

Inside of old church after renovation



Inside of old church before renovation

And let the beauty of the Lord, our God, be upon us; and establish the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish. Thou it.

Psalm 90, 77

## Introduction

The twelve charter members of St. John's congregation were Henry Bergsicker, Hermann Holers, Hermann Schroeder, H. Hogrefe, F. Hogrefe, G. Eggers, John Badenhop, Henry Scheele, Gerhardt Bergsicker, Henry Badenhop, George Heinrichs and Hermann Badenhop. They came to Freedom Township from the vicinity of Okolona, Ohio, and from the so-called Hanover Settlement in Napoleon Township. The first Lutheran pastor in Henry County was August F. Knappe. He was born in Germany Nov. 17, 1802, came to Indiana in 1840 to assist Pastor F. Wyneken in and around Fort Wayne, and came to Ohio in 1843. After being active in the vicinity of Defiance for several years he came to Okolona, Ohio, where he founded Bethlehem congregation in 1854. In 1857 Pastor Knappe added Zion congregation in Napoleon Township to his parish. About 1864 Pastor Kaspar Strausz became the assistant and later the successor of Pastor Knappe, who died May 11, 1871. In 1866 Pastor Strausz organized St. Paul's congregation in Napoleon Township. Two years later he followed some of his parishioners to Freedom Township and conducted the first Lutheran service in this territory. Pastor Strausz, however, was unable to take on another preaching station. He requested Pastor Adam Beronet of St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Archbold, Ohio to conduct Lutheran services in this new field.

### PASTOR A. BEROSET

1869 - 1871

St. John's Lutheran congregation was organized by Pastor A. Beronet, August 15, 1869, and services were conducted by him approximately every two weeks from August 1869 until about March 1871. At first the services were held in a public log school house about one mile north of the present site of St. John's church. While the services were conducted in the public school, they attracted not only the German settlers but also some English speaking people who were curious to know what was going on there. The presence of a number of people who could not understand the language used in the service did not add to the devotion of those for whom the services were really intended. So the little flock of German Lutherans decided to abandon the school house and to have their services in a private home, the home of Hermann Holers, located two miles north of the present St. John's church. January 1, 1871, the members resolved to acquire a piece of land and to erect a log church. Before this noteworthy resolution could be carried out, however, Pastor Beronet severed his connection with the congregation because of a serious difference between pastor and people regarding the reception of a member into the congregation. Pastor Beronet conducted about thirty-six services, administered the Lord's Supper to 122 guests in three communion services, and baptized seven children. One of these, John Badenhop, is still an active member of St. John's congregation.

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

Deuteronomy 32, 7

PASTOR JOHANN PETER KARRER  
March-November, 1871

When Pastor Beronet quit his charge in St. John's congregation seventeen more names had been added to the original twelve charter-members, and these people did not lose heart. They invited Pastor J. P. Karrer of Napoleon to become their pastor. They thereby severed their connection with the Iowa Synod and placed themselves under the influence of the Missouri Synod. The congregation also proceeded to carry out the resolution adopted Jan. 1, 1871. A tract of land comprising about three quarters acre was purchased May 16, 1871 from Frederick Roehrs at a cost of \$31. It is that plot which is now known as the "Old Cemetery". Late that summer the log church was completed and the following report of the dedication ceremonies was published in "Der Lutheraner."

"On the 13th Sunday after Trinity (1871) St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Freedom Township, Henry County, Ohio, had the joy to dedicate its newly erected church to the service of the Triune God. The festival guests came in such a throng that the little church was soon filled and about half of the assembly had to be content to remain outside the building. After the undersigned had read the rite of dedication, Pastor Adam Detzer of Defiance, Ohio, delivered the dedicatory sermon based on the Gospel for the Dedication of a Church (Luke 19, 1-10). His theme was: To-day Jesus would abide in this house." 1. Jesus truly comes; 2. He brings with Him glorious treasures; 3. Receive Him with joy. After the dedication service in the church the people gathered on the plot which was to serve for cemetery in order to dedicate solemnly also this place with God's word and prayer. The undersigned spoke on I Cor. 15, 42-44: First, of the seed that is to be sown in this field; and Secondly, the harvest which of one day shall be reaped here.

May the Lord continue to bless this young congregation and cause it to prosper inwardly and outwardly for His Name's sake.

J. P. Karrer, Pastor."

The church was a very humble house of worship. It did not boast church pews, but was furnished with home-made school benches, each of which had place for seven children. From the beginning the building was too small for the number of people it had to serve. Usually "spring-seats from farm wagons were carried into the church to provide additional seating.

Pastor Karrer was an energetic young man of thirty-three years. He was born in Germany March 17, 1838, and came to America in 1865 to complete his training for the Lutheran ministry at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. However, the need for Lutheran ministers was so great at that time, that his course was "accelerated" and early in 1867 he came to Henry County to assist Pastor Paul Rupprecht. The latter resided in the Leininger Settlement near Archbold, Ohio, but also served several congregations in Henry County. September 1, 1867 Karrer was promoted from assistant pastor to regular pastor of St. Paul's in Napoleon and of St. Paul's in Flatrock Township. The following year he was also installed as pastor of Zion congregation in

Napoleon Township. In 1870 Candidate Adalbert Krafft became pastor of St. Paul's in Flatrock Township. Pastor Karrer was therefore well able to accept the invitation of St. John's congregation, since he had only St. Paul's in Napoleon and Zion in Napoleon Township to serve. In the fall of 1871, however, he accepted a call to St. John's congregation near Monroeville, Indiana. Pastor Karrer baptized nine children in St. John's congregation.

PASTOR L. W. DULITZ  
1872 - 1884



Pastor Dulitz

After the removal of Pastor Karrer to Indiana there was a vacancy of more than six months. This vacancy was all the more serious in Henry County because Pastor A. Krafft had been transferred to the Leininger Settlement Sept. 24, 1871. Thus for a period of more than six months there was not a pastor of the Missouri Synod in all Henry County. On June 2, 1872, however, a pastor arrived who was to bring order and stability to the congregations which were so sorely in need of sound leadership. The following announcement appeared in "Der Lutheraner."

"Pastor L. Dulitz, by authorization of the honorable President of the Central District, was installed in his new parish in Napoleon, Henry County, Ohio, June 2, 1882 by being formally inducted in two of the congregations by the undersigned. The faithful God grant to this approved servant much blessing in his new and difficult field. A. Detzer."

Pastor Dulitz was indeed an "approved" servant when he arrived in Henry County. He was fifty-two years old when he came to Napoleon and had held three rather important pastorates. His first charge had been in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where in 1855 he had been one of the co-founders of a private college for parochial school teachers. This private college was the seed which in due time developed into Concordia Teacher's College in River Forest, Illinois. In 1857 Pastor Dulitz was called by a congregation in Buffalo, New York, and in 1864 he took charge of a Lutheran congregation at Huntington, Indiana. From there he came to Napoleon. The parish here was large enough to challenge a man of experience. He was not only the pastor of St. Paul's, Napoleon, St. Paul's Flatrock Township, Zion, Napoleon Township, and St. John's, Freedom Township, but almost immediately was called also to St. Paul's in Hanover Settlement.

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.  
Psalm 83, 3.

Although Pastor L. W. Dulitz was the shepherd of five congregations in Henry County for a period of ten years, he not only served them, but served them well. He undoubtedly had the talent to organize his work well. He must also have had the gift to inspire his hearers so that every sermon proved highly effective, for at best he could hardly conduct more than one service every two weeks in each of the congregations. The confirmation classes of St. John's and of St. Paul's in the Settlement were instructed jointly and confirmed as one group. One year the instruction and confirmation was held in St. John's and in the other year in St. Paul's. Some assistance was provided for the busy pastor by the services of a parochial school teacher. The first such teacher to serve in St. John's was Frederick Schroeder, who taught in St. John's from about 1875 until 1883. He was succeeded in 1883 by Louis Hilpert.

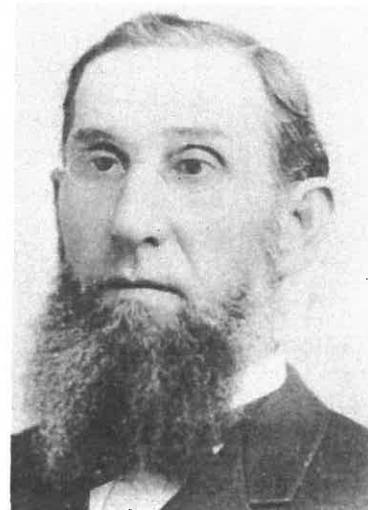
In 1882 Pastor Dulitz was relieved of a part of his work when St. Paul's and Zion in Napoleon Township formed a separate parish and called Pastor L. Dammann of the Ohio Synod. The following year St. John's made preparations for the erection of a new church. January 2, 1883 the congregation purchased another tract of land adjoining the original plot. It comprised about one half acre and was purchased from John Badenhop for \$75. Late that fall the new church was completed and was dedicated the 26th Sunday after Trinity, November 18, 1883. Two sermons were preached on this occasion. One by Pastor G. Reichhardt and the other by Pastor Adam Detzer. The latter had also delivered the dedicatory sermon twelve years earlier, when the first log church had been dedicated.

