

# History of the Founding and Growth of St. Paul's Lutheran Church

## THE EARLY YEARS

Not much is known of the first years of the congregation's existence. No official records of its early existence are available, no constitution was adopted until 1836, and no minutes were recorded until 1867. A committee was appointed in 1906 to investigate the date of organization. Corresponding with Pastor Juengel, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pleasant Grove, in 1860, it was learned that the first service he conducted at California was on October 18, 1860. It is probable that following the service on this day a meeting was held and business was transacted. It was also learned that during the summer of 1860 the Rev. Johann Buenger of St. Louis, founder of Lutheran Hospital at St. Louis and of Lutheran Orphans' Home at Des Peres, visited in California and encouraged the Lutherans living in this community to arrange for services under the guidance of the pastor at Pleasant Grove.

Since the first service was conducted on October 28, 1860, this date has been accepted as the date of organization. Charter members included F. Markworth, Christ Gross, William Kuhlmann, Fred Boeckhaus, Louis Boeckhaus, and Henry Boeckhaus.

In the year 1866 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.

In 1867 H. Boeckhaus compiled a brief history of the congregation which was read and included in the first minutes of the congregation.

The history mentions that F. Boeckhaus and C. Gross were elected elders. In spring, 1864, a piece of land was purchased by the congregation for a cemetery, and William Kuhlmann, F. Boeckhaus, and C. Gross were elected trustees. Soon afterward G. H. Meyer and R. Hecht succeeded F. Boeckhaus and C. Gross as elders.

Several years went by before the congregation applied for membership in The Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. On April 7, 1867, the matter was discussed and tabled. However, 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. Since 1869 the congregation has been a loyal member of the Missouri Synod (known today as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod). It accepts the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a correct presentation of Scriptural teachings. On March 2, 1873, the congregation was incorporated.

For the first services no stately church was available. Members offered the use of their humble homes for these gatherings around the messenger of God and his message from God. The homes of C. Gross and Louis Boeckhaus were used for such services. According to the report of H. Boeckhaus, services were also held in a Methodist church, a Baptist church, an old seminary (later bought by the congregation), and the courthouse. Increasing in number, the congregation rented a school building situated two blocks north of the present church. Then an old seminary, having become available, was purchased on April 16, 1866, and was converted into a church, a school, and a parsonage. For 28 years this old seminary building served the congregation as a house of worship.

Mr. Hugo Griebel, a son of Pastor J. G. Griebel, wrote of this church building as follows: "The old church building was a large frame structure with no tower or bell. It stood on the same site where the present church has been built. The front left room of the church was the schoolroom. Every Friday afternoon the large pupils carried some long benches from the school into the church and on Monday morning the benches were carried back into the school." Other childhood impressions were: "The parsonage was a frame, one-story, four-room building. The rooms were two bedrooms, the kitchen and dining room, and my father's study. A deep well was located toward the rear of the church lot near the church which supplied the parsonage and church with refreshing water. A white picket fence graced the church property along the street, with no sidewalks. In the yard were locust and fruit trees."

## CONTINUED GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENTS

On June 4, 1893, an important forward step was taken when the congregation resolved to erect a new church edifice. A List was circulated, and in a short time sufficient funds had been contributed to allow the erection of the new church. On May 6, 1894, the trustees were instructed to raze the old building and erect a school building. Construction of the new church began in the spring of 1894, the cornerstone was laid on June 10, 1894, and on November 11, 1894, an attractive house of worship, 32 by 50 feet, was dedicated to the honor of the Triune God.

In 1896 a Kilgen pipe organ was installed, the instrument which is still serving the congregation in its worship. The church furniture, which included the altar, pulpit, baptismal font, and pews, was made by Peter Krueger, a member of the congregation. He first made the baptismal font from lumber of the old church to prove to the congregation his ability in woodwork. Convinced of his skill, the congregation awarded him the contract to furnish the remainder of the interior furniture.

