the power of God – did not go forth the way it had in previous years. To some degree, Pastor Sievers may have been a tough act to follow. In the history of every congregation you find stretches where the devil worms his way into a fellowship either through false doctrine or lovelessness.

Here it is helpful to again try to imagine the challenges before these early members of St. Paul's. Pastor Sievers during his ministry would do a lot of horse-back riding to various places to preach the good news of Jesus. The Pastor coming after him would be vulnerable to false comparisons if reasonableness through Christ's love was not in abundance. Added to this it appears that the early members of St. Paul's faced sundry challenges from area secret societies that taught you got to heaven not by the grace of God in Jesus but by human efforts.

On a lighter note, church records show that occasionally St. Paul's Lutheran sold beer at Mission festivals to raise money for missions. This, of course, is *adiaphora* – something neither forbidden nor commanded in the Bible. What determines the resolve is that it furthers the Gospel and causes no stumbling block for a weaker brother. With great freedom comes great responsibility.

The Key for Church Growth

Preaching faithfully all the articles of the Gospel, respect for the Office of the Holy Ministry that Jesus instituted, and deep love and compassion rooted in Christ's love among the members are in every age the three-fold formula for church growth. From 1879-1886 this formula was broadsided by controversy. Nevertheless, paradoxically, no shortage of good things born of Christ's love, occurred.

To show how arduous this time was, one more anecdote needs footnoting. At this time the Rail Road, as it was advancing westward, burned a large number of mature trees in St. Paul's cemetery. Evidently it was clearing brush and their controlled fire got out of hand. At first the Rail Road was not going to give the church any compensation for the destruction of these trees, but the congregation through discussions squeezed \$80 dollars from them.

In the City of California at this time there were plenty of dry goods and grocery stores, at least one jewelry store, a commissions house, two saddlery shops, a gunsmith shop, a number of blacksmith shops, at least two bakers, livery stables, a cabinet shop, two hotels, several shoemakers, a couple of tailors and tanners, a handful physicians and several lawyers. There was "downtown" by the courthouse and "Uptown" by the railroad depot.

The Sometimes Long Shadow of Youthful Indiscretions

It was Luther who observed that "Where God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel." How true. Anything the old evil foe can do and any distraction he can conjure up to obscure the Gospel, he will. In serpentine fashion he engineered a congregational division whereby St. Paul's next pastor would find himself in the midst of what had to be a most-agonizing controversy. An honorable man and gifted young pastor, Pastor Paul Franke found himself in a swirl of controversy, facing a divided congregation, and even the possibility of being defrocked.

Pastor Paul Franke would replace Pastor Griebel in 1892. During his seminary years student Franke had been secretly engaged to a young lady. At that time young men studying to prepare for the Office of the Holy Ministry were not allowed to marry. The thought was that full energies were to be marshaled to study very hard to become equipped as a called spiritual apothecary able to divide rightly the Word of truth. Also, at that time to be engaged was considered tantamount to being married; therefore, in the eyes of some church leaders

Pastor Franke forfeited the right to serve as a pastor. At any rate, he broke off the engagement with the lady. He felt in tangible ways his fiancée had compromised the covenant they had mutually, yet secretly, made. Unfortunately, Synod officials had a different version of the story. Consequently, the St. Louis Seminary President came to St. Paul's Lutheran and requested in a Voters' Assembly meeting that Pastor Franke give up his office (*amt*).

When Pastor Franke refused to resign, the Seminary President revealed more information on this case. It caused a painful division among the members of St. Paul's. Some members went to the Lutheran church in Jamestown, others went to the Lutheran church in Sedalia, and others to different denominations. Still, a strong contingent of members supported Pastor Franke feeling that when he did was a youthful indiscretion – this secret pre-call engagement. They felt this lapse in judgment did not disqualify him from being fit for the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Pastor Franke stood his ground, and with the support of those members, who stayed, did not submit to ecclesiastical leaders who sought his resignation. He told church leaders and Synod leaders that he would yield to the judgment of his father, a godly man with whom he entrusted all the details of this sad story. His father told him not to resign and to remain as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran. In the end, the congregation would grant him a peaceful release when he was called to be a pastor of another Lutheran congregation and give him a good recommendation for serving the Savior at another evangelical Lutheran congregation. It appears that he then took a call to Trinity Lutheran congregation in Russellville with whom the Missouri Synod was then in communion fellowship. Later, the Iowa Synod of which Trinity was a part of, would split with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod over the issue of predestination.