About this time the failing health of Pastor Dulitz no longer permitted him to perform all the duties of his large parish. The three congregations, St. Paul's in Napoleon and St. Paul's in Flatrock Township and St. John's in Freedom Township, on February 10, 1884 invited Pastor W. L. Fischer to assist their aging and ailing pastor in his large field. Pastor Fischer meanwhile continued to serve also his own two congregations, St. James' in Fulton County and St. John's Ridgeville Township. In the spring of 1884 the parish granted Pastor Dulitz several months' leave of absence in the hope that he might recover his health and vigor. When Pastor Dulitz failed to recover his health he resigned from his parish August 31, 1884. He removed to Detroit, Michigan, where for about one year he assisted the Rev. K. L. Moll. Pastor Dulitz passed away in Detroit, November 27, 1885 at the age of 65 years.

**Official Acts of Pastor L. W. Dulitz  
1872 - 1884**

Baptisms .....	203
Confirmations .....	71
Marriages .....	33
Burials .....	65

**PASTOR W. L. FISCHER  
1884 - 1898**



Pastor Fischer

After the resignation of Pastor L. W. Dulitz the parish of three congregations called Pastor W. L. Fischer to become their pastor. He accepted this call, moved from the Leininger Settlement to Napoleon, and was duly inducted into office in St. Paul's, Napoleon, St. Paul's Flatrock Township, and St. John's Freedom Township by Pastor G. M. Zucker the 22nd Sunday after Trinity, 1884.

Pastor W. L. Fischer was 42 years old, when he came to Henry County. He was born in Berleberg, Westphalia, Germany, May 10, 1842. After his elementary education was completed he studied law in Germany and obtained a position in the civil service of his native land. In 1886, however, at the age of 24 years, he came to

America with the intention of practicing law here. But his first position was that of an instructor in an educational institution in the east. Soon he reached the decision to prepare himself for the ministry in the Lutheran Church. He enrolled in the seminary of the Ohio Synod, now Capitol University, Columbus, Ohio, where he was graduated in 1871. His first charge was in Milan, Indiana. Then for several years he served a congregation of the Missouri Synod at Gardenville, Missouri. Later he returned and served a congregation of the Ohio Synod at Holland, Indiana. Here he resigned his charge and severed his connections with the Ohio Synod, because he found himself in disagreement with the teachings of that synod. In 1882 he became pastor of the congregation at Elkhart, Indiana, and the following year he came to Ohio to be the pastor of the St. James' (Leininger) and St. John's (Ridgeville Township) parish.

After the erection of the new church in 1883 the old log church served as school for several more years, the teacher being Louis Hilpert. But in 1886 the congregation purchased a school ground about one half mile north from the church. The land comprising about two thirds acre was purchased from Christoph Behrmann for \$35. A plain frame school house was erected. The new school house was first the testing ground of two students, Jaeger and Aspek, who each taught three months. After this rather discouraging beginning a regular teacher was employed, who is said to have taught in the school from 1887-1893. He was Frederick Ziegele. After the departure of Teacher Ziegele the congregation again employed students for a number of years. Henry Reinking is said to have taught the school for two years. He

A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84, 10.

was succeeded by George Arkebauer, who taught for one year, and the latter was succeeded by Christ Lehmborg, who also taught for one year.

Meanwhile the 25th anniversary of the founding of the congregation which occurred in 1894 apparently was passed without any special notice. In a meeting of the congregation April 20, 1897 it was resolved to purchase a pipe-organ for the church. This organ served the congregation for almost 40 years. In 1898 the large parish which Pastor Fischer had served for fourteen years was dissolved and each congregation called its own pastor. St. Paul's in Flatrock Township called Candidate Simon Hofmann, who was ordained and installed the 5th Sunday after Trinity, 1898. St. Paul's in Napoleon called Pastor Theo. Saupert and he was installed the 18th Sunday after Trinity, 1898.

Pastor Fischer who had resided in Napoleon for the past fourteen years moved out into the country July 3, 1898 to occupy his own house halfway between the church and the school.

**Official Acts of Pastor Fischer  
1884 - 1913**

Baptisms .....	594
Confirmations .....	433
Marriages .....	144
Burials .....	168

**Teachers**



Fred Ziegele



Carl Heitmann



Carl Zehnder



Wm. Asbeck



Herman Westenfeldt

**PASTOR W. L. FISCHER  
1898 - 1913**

For the first time in almost thirty years St. John's congregation now had a pastor all its own. And it was not a "new" pastor, but the shepherd who had served them already for fourteen years. Pastor and people now labored together with vigor and determination. For a few more years students were employed as teachers in the school. Carl Zehnder, Carl Heitmann, Theo. J. Koch and Schneider, each taught one year. Pastor Fischer and his daughter, Miss Martha Fischer, taught in the school in 1902 until Herman Westenfeldt was called November 27, 1902, and duly installed as teacher the 2nd Sunday in Advent, 1902.

Since the congregation had been enjoying continuous growth, it now became necessary to enlarge its facilities. May 5, 1901 it was resolved to add a room, 20 x 26 feet to the school. This room was used for confirmation instruction. When Zion congregation was founded in Ridgeville Corners, August 23, 1904 a number of members were released from St. John's to strengthen the new congregation. May 14, 1905 the congregation took another important step forward when it decided to provide a home for its teacher. August 12, 1905 the congregation purchased the fourth tract of land. It comprised one acre and was bought from Fred and Sophie Behnfeldt for \$100. On this land a house for the teacher was built.

The following year, January 28, 1906, it was resolved to enlarge the church. Sixteen feet were added to the nave of the church and in addition an altar niche and a sacristy were provided. On this occasion also the present altar and pulpit were installed in the church. There is no record of a dedication service of the enlarged church, but two years later, in the fall of 1908, the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the church was duly observed in two services. In the morning service Prof. L. W. Dorn of Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, preached on Psalm 84, 4; "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." In the afternoon Pastor F. J. Lankenau, who had meanwhile succeeded Pastor Theo. Saupert in Napoleon, delivered the sermon on Isaiah 55, 11: "So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." At that time Pastor Fischer reported that the church was built by 47 voting members, while in 1908 the congregation numbered 145 voting members.

St. John's congregation was now in a celebrating mood. February 10, 1909 it observed the 25th anniversary of Pastor Fischer's ministry in Henry County. The guest preacher for this noteworthy occasion was Prof. Joseph Schmidt of Concordia Fort Wayne, Indiana, who spoke on Ephesians 4, 11, 12: "And He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.  
Haggai 2, 9.

With the growth of the congregation and the increase in church attendance a "parking problem" developed. The congregation therefore purchased a strip of land along the road for hitching rails. This real estate deal was made May 3, 1909. Thus in the course of 40 years the congregation had purchased five tracts of land.

By this time the boundaries of the congregation had been extended far to the northeast of the site of the church. It was still in the horse and buggy days and distance had much to do with church attendance. So a number of sons and daughters of St. John's congregation decided to organize a congregation and establish a house of worship in their immediate vicinity. Thus St. Luke's congregation in Clinton Township, Fulton County came into being July 3, 1919, and a number of members were released from St. John's congregation.

The following year, April 2, 1911, Herman Westenfeldt resigned as teacher of St. John's school. The congregation then called John Gefeke, of Ellisville, Missouri. Mr. Gefeke was born January 9, 1888, at Archer, Nebraska, and after his confirmation attended the Lutheran Teachers' College in Seward, Nebraska. He graduated from that institution in 1907 and was called to Ellisville, Mo.



Mr. Gefeke

He was installed as teacher of St. John's School by Pastor Fischer the 6th Sunday after Trinity, 1911.