Pastors in the early years of the congregation's existence lived in a section of the old seminary building. On July 4, 1886, a resolution was passed to erect a new parsonage. It was then learned that the congregation could buy the Adam's property for \$560. This it resolved to do. With slight improvements, this house served as the second parsonage. In 1898 the congregation resolved to erect a new parsonage. This parsonage, which includes seven rooms, two halls, and a bathroom, is

in use today, having been improved and modernized in recent years.

Since the membership in the beginning was of German descent, services during the first years were conducted in the German language only. But already in the early seventies the need of English services began to be felt, for on July 8, 1871, the congregation passed a resolution leaving it to the discretion of the pastor to decide whether or not it was desirable to conduct English services. Two years later the congregation resolved to have English services occasionally. In 1907, when a new pastor was called, he was instructed to preach one English sermon a month. Beginning with September, 1918, religious instruction in school was given in English. In November, 1925, it was resolved that one morning service each month should be conducted in English, later two morning services each month. By 1934 only one German service a month was conducted, except when there were five Sundays in a month, and by 1941 the change to English was completed. With the language barrier removed, the congregation has been in a more favorable position to reach people in our community with the Gospel ministry.

During the hundred years of its existence the congregation has been served by fourteen pastors. The first pastor was pastor Juengel, at that time resident pastor at Pleasant Grove. This faithful pastor, who also served Trinity Lutheran Church at Clark's Fork, regularly came to California on horseback to conduct services. A home in which he occasionally spent Saturday nights was that of Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Meyer.

The congregation grew, and more services became desirable. Encouraged by Pastor Juengel, the congregation resolved to call a resident pastor. The call was sent to Pastor Theodore Gruber of Perryville, Missouri. He was installed on the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1863, but already in February, 1864, he accepted a call to Hampton, Illinois. Candidate G. Lehnick became the second resident pastor in 1864. Due to ill health he resigned in 1865. He was succeeded by Candidate Gustav Schilling, who was installed on Septuagesima Sunday, 1865, by President J. Buenger of St. Louis. Under his guidance the organization and the activities of the congregation were advanced, and a constitution was adopted. After five years Pastor Schilling accepted a call to Kewaskum, Wisconsin.

On July 13, 1870, Candidate H. Wille was called. He remained until August, 1874, when he became pastor of Holy Cross, Emma, Missouri. After a vacancy of almost a year the congregation successfully called Candidate B. Sievers. His service extended to June 1879, when he accepted a call to Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He was followed by Pastor J. G. Griebel of Norborne, Missouri, whose ministry at California began in September, 1879, and continued until June, 1892, at which time he followed a call to Perryville, Missouri. The next pastor, the Rev. Paul Franke, served from the fall of 1892 to October, 1894.

There followed the ministry of two brothers – Pastor P. D. Mueller and pastor F. W. Mueller. The Rev. P. D. Mueller was pastor from February, 1895, to September, 1907, when he left to become pastor at Topeka, Kansas. The Rev. F. W. Mueller was pastor from November, 1907, to

October 13, 1926, and then moved to a country parish near Clarinda, Iowa.

The ministry of the next pastor, the Rev. William Karsten, was brief. Coming from Farley, Missouri, in January, 1927, he died on August 13, 1927, and was laid to rest at Alma, Missouri. The vacancy which followed was ended when Pastor T. A. Weinhold of Pevely, Missouri, came at the beginning of 1928. In April, 1933, he accepted a call to become pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Missouri. His successor, the Rev. W. H. Schwab, came from Slater, Missouri, in August 1933, and continued here until August, 1949. During his pastorate the church was enlarged and renovated. In August, 1949, he accepted a call to Messiah Lutheran Church, Independence, Missouri. The present pastor, the Rev. Ferdinand Reith, came in November, 1949, from Burt, Iowa.

At different times pastors conducted services elsewhere. In 1871 pastor Wille preached occasionally at Excelsior, Morgan County. In 1876 Pastor Sievers preached at Sedalia, sharing this preaching assignment with Pastor Wille of Emma, Missouri. In 1899 and 1900 Pastor P. D. Mueller made mission tours through several southern counties and between Jefferson City and Columbia. He was also granted permission to preach occasionally at Fayette. Pastor W. H. Schwab conducted services at the Industrial Home for Colored Girls at Tipton and at the County Farm. He also held services at Eldon, which later resulted in the establishment of Bethany Lutheran Church. The present pastor has served Immanuel Lutheran Church, Jamestown, for a number of years and also conducts

services at the Hall Nursing Home in California.