Miraculously, through this all, the seeds were planted for St. Paul's Lutheran to build its first church edifice in 1894. Under the solid leadership of Pastor P. D. Mueller, St. Paul's raised through signed pledges \$2,625 over a two-week period. This would allow the saints to build a church shaped in the form of a cross that would be a 32-foot by 50-foot edifice. It would have a steeple, a sacristy, and a brick exterior. During Pastor Mueller's stay at St. Paul's, a Kilgen pipe organ was installed, a new parsonage erected, and the Ladies' Aid Society was founded. Finally, it is worth mentioning how the Presbyterian Church in town let St. Paul's use its building during the time the 1894 congregation was erected.

Craftsman for Christ

The church was blessed by a skilled craftsman God placed into the congregation. Peter Krueger, a member of St. Paul's could build just about anything. He first made the baptismal font from lumber of the old church to prove to the congregation his ability in woodworking,

The congregational leaders, impressed with Krueger's skill and passion to honor the Lord with his gift, commissioned him to make an altar, pulpit, and pews.

From Krueger to Kiso to Kuester, St. Paul's has had a number of outstanding artisans who have done yeomen's work to assist the congregation in projects that serve the Gospel. Carl Kuester, a present member, has done a host of impressive projects to beautify this congregation and serve the Gospel. Most impressive are his work with the communion rail and the three tables in the altar area where the medicine of immortality, the Lord's Summer have been placed to give to the communicant members Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Added to this list would be the name of Donald Jungmeyer who also has overseen so many of the building efforts including the addition of our elevator. What a blessing to St. Paul's these saints in Christ have been to the ministry of the Holy Gospel.

All in the Family

A rare event took place after the Ministry of P. D. Mueller ran its course. His brother, Pastor F. W. Mueller, followed as pastor. That meant that P. D. Mueller must have recommended highly St. Paul's as a wonderful place to serve and the congregation felt a warm disposition to call P. D. Mueller's brother. This was a good sign that harmony and concord were present. During Pastor F. W. Mueller's 18-year ministry, two significant events occurred. One, the young people became a vibrant part of the congregation through their connection with The Walther League and through this affiliation many young adults would grow in Christ and become superb future church leaders. Two, under the leadership of Pastor F. W. Mueller, the congregation resolved in 1925 to have one English service per month.

Pastor F. W. Mueller completed his work as a called pastor to St. Paul's Lutheran in 1926. All total he served as an under-shepherd of the Lord Jesus for 19 years bringing continuity and a good evangelical confession. He, as well as his brother, sought to have the members to be solid in the basics of Christian doctrine.

Tragedy and Healing

After the 31 years of the Mueller brothers' pastoral care of the souls, the congregation called Pastor William Karsten. Pastor Karsten fell into a deep depression. Back in those days there was not access to some of the excellent medicines we have today to help fight off this dark cloud. As noted by a former pastor, his depression led to a rash act and he met death by his own hands. St. Paul's congregation was stunned and badly wounded and it would take the sturdy ministry of its next Pastor, Rev. T. A. Weinhold to help the congregation get back on its feet, as well as to weather the Great Depression. A key accomplishment of Pastor Weinhold was to organize an Adult Bible Class. The Holy Spirit moved 29 members to step

forward to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ through this means-of-grace opportunity.