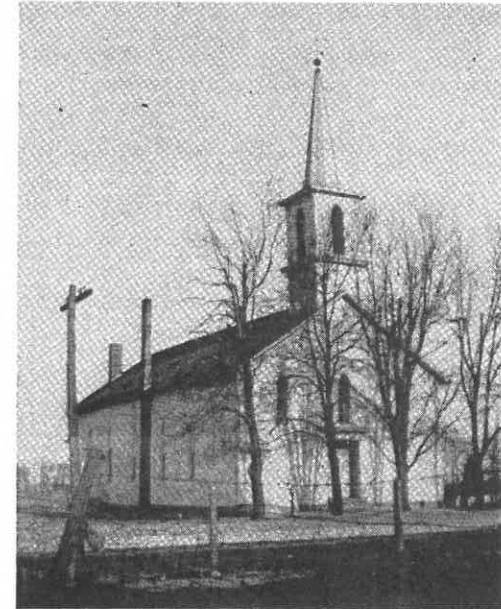
Two years later another important change was effected in the life of St. John's congregation. June 29, 1913 Pastor Fischer submitted his resignation as pastor of the congregation. Although he was still in vigorous health, failing eye-sight made it extremely difficult for him to continue his pastoral activities. The congregation reluctantly accepted the resignation and in a meeting July 13, 1913, called Pastor

G. Thun, of Dashwood Ontario, Canada. At the same time the congregation resolved to purchase another tract of land to erect a parsonage. This real estate, one acre, was purchased from Henry and Sophia Kruse September 9, 1913 and the present parsonage was built in the fall of the same year.

Pastor Fischer was granted a pension by his grateful flock and continued to live among his people for thirteen more years. He died October 9, 1926 at the ripe old age of 84 years, 4 months and 29 days. His funeral sermon was preached by his co-worker and intimate friend, Pastor Theo. Horst, of Toledo. He was laid to rest in the church cemetery, where he had so often officiated. Two years later his widow departed this life and was laid to rest by the side of her husband.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.

Isaiah 52, 7.



Old Church



New Church

**PASTOR GUSTAV THUN**  
1913 - 1931



Pastor Thun

Pastor G. Thun was installed in St. John's church the 15th Sunday after Trinity, 1913, by Pastor W. L. Fischer. Pastor Thun was born in Waasbuettel, Schleswig - Holstein, Germany, October 22, 1878. He received his preparatory training for the Lutheran ministry at Kropp in Schleswig, Germany. Graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., in 1900 he served six years at Mitchell, Ontario, Canada, and seven years at Dashwood, Ontario. He was thirty-five years old when he assumed the pastorate of St. John's congregation.

Two years later the school grounds were enlarged by the purchase of additional land adjoining the west and the north

side of the grounds. The purchase was made from Henry and Carl Behrmann, and the deed duly recorded June 7, 1915.

In 1917 our country was drawn into the First World War. The kind of world that Pastor Fischer and his flock had dwelt in for so many years came to an abrupt end. Quiet, "land-locked" communities, such as that of which St. John's church was the center, were suddenly drawn into the whirlpool of world events. Thirteen young members of St. John's congregation were inducted into the armed forces of their country. They were:

William Riefers	William Dehnbostel	William Precht
Henry Gerken	Fred Bischoff	*John Dehnbostel
*August Badenhop	Carl Rosebrock	John Behnfeldt
Fred Garbers	Fred Von Deylen	
Charles Hurst	Henry Gruenhagen	

August Badenhop fell in action in France. John Dehnbostel died while with the army of occupation in Germany.

With the passing of the horse and buggy days and the coming of automobiles many changes came also into the life of rural people. By the grace of God the members of St. John's congregation recognized the changes that had already occurred and the changes which were yet to come. They thought of the needs of their children and in 1917 resolved to erect a new school-building, even though at that time parochial schools were under suspicion and attack. The building committee consisted of Henry G. Badenhop, John Norden, Henry Von Deylen, Fred Panning, William F. Meyer, Fred Gerken, Pastor G. Thun, and Teacher John Gefeke. The bell in the new school could be rung on Armistice Day. The school was dedicated December 1, 1918. The guest speakers for the occasion were Prof. E. W. A. Koehler, Concordia Teachers' College, River Forest, Illinois, Pastor Theo. Horst of Toledo and Pastor F. A. Kiess of Defiance, Ohio.

How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD.  
Psalm 84, 1. 2.



Miss Schick

Later that same year electric lights were installed in the church and school, parsonage and teacherage.

July 27, 1921, the congregation voted to engage another teacher, who was to teach the primary grades. Miss Louise J. Schick, who was born in Norwalk, Ohio, August 13, 1901, was given this position.

March 23, 1922, the congregation purchased two more acres of land from Mrs. Emma Badenhop. It is that tract of land which has been developed into the "new" cemetery on the south side of the church.

September 21, 1919, the congregation observed the 50th anniversary of its organization. The guest speaker in the morning service was Pastor H. Witte, of Pekin, Illinois. He spoke on Matth. 21, 1-9. In the afternoon Pastor J. H. Meyer, a son of St. John's, preached on Sam. 7, 12: "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Pastor Thun read a brief history of the congregation and Pastor Fischer addressed the assembly on Gen. 32, 10: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou has showed unto Thy servant."



The Parsonage

PASTOR GEORGE MAASSEL  
1931



Pastor Maassel

The present pastor of St. John's was installed the 25th Sunday after Trinity, November 22, 1931, by Pastor Adolph Eggers. Pastor Maassel was born near Hamler, Ohio, July 2, 1897, graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, June 9, 1921, and served two years in a mission field at New Underwood, South Dakota. Since 1923 he had been pastor of St. John's congregation near Sherwood, Ohio.

In the spring of 1932 the congregation authorized the organization of a Young People's Society. A preliminary meeting of young people was held May 20, 1932. In a meeting June 7 a constitution was approved and the society was organized July 5 with 72 members signing the constitution.

On Sunday, September 11, 1932, the congregation observed the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Mr. John Gefeke as a Lutheran teacher. The pastor preached on Psalm 115, 1. The afternoon was devoted to a get-together on the school grounds.

In accordance with a resolution adopted January 1, 1931, St. John's congregation applied for full voting membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, at the convention of the Central District in Fort Wayne, June 19-23, 1933. The convention voted to receive St. John's congregation, and John Norden, the first delegate to represent St. John's at the convention, signed the synodical constitution in the same name of the congregation.

As the enrollment of St. John's school was now so large that two teachers could no longer be expected to instruct and supervise so many children, the congregation in the summer of 1933 resolved to open a third room in the school and to engage a teacher for the intermediate grades. Elmer Bunsold was assigned to St. John's school by Concordia Teachers' College in River Forest, Illinois. He was born near Marysville, Ohio, September 16, 1913, graduated from Concordia Teachers' College in June 1933, and joined the teaching staff of St. John's School in September 1933.



Mr. Bunsold

Pastor emeritus Adolph Eggers preached in the forenoon, and in the

August 2, 1925 was the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Pastor Thun. This event was observed with a divine service in which Pastor B. Oldenburg delivered the sermon on Psalm 103, 1.2. In the afternoon a social gathering was held on the school grounds, and speeches in a lighter vein were given by the pastors Theo. Horst, of Toledo, H. C. Knust, of Hamler, F. J. Lankenau, of Napoleon, and Albert Dede, of Defiance.

August 7, 1928, the congregation purchased its ninth tract of land to enlarge the school grounds to their present dimensions. The purchase was made from Henry and Alwina Behrmann.

In the meeting of January 1, 1930, a resolution was adopted to modernize the teacher's residence. This resolution was carried out in the course of the year.

1931 marks the close of Pastor Thun's ministry in St. John's congregation. He had been in poor health for several years. February 12, 1931, on the occasion of the first Lenten service of that season he occupied the pulpit of St. John's church for the last time. Pastor emeritus Adolph Eggers, of Ridgeville Corners, Ohio, filled the place of Pastor Thun in the church services, but Pastor Thun continued his pastoral activities until July 10, when he entered Toledo Hospital. A major operation failed to benefit him and he died August 25, 1931 at the age of 52 years, 10 months and 3 days. Funeral services were held in St. John's church August 28. The funeral sermon was delivered by Pastor G. Blievernicht, of Toledo, on Ps. 39, 9: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it." Pastor F. W. G. Mueller, of Florida, Ohio, officiated at the grave.

Official Acts of Pastor G. Thun  
1913 - 1931

Baptisms .....	349
Confirmations .....	283
Marriages .....	117
Births .....	141

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.  
I Corinthians 4, 1. 2.

afternoon Pastor Fred Behrman preached in German and Pastor August Gerken in English.

In the spring of 1934 the congregation adopted a resolution to have one English service a month. The first such service was held the first Sunday in June 1934.

In the summer of 1935 the congregation formally called Teacher Elmer Bunsold for a permanent position in its school, and he was duly installed by the pastor the 11th Sunday after Trinity, Sept. 1, 1935.