On October 27, 1935, the congregation observed its Seventy-fifth Anniversary. The anniversary speakers on that day were Pastor F. W. Mueller (morning service), Pastor P. D. Mueller (afternoon service), and Pastor T. A. Weinhold (evening service). During the week services emphasized Christian education, the work of the Ladies' Aid, and youth work. The speakers were Pastor Richter of Jefferson City, Pastor Schoech of Lone Elm, and Pastor Heidbreder of Sedalia. The anniversary committee consisted of C. J. Houser, Harold Friedmeyer, and O. E. Boeckhaus.

A progressive step was taken in 1941 when the church, in use since November, 1894, was enlarged and renovated. The members of the building committee were Harold Friedmeyer, Herman A. Kuester, and John Lankop Sr. A sixteen-foot addition was added on the west end, the old steeple was lowered, a basement under the west end was excavated, art glass windows, light fixtures, chancel furniture, and pews were installed, interior walls were redecorated, and exterior walls were tuck-pointed. The enlarged church was dedicated on February 1, 1942. In the three services Pastor Paul Koenig, president of the Western District, Pastor H. Heidbreder, and Pastor T. A. Weinhold were the speakers. Last fall the church interior again was redecorated.

During World War II four sons of the congregation died in the service of their country: Oliver Garrett, Elmer Lademann, Wilbur Miller, and Truman Pennington. In their memory a set of Maas cathedral chimes were donated by Mrs. Oliver

Garrett, the Lademann-Schnackenberg families, Mr. F. W. Miller and Virginia, and Mrs. Gladys Pennington and were dedicated on January 26, 1947.

Among interesting historical facts may be mentioned the following: The first recorded baptism was that of Johann Franz Kuhn, a son of Christian Kuhn and his wife Eleonore, nee Scholle. He was baptized on September 6, 1863. The sponsors were Franz Gentsch, Liberte Ehrhardt, Gottlob Scholle, and Elizabeth Habruth. The first recorded marriage was that of Reinhold Hecht and Alwine Heysel. It was performed by Pastor Theodore Gruber. The first recorded burial was that of Friederike Kuhlmann, who died on August 17, 1864. She was a child of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Kuhlmann. During the course of seventy-five years the congregation had only five secretaries: Christ Gross, H. W. Boeckhaus, William Bertram, F. W. Houser, and Bernard Houser. Dr. F. W. Houser served the congregation in this position for fifty-one years, beginning on January 26, 1879, and writing his last minutes on May 4, 1930. In 1866 the pastor's income included \$200 in salary, some school fees, and special gifts for official acts. During the pastorate of the Rev. J. G. Griebel the monthly salary was \$50. In 1867 the church was insured for \$1,000.

The present officers of the congregation are: Elders—Charles Kaiser, Charles Stock, and John Langkop Jr.; trustees—Walter Fluegel, Walter Schubert, and Ed Kiesling; chairman—Herman Lademann; vice-chairman—Paul Kuester; secretary—Carl Kuester; treasurer (home)—Billy Maier; treasurer (synodical)—Hilbert Strobel; treasurer (building)—Rex Volkart; S. S. superintendent—Lester Peters; board of Christian education—Oscar Hagemeyer, Robert Jungmeyer, and Wilburn Linhardt; finance board—William Winkler, Arthur Bleich, and Arthur Lademann; and stewardship and E. M. V. committee—Charles Stock, Harold Friedmeyer, Arthur Friedmeyer, and Robert Denker.

Beginning with the year 1863, 700 were baptized, 233 were united in marriage, and 310 received a Christian burial. Beginning with the year 1871, 492 were confirmed.

On October 1 of this year St. Paul's congregation numbered 376 baptized members, 279 communicant members, and 64 voting members.