Already back then you could see St. Paul's Lutheran attempt to educate the community in terms of what Lutherans believe, teach and confess. An in-house congregational contest was held to come up with a slogan that would capture what St. Paul's sought to bring to the community in terms of comfort. Fifty-five slogan entries were received. The committee judging the slogans was unanimous in their verdict as to the winning slogan. The winning slogan read this way: *St. Paul's Lutheran: a congregation with real help for the sinner.*

We Preach Christ Crucified!

During the ministry of the congregation, there was healing needed for the loss of its previous pastor and hope for people going through the throes of the Great Depression. Pastor Weinhold served admirably in both regards. Yet in God's master plan was to come a pastor who was a fiery, effective preacher of the Gospel and the message of Jesus Christ crucified. Pastor W. H. Schwab was called in 1933 and provided very strong leadership for St. Paul's Lutheran for the next 16 years.

Under the guidance of Pastor Schwab, the change to English in all services was completed. Added to this the church building was enlarged and renovated. A Men's Club was organized in 1944 beginning with 16 members. In the same year, the Ladies' Aid Society affiliated with the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. In 1947 there was a dedication of Maas cathedral chimes in memory of our men who died in service to their country during World War II.

Throughout these years, the emphasis of Christian doctrine being taught to the children, respect for the Office of the Holy Ministry, canvassing the community, financial pledges, and following Matthew 18:15-18 in relationships was seen from the records. Pastor Schwab wrote in one of his bulletins. "*A Sunday well spent is a Sunday spend in church.*"

Tennis Anyone?

In 1940 St. Paul's Lutheran built a tennis court. During this decade St. Paul's worked to support the effort to build a Lutheran mission congregation in Eldon. Fun, fellowship, fidelity to the full Gospel of Christ, and financial support for the work of Christ were emphases throughout this decade. The congregation sought to encourage its members to lead and live godly lives living deeply from god's Word of Law and Gospel. On a regular basis new members joined the congregation. The Word of the Lord grew!

“In Jesus We Have Forgiveness of Sins!”

Another conscientious pastor followed Reverend Schwab. Reverend Ferdinand Reith became pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran in 1949 and would continue a trend of sincere, capable Lutheran pastors faithful to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. A very good teacher, Pastor Reith sought faithfully to impart to the members a theology that conscience was captive to the Word of God. Like the pastors before him, he exhorted the saints to fill their mind with things that were noble, praiseworthy, excellent, and pure so that the God of peace would in turn grant them grace upon grace. One of Pastor Reith’s favorite phrases was “Some of us are going to get to heaven just under the wire.” It was his way of saying on the one hand that salvation is solely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, yet it behooves every saint to live for Christ in a manner whereby they would walk worthy of the Gospel.

During his years of service, Pastor Reith saw the formation of the Evening Guild, the church interior redecorated and the purchase of property north of the church. One of his favorite verses was “In Jesus we have the forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:7). Pastor Reith held a high view of the Lord’s Supper as being the true body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

Pastor Keith Kiihne followed Pastor Reith. Pastor Kiihne would serve the saints for approximately four years. He saw the value of trying to connect members to the means of grace and involving them in fellowship activities. He especially had good rapport with teens and attempted to involve them in ways where they felt included as part of the congregation. Under his care the congregation began to think about a series of evangelistic forays. A Moeller pipe organ and Schulmerich Carillon were installed to enlist the gift of music in service of the Gospel. Little by little one can see how each ministry builds upon the one that came before it as the body of Christ passes on works that have an abiding positive impact.

Law and Gospel – the Two Handles of Scripture

St. Paul’s next pastor rode at least 10,000 miles through South American mountains as a Lutheran missionary before being called as pastor to this congregation in California, Missouri. Martin Hofman was another in a long line of solid Law-and-Gospel preachers. He had a particular concern in making sure elderly members could hear the Gospel. “*Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the message of Christ*” writes St. Paul. Thus, Pastor Hofman wanted the elderly to be able to hear. He was a Gospel audiologist. He would tinker with ways for the sound of the story of Jesus to be heard by those whose hearing had waned. While serving as a shepherd under Christ at St. Paul’s, the educational building was dedicated in 1970 and a new parsonage was dedicated on December 5, 1971. In 1978 a Junior Youth Organization was formed on January 8th.