In 1936 a number of alterations were made in the church to provide more seating. This was done by enlarging the balcony and installing an electric pipe organ. The organ was dedicated in the service of July 12, 1936.

September 6, 1936 the congregation observed the 25th anniversary of the installation of Teacher John Gefeke. The pastor's sermon for the occasion was based on Genesis 32, 10.

In the New Year's meeting of 1938 the congregation tentatively resolved to institute regular Sunday morning services also in the English language. The first such service was held following the service in the German language on January 23, 1938. In the quarterly meeting in April this arrangement was approved and made permanent. Once a month when there is a Communion Service in the German language the service in English is dropped because of lack of time.

By the summer of 1938 the Young People's Society had become so large, that two groups, Seniors and Juniors, were formed.

In April 1939 the congregation elected a committee to study the conditions of the church building and to propose plans for the complete renovation of the house of worship. This committee consisted of John Badenhop, Henry D. Meyer, Fred Dishop, Karl Meyer Sr., and William F. Meyer. The committee did its work cautiously and diligently and in the summer of 1940 submitted plans drawn by Mr. J. M. E. Riedel, a church architect of Fort Wayne. These plans were adopted by the congregation in the meeting of July 18, 1940, and the contract for the construction work was awarded to Mr. Ernest Behrmann, of Ridgeville Corners, Ohio. September 1, 1940 the last service was held in the "old" church. During the time of building operations regular services were conducted in the school with a loud speaker system provided by Ridgeville High School. Upon the kind invitation of St. Paul's congregation German Communion services were held in St. Paul's Church once a month in the afternoon. The Children's Christmas Eve service and the Christmas Day service were held in the auditorium of Ridgeville High School.

March 23, 1941, the "new" church was solemnly rededicated. Completely new is the tower of the church, the art-glass windows, and the pews in the nave of the church. The electric pipe organ was completely rebuilt and enlarged and the console of the organ was placed in the balcony. After a brief service in the school on dedication day the congregation assembled in church to a German-English service in which Pastor emeritus Adolph Eggers preached in German and

He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children. Psalm 115, 13. 14.

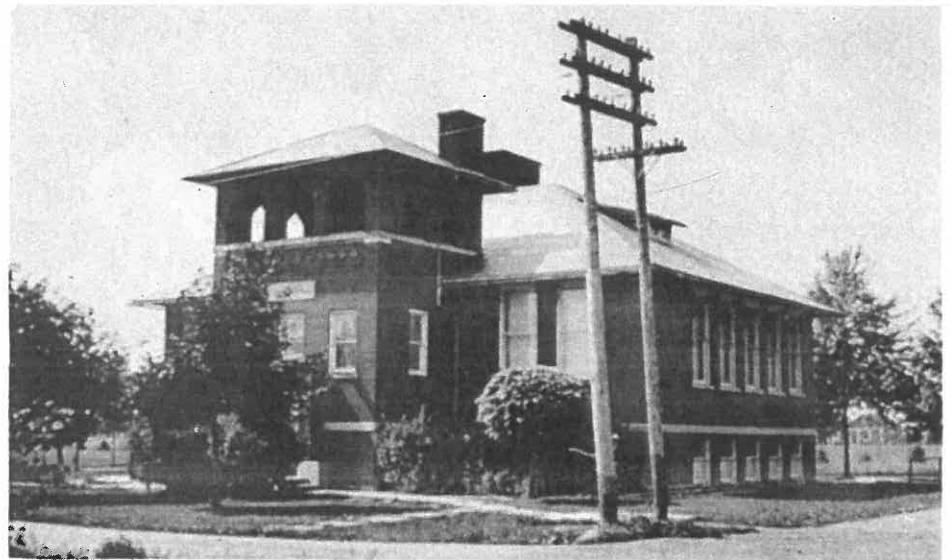
Pastor Walter C. Birkner, Director of Missions of the Central District of the Missouri Synod, preached in English. In the afternoon services, which were largely attended by former members of St. John's and many friends and well-wishers, Pastor W. C. Birkner preached in German and Pastor Martin Zschoche, of St. Paul's, Napoleon, preached in English. In the evening Mr. E. V. Nolte, principal of St. Paul's School in Napoleon, presented a concert on the organ. The school children of St. John's sang in all services.

May 29, 1941, the congregation took note of the completion of twenty years' teaching of Miss Louise J. Schick in St. John's School. In the special service conducted for this occasion the pastor spoke on Romans 16, 1-2; "I commend unto you, Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also."

November 30, 1941 was observed the 10th anniversary of the installation of the pastor. Pastor emeritus H. C. Knust delivered the sermons.

In 1943 St. John's school building had stood 25 years. The congregation had a service of thanksgiving December 5 and President Ottomar Krueger of Concordia College, Fort Wayne, was the guest speaker.

January 2, 1944 the building committee reported that all debts and obligations incurred in the rebuilding of the church had been paid and that St. John's congregation was completely debt-free. Thus St. John's joyfully entered the year of its Diamond Anniversary, 1944.



Ye fathers, bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6, 4 PICTURE OF SCHOOL



## History Of St. John Lutheran Church 1944-1969

St. John's commemorated the 75th anniversary of its founding on July 16, 1944. An outdoor service was held on the school grounds with approximately 2,500 persons in attendance. Dr. Walter A. Maier of the "Lutheran Hour" was the guest speaker. His address was based on Proverbs 22, 28: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." Dr. Maier noted the landmarks or Christian teachings which St. John's had followed throughout the years and exhorted the congregation that they would never be removed. The members then gave thanks to God for the gracious guidance and numerous blessings which he had bestowed on them. The anniversary committee for this memorable occasion consisted of Henry G. Badenhop, Albert Gerken, Ernest Schlueter, John Gefeke, Elmer Bunsold, and Pastor Maassel.

The following Sunday, July 23, 1944, a home-coming service was held with many former members of St. John's present. Two sons of the congregation delivered the anniversary sermons. They were the Rev. John H. Meyer of Lakewood, Ohio and the Rev. August Gerken of Marysville, Ohio.

The tragic effects of war struck deeply into St. John's congregation during World War II. Many members of our congregation were called to duty into the armed forces. Of these several were killed in action. Edgar Gerken was killed in Sicily, Rudolph H. Gerken in Germany, Paul J. Gerken in China, Henry Von Deylen in Germany, and William E. Noske in Italy. Special memorial services were conducted for each of these.

With the passing of the war St. John's entered an era of gradual change. During July of 1945 it was decided to discontinue religious instruction in German in our school. St. John's also experienced a moderate decline in church membership and school enrollment during the years immediately after the war. This was principally a result of changes brought about by the war on the rural life of our members. God, however, never forsook his children and faithfully guided them through this period.

In the fall of 1945 Mr. Bunsold accepted a teaching position with St. Paul's Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas. During his years at St. John's he served the congregation well with his faithful work in the school. He was also remembered for his excellence in directing the Young People's Societies.



Mr. Walter Timm

that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

To replace Mr. Bunsold, Mr. Walter Timm was called. Mr. Timm was born at Detroit, Michigan on November 13, 1899. He was a 1922 graduate of Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois. He taught two years in Conover, North Carolina and approximately twenty years in Detroit schools. Prior to St. John's he taught in Big Rapids, Michigan.

Mr. Timm was installed as principal and teacher of the upper grades of our school on October 7, 1945. The text for this occasion was Hebrews 13, 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they



### LADIES AID

Mrs. Geo. Rabe, Pres.; Mrs. Wm. Hesterman, V-Pres.; Mrs. Fred Rohrs, Sec.; Mrs. Raymond Meyer, Treas.; Mrs. Adolph Damman, Mrs. Walter Delventhal, Mrs. Arnold Norden, Budget Committee.

On November 27, 1945 a meeting was held by the women of the congregation concerning the formation of a ladies organization. As a result the Ladies Aid was organized by the adoption of a constitution on January 24, 1946. The first regular officers of the Ladies Aid were: President, Mrs. Walter Timm; Vice-President, Miss Ida Gerken; Secretary, Mrs. Edwin Bindemann; Treasurer, Mrs. John Gefeke.

On May 26, 1946 the 100th year of Lutheranism in Northwestern Ohio was observed in special services at the Fairgrounds in Napoleon. Members of our congregation were in attendance in a gathering of over 3,000 persons.

In June of the same year our Young People's Societies held their first elections as members of the Walther League. The first officers of the Senior Walther League were: President, Ernest Panning; Vice-President, William Von Deylen; Secretary, Wilma Riefers; and Treasurer, Hildegard Hurst. The first officers of the Junior Walther League were: President, William Schnitkey; Vice-President, Vernon Miller; Secretary, Sydelle Timm; and Treasurer, Mary Ann Rosebrock.



WALTHER LEAGUE

Counselors: Mr. and Mrs. Donald Niebergall, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Maassel, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Norden. Officers: Debra Rosebrock, President; Marlene Gruenhagen, V-Pres.; Delores Kruse, Sec.; Joyce Winkelman, Treas.

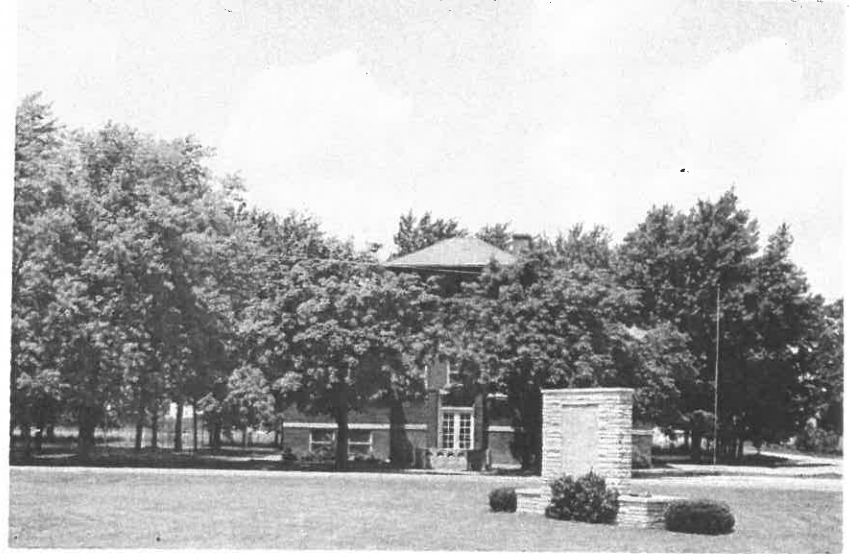
During this period St. John's embarked on several building projects. Construction of an additional teacherage was started in the fall of 1946. In 1947 improvements were made in the water supply and drainage systems at the school. Plans were also made to construct an annex to the school.

Also on April 27, 1947 a special service was held in our church to observe the Centennial Anniversary of the Missouri Synod.

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Henry Buchhop, Edwin  
Rosebrock, Delbert Dam-  
man.



The school annex was completed in the fall of 1948. In addition, a new furnace and improved lighting facilities were installed in the school. The annex provided our school with an additional classroom, a library, a recreation room, and modern restroom facilities. The committee in charge of these improvements included Otto Dehnbostel, Albert Gerken, William Riefers, Henry Schlueter, and George Wiemken.



PICTURE OF SCHOOL

On December 5, 1948 the 30th anniversary of the school's dedication was observed. The new annex was also dedicated on this date. Pastor E. T. Schmidtke of Decatur, Indiana assisted Pastor Maassel in the services.

On September 23, 1951 the congregation acknowledged the forty years Mr. Gefeke and the thirty years Miss Schick had served as teachers in our school. They were honored for their years of faithful service in instructing the children in the way of the Lord. In addition to being excellent instructors, they were capable choir directors who often led the children in singing praises to God. It was noted at this time that Mr. Gefeke had taught the first ten years alone until Miss Schick undertook the lower grades in 1921. He served as the congregation's lone organist for over twenty years. He had also served as secretary of the congregation for approximately thirty-years and acted as "fireman" or attendant of the school's heating system for forty years.

Miss Schick was sometimes referred to as the "Mother" of the Sunday School. In 1950 she undertook supervision of the Sunday School and served as its first superintendent. The Young People's Societies also owed much to Miss Schick for her never-failing assistance in direction of their activities.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.  
2 Timothy, 4, 8.



#### SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Louis Meyer, Albert Dehnbostel, Richard Wachtman, Ted Bostelman, asst. supt.; Marvin Gruenhagen, supt.; Donald Niebergall, Elmer Dishop, Dorothy Gerken, Evelyn Rohrs, Arlene Flory, Marilyn Gruenhagen, Norma Damman, Lorna Von Deylen, Margaret Miller, Delores Badenhop, Phyllis Silveus, Irene Bickel, Mary Ann Gerken, Elaine Hesterman, Irma Rohrs, Susan Rohrs, Margaret Meyer, Susan Damman, Nancy Meyer, Barbara Elling, Karen Niebergall.

The following Sunday, September 30, Mr. Gefeke and Miss Schick wrote a brief eulogy of Pastor Maassel for the Sunday Bulletin. They mentioned that Pastor Maassel had now completed twenty years as pastor of St. John's. The Walther League, Bible Class, Ladies Aid, and Sunday School owed their beginnings to him. He had been a member of the Synod's Committee on Lutheran Unity, served nine years on the Board for Parish Education of the Central District, and was visitor of our Circuit G since 1942. They remarked that Pastor Maassel was always willing to assist anyone and that St. John's had truly prospered under his leadership. St. John's was indeed thankful that God had permitted his servants to labor fruitfully in our midst.



#### MEN'S CLUB

Loren Volkman, Pres.; Norman Fitzenreiter, V-Pres.; Arnold Fitzenreiter, Sec.; Earl Elling, Treas.

Also during 1951 members of our congregation became affiliated with the Lutheran Layman's League. As a result a Men's Club which promoted the activities of the Lutheran Layman's League was organized on September 23, 1952. Its first officers were: President, Henry Huner; Vice-President, Otto Dehnbostel; Secretary, John Fritz; and Treasurer, Henry Schlueter.

At this time the women of the congregation formed an organization for the promotion of missions. Permission was granted during the voters meeting of January 6, 1952 for the organization of a chapter of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. St. John's chapter was formally organized on April 29, 1952. Its first officers were: Chairman, Mrs. Lillian Ruetz; Secretary, Mrs. Meta Timm; and Treasurer, Mrs. Henrietta Huner.

#### LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

Barbara Tietje, President; Elaine Hesterman, V-Pres.; Lois Arps, Sec.; Margaret Meyer, Treas.; Marilyn Gruenhagen, Christ-Growth Chairman.



Throughout 1952 our congregation participated in the "Conquest for Christ" program to raise funds for our colleges, seminaries, and missions. St. John's joined other congregations with generous contributions to the success of this program.

In 1954 the church basement was modernized by the installation of a water pressure system, restrooms, and new heating equipment.

In October of 1954 Mr. Timm accepted a call from a congregation in Auburn, Michigan. Mr. Eugene A. Sattler of San Antonio, Texas was then called as principal and teacher of the upper grades. Mr. Sattler was originally from Wisconsin and graduated from Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois in 1952. Since he was unable

I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.  
Psalm 116, 17. 18.



Mr. Eugene Sattler

to begin teaching until January of 1955; August F. Gerken, a member of St. John's, was employed as an interim teacher.

Mr. Sattler was duly installed on January 2, 1955. The sermon for this occasion was based on Mark 10, 13-16. During that year an adult choir was organized under Mr. Sattler's direction. In addition, St. John's took part in the "Building for Christ" program in 1955. Funds designated for this were used to support various Lutheran service agencies.

On the 18th of November, 1956 our congregation noted that Pastor Maassel had completed thirty-five years of faith-

service in the ministry, including twenty-five years at St. John's. Ottomar Krueger, President of the Central District of the Missouri Synod, was engaged as guest speaker and spoke on Jeremiah 3, 15: "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." All nine of Pastor Maassel's children were in attendance. Two of his sons took part in the service.

In May of 1957 it was resolved to remodel the parsonage. This resolution was carried out during the course of the year.

The Sunday service of September 1, 1957 was devoted to praise and thanksgiving for Mr. Gefeke's fifty years of service in the teaching ministry. A nephew of Mr. Gefeke, Pastor Louis H. Koehler of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Detroit, was the guest speaker and spoke on Psalm 71, 8: "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day."

Due to declining health Mr. Gefeke resigned on April 17, 1958. For the balance of the school year members of the upper grades conducted the classes of the intermediate grades under Mr. Sattler's supervision.

The congregation showed their appreciation with a Thanksgiving service for Mr. Gefeke on June 22, 1958. The Pastor spoke on Psalm 90, 17: "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Inclusive of June 30, 1958 Mr. Gefeke completed forty-six years, eleven months, and seven days as a teacher at St. John's. Mr. and Mrs. Gefeke are presently residing in Napoleon.

Donald Niebergall of Kansas City, Missouri was called to replace Mr. Gefeke. He was a 1958 graduate of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska and was installed on August 24, 1958. Pastor Maassel preached on Ephesians 6, 1-4.