Masks for God's Tasks

During all these years, records will show how the love of Christ moved members and organizations to perform thousands of charitable works to help the poor, those in need of hearing the Gospel, and others in various distresses. These benevolent deeds are Christ at work through His Body to bring to people mercy, love, and compassion. Without such deeds, many a family would be overwhelmed with despair and our social services be taxed beyond belief. The leaven of Christ's love through His children who are masks for His tasks is what helps to preserve freedom and keep the world from plunging into deep despair. Often it is the love of Christ that is pulsating as the keynote motivation for members in Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, the American Red Cross, and a host of similar organizations. The world does not see these hidden phenomena. St. Paul's for 150 years has been part of this noble, invisible. Train.

As one views the overall picture of God's grace at work at St. Paul's Lutheran these past 150 years, you stand back and see how different pastors brought different gifts to this congregation and community. In 1982 St. Paul's called as their pastor a man who was a builder par excellent and blessed with much energy and organizational skills. Walter Loeber began a series of creative outreach efforts and building programs that have left an impressive legacy.

Evangelism and Edifices Par Excellent

In terms of outreach Reverend Loeber covered many fronts. He was the architect of the first radio service on July 29, 1984. This has been an outreach arm that has been a huge blessing to this community and beyond for over 25 years. He connected St. Paul's radio services with St. Louis radio station KFUD and made outreach efforts through Channel 25 TV. "Dial-A-Meditation" came about under his good lead. The Braille Center No. 181 was also a significant evangelistic effort to people around the world, and only in heaven will we see the thousands of lives touched through the good news of Jesus via the wonderful work of this ministry. Finally, Reverend Loeber's insight to link the work of Kiwanis to the work of the church was a superb stewardship linkage that has brought innumerable blessings to this county and beyond.

Reverend Loeber's ability to mobilize the saints to build a new beautiful house of worship in 1983 and a beautiful bell tower in the same year have bequeathed to future generations a most lovely House of God in which to gather to be fed by Word and Sacrament. The added purchase of two lots south of the church and improvements on the grounds of this spiritual campus at 207 North Owen have been a present blessing with as-of-yet untapped future potential.

The Mystery

In scouring through the records, a mystery remained unsolved. The burning question of when were gooseberry pies introduced into the congregation. This sweet-sour paradoxical pie was a highlight at many a potluck meal throughout the church's history. Children who ate gooseberry pies and took to heart the Gospel invariably turned out well. The good news of Jesus' love contoured their heart and the gooseberry pie made with such sacrifice and love sculptured their soul. If only both of these were staples throughout the world. Oral tradition has it that the Native American Indians persuaded the American settlers to give the gooseberry a try. They did. Whether wine, pies, or jams, it has been one gift from God mediated through our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul's 18th Pastor

St. Paul's 18th pastor and present shepherd is Pastor Peter Kurowski. In early 1994 he was installed at St. Paul's Lutheran after the impressive interim service of the Reverend Rolland Nothwehr. Throughout the years St. Paul's has been blessed with wonderful interim pastors and circuit counselors. The names of Scheperle, Schmaltz, and Schedler are several. Regarding Reverend Nothwehr he was famous for bringing a stick of real dynamite into the pulpit to show how the good news of Jesus is the power (dynamite) of God unto salvation. Also, he preached an unforgettable stewardship sermon when the church was running behind financially. Early in 1994 his stewardship sermon at the request of the Stewardship Board consisted of ten words: *"The Gospel is free. Pastors are expensive. So pay up."* He then went on to preach the sermon he wanted to proclaim telling the saints of the goodness of God's love in Christ. Convince a person that the holy Son of God, true God and true man, loved a person, died for that person, even went to hell and back for that person, and there will be no shortage of return.