On November 18, 1958 St. John's observed the 75th anniversary of the church's dedication.

In January of 1959 the church was renovated somewhat by a complete repainting of its interior. A remodeling of the old teacherage was also undertaken at this time.



CHOIR

Back Row: Henry Gerken, William Von Deylen, Arnold Bischoff, Norville Volkman, Donald Arps, Eldor Gruenhagen, Donald Bischoff, Harold Behrman, Norman Fitzenreiter. Center: Mr. Meyer, director; Loren Volkman, Evelyn Rohrs, Norma Behnfeldt, Marilyn Gruenhagen, Luella Dehnpostel, Phyllis Silveus, Irene Buchhop, Marian Buchhop, Lucia Rosebrock, Martin Damman. Seated: Carolyn Meyer, Linda Volkman, Irene Bickel, Irma Rohrs, Nancy Short, Dorothy Ruetz, Rebecca Laurent, Eleonore Bischoff.

As the new school year approached, Mr. Sattler received a call from a congregation in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He accepted this call and departed on October 15, 1959. During Mr. Sattler's stay the programs and activities in the school were expanded. He also did excellent work in directing the choirs of the congregation. Thus, St. John's was again in need of a teacher and called upon God for guidance in obtaining a replacement.



Mr. John Springer of San Diego, California was called on October 4, 1959 to replace Mr. Sattler. Mr. Springer was a 1952 graduate of Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois. He was installed as principal and teacher of the upper grades on Sunday evening, November 22, 1959.

During the latter part of 1959 St. John's participated in the Preaching, Teaching, Reaching Mission program. The purpose was to acquaint the congregation with the need for mission work in the surrounding area. Members of St. John's along with many other persons in the area were informed about their Savior. This program was consummated with a Mission Week from October 25-29. Church services were held each evening to further explain the Christian faith. Pastor Omar Rau of Trinity Lutheran Church, Darmstadt, Indiana, was the guest missionary for these services.

We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banner. Psalm 20, 6.

December 27, 1959 marked the completion of twenty-five years of publication of St. John's Bulletin. Its issuance was made possible largely through the efforts of the Young People's Societies and the Walther Leagues. On September 6, 1959 its publication became the responsibility of the congregation.

In 1960 a basketball court was constructed on the school grounds. On October 2 of that year the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Sunday School was observed.

Early on the morning of March 4, 1961 our church, which had existed since 1883, was completely destroyed by fire. This fire was presumably caused by lightning. The loss of their house of worship was deeply mourned by the members of St. John's. The loss, however, was partially covered by insurance. Words of sympathy and condolences were received from many individuals in the surrounding area. Offers to make use of their facilities to conduct our worship services were received from several neighboring congregations. The congregation decided, however, to accept the invitation extended by officials of Ridgeville High School. English services were conducted in the School Auditorium and Sunday School classes in the General Purpose Room. German services were held in the basement of the school. Zion Lutheran Church in Ridgeville Corners and St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Napoleon were used occasionally for funerals and special services.

In the period following, St. John's gratefully acknowledged many contributions toward a building fund for a new church. Generous donations were received from area churches, firms, and individuals. The members of St. John's also gave generously toward the enlargement of this fund.

### BUILDING A NEW CHURCH

To plan for a new church, a building committee was elected on March 12, 1961. This committee consisted of Walter Delventhal, President; Wilfred Hesterman, Secretary; John Rosebrock, Harry Von Deylen, and Martin Damman. On April 7 William H. Manor of Bellefontaine, Ohio was engaged as architect for the new church.



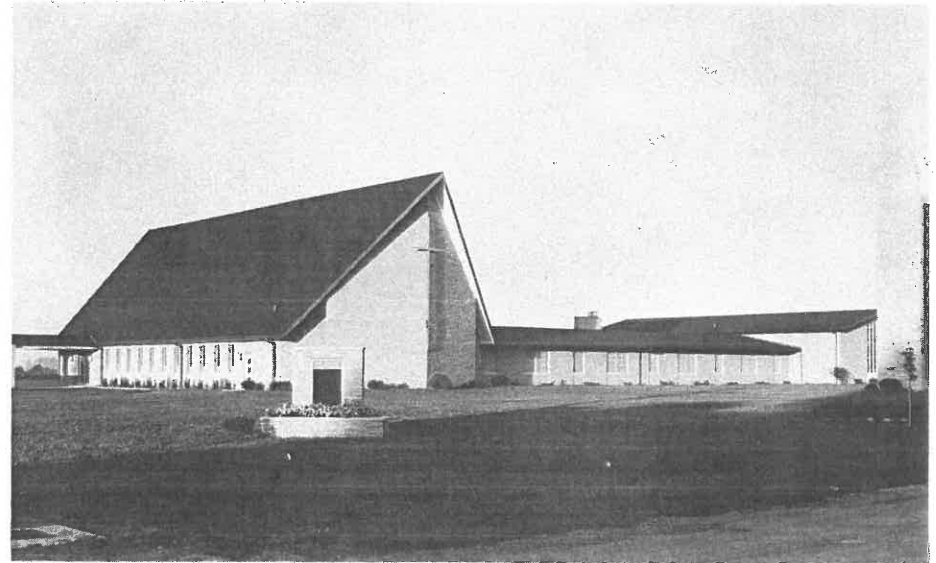
BUILDING COMMITTEE

L to R: M. Damman, H. VonDeylen, J. Rosebrock, W. Hesterman, W. Delventhal, Chm., G. Maassel.

On June 26 a finance committee was elected. Serving on this committee were John F. Gerken, Richard Gerken, William Hesterman, Theodore Meyer, and Ernest Schlueter. It was decided at this meeting to erect the new church on the corner south of the school. Five acres were purchased from Mr. Albert Gerken for this purpose. A plan of the new church was also selected at this meeting. Since several details could not be decided upon at this meeting, a continuance of it was held on July 11. Decisions to purchase an organ and to construct a bell and tower were made.

St. John's also observed two anniversaries during 1961. On August 27 Miss Schick was honored for her forty years of service as teacher of the primary grades in our school. Pastor L. J. Rausch preached in German and Pastor Martin Ilse in English. Pastor Maassel was honored on September 3 with a special service in recognition of thirty years of service in the ministry at St. John's. The text for this service was Acts 9, 1-9; 17-22.

Also noteworthy of 1961 was the decision of the December 3 voters' meeting to incorporate St. John's congregation. Henceforth, our church was legally titled St. John Lutheran Church.



As planning for the new church was nearing completion in January of 1962, a voters' meeting was held on January 28. Contracts for the construction and furnishing of the new church were approved in this meeting. Total cost was estimated at \$347,500.

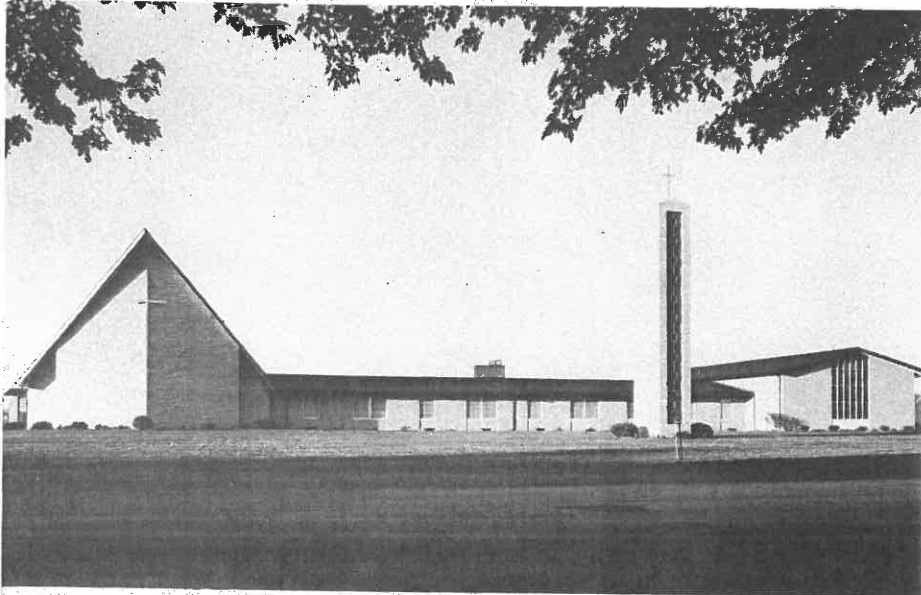
The ground-breaking service was held in the school on the afternoon of March 11. Pastor Maassel spoke on Ezra 3, 11: "And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12, 3

Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." In the ground-breaking ceremony which followed, ground was broken where the altar of the new church would later be placed. Actual construction, however, was begun on March 27, 1962.

Another honor was bestowed upon Pastor Maassel on May 30, 1962. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod conferred upon him the title Doctor of Divinity. The citation to him read: "Faithful shepherd of rural parishes for 41 years; leader in his District and in intersynodical and doctrinal discussions."

On July 1, 1962 a service of recognition was given for Pastor Maassel. Rev. E. H. Zimmerman, Stewardship Secretary, Fort Wayne, was the guest preacher. The text of the sermon was II. Timothy 2, 20-21: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." It was noted at this time that he had served as chairman of the District Board of Christian and held the post of First Vice-President of the Central District. He was a member of the Doctrinal Unity Committee of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod since 1950 and served as its chairman since 1958. Doctor Maassel also contributed to the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, and to doctrinal, sermonic, and devotional literature. On occasion, he served as convention essayist.



The cornerstone of the new church was laid on Mission Festival Sunday, July 29, 1962. It was laid following the forenoon service with Pastor Maassel officiating. Others participating in the ceremony were the architect, the contractor, the mason, Walter Delventhal, Richard Gerken, and Fred Damman. In addition to an English and a German Bible, various other publications and articles were placed in the cornerstone.

Upon completion of construction in March of 1963, the church was dedicated to the glory of God on March 31, 1963 with morning and afternoon services. The bell of the new church, following the congregation's custom, was rung for the first time the previous evening. Pastor Maassel then led his flock the following morning in dedication of the church. Prior to entering its portals, he offered prayers in thanksgiving to God. He then led the various officials and committees in charge of construction, and the congregation into the church. Pastor Maassel officiated in the forenoon service and preached on 1 Chronicles 16, 29: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." A service of praise was held in the afternoon. Pastor Robert E. Meier, Associate Pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, was the guest speaker. "The Church - A Hallowed Place" was the theme of his sermon. The children's choir and the adult choir sang praises to God in both services. Following the afternoon service the women of the congregation sponsored a get-together in the fellowship hall adjoining the church. It was truly evident that day that God had bountifully blessed St. John congregation.

**PIANNIST - ORGANIST**

Henrietta Huner, Irene Bickel, Shirley Sonnenberg, organist; Darlene Badenhop, Karen Behnfeldt, pianist.



The pipe organ for the new church was dedicated on October 20, 1963. Mr. August C. Stellhorn, organist at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, was the guest organist.

**PARENT-TEACHER LEAGUE**

Mary Ann Gerken, Sec.-Treas.; Norville Volkman, President.



September 24, 1964 marked the first Parent-Teacher meeting. The purpose was discussion of affairs and matters pertaining to the school. An organization was formed and officers elected. Mr. Norman Fitzreiter was elected chairman; Mrs. William Von Deylen, secretary; Mr. and Mrs. Donald Badenhop, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Damman, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Delventhal, and the teachers, the program committee.

On March 9, 1965 Pastor Maassel died suddenly of a heart attack. He was mortally stricken at a Pastoral Conference in Van Wert. His congregation and others who knew him were deeply shocked over his passing. Funeral services for him were held on March 13 in the church he dedicated two years earlier. Many persons attended the service in respect for the man they knew and loved. Doctor Maassel served his God as faithful pastor of rural parishes for forty-three years, including thirty-three at St. John congregation.

The Rev. Ottomar Krueger, D. D. and President of the Ohio District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, preached the funeral sermon in German. He spoke on Psalm 116, 15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." The English sermon was delivered by the Rev. Walter C. Birkner, D.D. and Secretary of Missions and Church Extension - Indiana District. He preached on Luke 18, 31: "Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." The children's choir sang "In the Midst of Earthly Life" between the sermons. Doctor Maassel was laid to rest in the church cemetery where he had so often officiated.

To guide the congregation through the ensuing period, the Rev. Fred Boelter, Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Ridgeville Corners, and Prof. Werner Wadewitz of Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne served as vacancy pastors. They served ably and faithfully until St. John received another pastor.

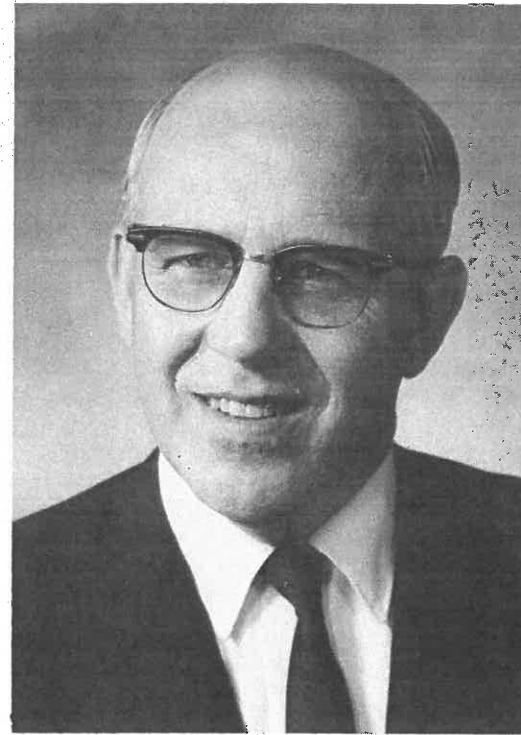
Another service of recognition was given in honor of Miss Schick on May 23, 1965. She had now completed forty-four years at St. John's. Her retirement from the teaching ministry was effective upon completion of the school year. Rev. E. A. Laabs preached on Psalm 107, 1: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever." At the time of the Centennial observance, she is residing at the Lutheran Home for the Aged, Westlake, Ohio.

#### PASTOR BICKEL BEGINS HIS MINISTRY HERE

On May 25, 1965 a call was extended to Rev. Adolf M. Bickel of Sebewaing, Michigan. He formally accepted our call on June 13, 1965. Rev. Bickel was born on July 14, 1920 at Birch Run, Michigan. After vicaring at Scribner, Nebraska he graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1945. His first call as pastor was to Grande Prairie, Alberta. After four years there he accepted a call to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Shelby, Michigan. In 1956 he assumed the pastorate at St. John's Lutheran Church, Kilmanagh, Michigan. He served there until he accepted the call to St. John congregation.

For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.

I Corinthians 9, 16.



PASTOR BICKEL

Rev. Bickel was installed in an afternoon service on July 25, 1965. A brother of Pastor Bickel, the Rev. Eldor Bickel of Lansing, Michigan, delivered the sermon. The text was Joshua 3, 1-6: "What saith my Lord unto His servants." Rev. L. Rauch performed the rite of installation. The congregation then gave thanks unto God for granting a pastor to guide them. After the service an informal reception was held for Pastor Bickel and family in the fellowship hall.

To replace Miss Schick, Miss Ada Theel of Napoleon was hired as teacher of grades one and two. She was inducted during the Sunday service of August 29, 1965. However, due to failing health, Miss Theel was unable to continue teaching in October, 1965. Mr. Herman Neilsen of Wau-

seon and Mrs. Estella Hoffman of Ridgeville Corners were hired on a temporary basis to carry on the classes. Early in 1966 Mrs. Theodore Bostleman, a member of our congregation, became teacher of the primary grades.

During the voters' meeting of May 15, 1966 it was resolved to permit transportation of our children to school in public school buses. Formerly, transportation of the children was done by private automobiles.

In July, 1966 Mr. Walter Obst accepted the position as teacher of the primary grades. Previously, he had taught many years in Toledo schools. He was formally inducted on August 21, 1966. Mrs. Bickel also taught on a part-time basis during this year.

Since enrollment in the school had increased substantially over previous years, a call was extended for a fourth teacher. Mr. Arthur Winters of Washington, Missouri was called to fill this position. He graduated from Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska on January 25, 1967 and was installed here on January 29, 1967. The text of Pastor Bickel's sermon was Ephesians 4, 10-12: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Mr. Winters then served as teacher of the third and fourth grades.

During 1967 the congregation gave thanks unto God through the Ebenezer program. In gratefulness for his manifold blessings, the members observed their birthdays by offering gifts of thanksgiving unto Him.

In January of 1968 notice was made that Mr. Springer would terminate his position as teacher at the close of the school year. To replace him, a call was extended to Mr. Louis O. Meyer of Manistee, Michigan. Mr. Meyer was born on October 22, 1932 in Tuscola, Michigan and graduated in 1957 from Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois. He was installed as principal and teacher of the upper two grades on July 28, 1968. The text of Pastor Bickel's sermon was Mark 10, 14.

St. John congregation observed another eventful anniversary on December 1, 1968. This was the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the school building.