During Pastor Pete's service at this congregation, St. Paul's Lutheran has made an impact on The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at large. His simultaneous service as first vice-president of the Missouri District and the writing of seven evangelical books recognized by noted scholars as helpful to contemporary issues of the day has been a gift through St. Paul's Lutheran. These literary efforts have raised much money for missions and have helped Lutheran Christians to see the grace-nature of their historical confession.

One of the emphases of Pastor Kurowski has been the use of art for the sake of the Gospel. Whether enlisting Jack Voigt to paint his two Gospel-centered masterpieces, script writing for the animated video *Red Boots for Christmas*, working toward the restoration of old Sunday School pictures now framed and hanging on the walls, and cultivating a connection with the Finke Theatre, Pastor Kurowski has seen art as a tool that can work hand in hand with the Gospel. With the help of our immensely talented musicians of the

congregation, St. Paul's Good Friday Cantatas and connection with the California Ensemble has been a joy to many people inside and outside of our church membership. Whether writing for *Portals of Prayer*, *Concordia Pulpit*, *Contemporary Issues*, *The California Democrat*, as well as serving as a Lutheran Hour guest preacher, being a guest lecturer to numerous venues around the country, and a regular speaker on a wide array of radio programs, Dr. Kurowski has been given considerable freedom by the congregation to do this kind of work to help the church body at large and conduct Kingdom work. Thanks to the generosity of the congregation and the superb assistance of Emeritus Pastor Martin Hoyer, these additional arms of ministry have come about.

As we draw to a close of this brief description of "150 Years of God's Grace," we must underscore that one of the strong points of St. Paul's Lutheran has been its musical tradition. From a long line of outstanding organists, musical directors, instrumentalists, and choir members, the Gospel has gone forth with double grace via the gift of music. This is such an important way in order to hand over the Gospel goods. Moreover, if a person can learn to work with a choir, they stand a very good chance of being able to work with most people – which is an aspect of love. The whole choir concept is a vital faith formation process and is a walking, talking, singing sermon on how the body of Christ in love is to walk together in sync and make a healthy, joyful noise unto the Lord to all ends of the earth.

Finally, it is important to mention how grateful to God in this sesquicentennial year we are that a son of the congregation was ordained at St. Paul's Lutheran. Samuel Michael Powell was ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry on July 25, 2010, at this congregation. From eternity, in love and in Christ, this was part of God's Divine design to grace us with this event during our sesquicentennial. While we have had other young men ordained as pastors here at St. Paul's, especially during the early years of our history, we are most thankful for this added Providential blessing from the Triune God – the God of **all** grace.

St. Paul's: A House of Hope, Hospital for Sinners

By the grace of God St. Paul's Lutheran has become a highly-respected congregation in this area and in some respects a bellwether. A long list of faithful pastors, dedicated laity, and a Gospel confession that holds high the person and work of Jesus has been a continuous staple. There have been plenty of times the congregation has stumbled and struggled in ways that remind us that this side of heaven we will always be a work in progress. Nevertheless, for 150 years the Holy Spirit through the means of grace has made this congregation a grace place. St. Paul's remains a house of hope, a hospital for sinners and a haven for people who want to learn of Jesus, the express image of God.

On the 50th anniversary of St. Paul's Lutheran a layman wrote words of deep gratitude to the God of all grace for sustaining this congregation during the turbulent years of its first

five decades. It seems that those words written in those records one hundred years ago are fitting words for us to close this brief history. *“Bless the Lord, O my soul; al all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. It is He who freely forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases!”* (Psalm 103:1-3)

Resources: Minutes to past meetings; *The Life and Times of First Baptist Church* by Dr. Paul D. Branstetter; *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Booklet*, by Pastor W. H. Schwab; *100th Anniversary Booklet*, by Pastor Ferdinand Reith; *1990 Directory of St. Paul’s Lutheran* by Walter C. Loeber; The Holy Bible.