Early in 1969 Pastor Bickel suffered a moderate heart attack. He recovered fully and was able to resume his duties in the spring of that year. While he was recovering, Prof. Werner Wadewitz and Rev. Fred Boelter of Ridgeville Corners served as vacancy pastors. Special



TEACHERS

Louis Meyer, Donald Niebergall, Walter Obst, Arthur Winters.

services during this period were conducted by area pastors.

On January 27, 1969 Mrs. Clara Maassel, wife of Pastor Maassel, was called to her Heavenly Home. She was laid to rest beside her husband on January 30 with Rev. Fred Boelter officiating. He chose Revelations 14, 13 as the text for his sermon.

Also noteworthy at this time was the completion of Mr. Obst's 45th year in the teaching ministry. He faithfully taught many years in Toledo prior to joining our faculty in 1966.

Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua 1, 9.

**Sacred Acts**

Pastor George Maassel 1931 - 1965 <sup>65</sup>

Baptisms .....	592
Confirmations .....	510
Marriages .....	196
Burials .....	198

**Vacancy - 1965**

Baptisms .....	5
Confirmations .....	17
Marriages .....	8
Burials .....	4

**Pastor A. M. Bickel 1965 - 1968**

Baptisms .....	51
Confirmations .....	42
Marriages .....	20
Burials .....	22

**All Sacred Acts 1869 - January 1969**

Baptisms .....	1810
Confirmations .....	1356
Marriages .....	518
Burials .....	598

**PASTORS, TEACHERS, AND PARISH WORKER**

In the past hundred years the following members of our congregation completed preparation for full-time service in the church.

PASTORS	Lawrence Gefeke	
John Meyer	Adele Norden	Eunice Gerke
Fred Behrman	Marianne Damman	Ronald Zumfelde
August Gerken	Harold Panning	
Paul Maassel	Miriam Maassel	
Richard Maassel	Judith Gerken	
TEACHERS	PARISH WORKER	
Adof Fischer	Harriet Huner	
August Gerken		

In August, 1969, St. John Lutheran Church will, God willing, observe the Centennial Anniversary of its founding. For one hundred years the Lord has graciously guided and blessed us. In these hundred years we have passed through quiet times and sometimes very perilous times. But God has always been beside us and guided us.

As we look to the future we know He will not fail us, for He has promised His Church "Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20.

Abide, O faithful Savior  
 Amongst us with Thy love.  
 Grant steadfastness and help us  
 To reach our home above. Amen.



**MEMBERS WHO SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES OF OUR COUNTRY TO APRIL 1, 1944:**

ARTHUR G. NOSKE	CLARENCE J. BISCHOFF	HERMAN H. BADENHOP
ERNEST DISHOP	ELMER VON DEYLEN	HENRY VON DEYLEN
WILLIAM E. NOSKE	HENRY VON SEGGERN	ELDOR KRUSE
EDGAR PLASSMAN	FRANKLIN PLASSMANN	RAYMOND BOSTELMANN
WILLIAM H. MEYER	WILLIAM RUETZ	LESTER W. R. MAASSEL
NORMAN G. GEFEKE	WALTER DAMMANN	HAROLD HUNER
WALTER C. GERKEN	RAYMOND HOGREFE	ALFRED KRUSE
ARNOLD HOGREFE	EDMUND VON DEYLEN	ELMER F. BEHNFELDT
EDGAR GERKEN	PAUL J. GERKEN	EDWIN BINDEMANN
JOHN H. DEHNBOSTEL	ELDOR VOLKMANN	WALTER DELVENTHAL
ARTHUR H. MEYER	RAYMOND HUNER	PAUL BISCHOFF
ELMER H. KRUSE	RAYMOND PANNING	DELMAR H. MAASSEL
HAROLD RUETZ	EDMUND RAUCH	RUDOLPH GERKEN
FRED PANNING	NORMAN GRUENHAGEN	EDWIN BAHLER
EMIL PANNING	FERDINAND MOHRING	

**MEMBERS WHO SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES OF OUR COUNTRY FROM APRIL 1, 1944 -- AUGUST 1, 1969:**

Anita Plassman	Julian Gerken	Marvin Behnfeldt
Donald Homan	Robert Ludeman	Carlton Badenhop
Norman Miller	Walter Rosebrock	Roger Behnfeldt
Elmer Gerken	John Damman	Thomas Laurent
Norman Volkman	Arthur Hesterman	Marvin Sonnenberg
Harold Rosebrock	Howard Gerken	Norville Volkman
Martin Damman	Edwin Delventhal	Lavern Volkman
Henry A. Huner	Raymond Wesche	Loren Volkman
Harold Behrmann	William Von Deylen	Arnold Bunke
Lawrence Bahler	Raymond Zumfelde	Roger Mahnke
Arnold Von Deylen	Marvin Vajen	Reldon Bischoff
Walter Hogrefe	Eldon Badenhop	Frederick Bischoff
Rudolph Dehnbostel	Victor Kruse	Eldon Kruse
Raymond Meyer	Harold Von Deylen	Lester Behnfeldt
Lawrence Langenhop	Werner Badenhop	Dennis Schlueter
Eldor Von Deylen	Henry O. Bischoff	Gary Nye
Albert Dehnbostel	Donald Hurst	Laverne Gerken
Donald Gerken	Elmer Badenhop	Roger Sonnenberg
Donald Badenhop	Victor Gerken	William Miller
Norman Fitzenreiter	Walter Houglan	Ronald Fuhrhop
Arnold Damman	Arnold Rosebrock	John Ruetz
John Damman	Vernon Damman	Lester Damman
Wilfred Hesterman	Marvin Buchhop	Laverne Sonnenberg
Harold Ruetz	Marvin Gruenhagen	Elmer Maassel
Donald Cordes	Franklin Damman	Robert Norden
Kenneth Gerken	Donald Dickman	James Hogrefe
Vernon Holers	Walter Riefers	Dennis Behnfeldt
Eldor Wesche	Robert Gerken	Ralph Badenhop
Norman Kruse	Donald Bischoff	Jerry Short
Wilfred Gerken	Marvin Zumfelde	Lee Roy Norden
Ervin H. Bischoff	Richard Stockman	Gene Homan
Henry Bahler Jr.	Larry Holers	Gary Meyer
Ernest Panning	Delbert Damman	Donald Maassel
Arnold Bischoff	Vernon Von Deylen	Leroy Sonnenberg
Donald Kruse	Harold Kern	Randall Damman
Vernon Tietje	Lowell Flory	John Vajen
Robert Houser	Roland Bunke	Lyman Norden

**A Few Interesting Facts Revealed  
By The Church Records**

The first child to be baptized in St. John's congregation was Mary, the daughter of Henry and Elizabeth Meyer, born July 3, 1869; baptized September 19, 1869.

The first Confirmation class was confirmed April 6, 1873. The members of the class were: Hermann Glanz, Hermann Luensmann, George Eggers and Doris Quell.

The first marriage was that of Fred Oelfke and Lena Lueders, December 13, 1872.

The first burial was that of nine months old Emma Kruse, infant daughter of Christoph Kruse and Mary, nee Gebers. She was buried July 17, 1872.

The first twins born in St. John's congregation were Henry and Wilhelmine Steffens. They were born August 11, 1878.

The oldest person buried from St. John's church was Christoph Witte, who died July 2, 1902 at the age of 97 years, 7 months and 26 days. He was buried July 6, 1902.

The largest number of baptisms occurred in 1903 when 36 children were baptized.

The largest confirmation class was that of 1917 when 25 children renewed their baptismal vow.

The largest number of marriages to be solemnized in one year was 13 in 1928.

The largest number of burials in one year was during the epidemic of Influenza in 1918 when a total of 15 persons were given Christian burial.

The last of the charter members of St. John's to depart this life was Henry Scheele, who died April 4, 1933, at the age of 83 years.

**Statistics for 1968.**

Communicants .....	516	Sunday School Staff .....	37
Souls .....	704	Contributions for	
Voters .....	136	Home .....	\$63,990
Pupils in School .....	113	Contributions for	
Teachers .....	4	Charities and Synod ....	\$19,531
Sunday School and		Communion Registration ..	2211
Jr. Bible Classes .....	258		

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy Name, O most High: to show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.  
Psalm 92, 1. 2.

EARLIEST HISTORICAL RECORDS

Few churches have as complete a record of their Church's history as we do. We have the original Church Book in the Church safe. On the first page we find the following message by Pastor Beroset;

"A Short Summary of the Founding and Beginning of the Evangelical Lutheran Christian Congregation in Freedom Township, Henry County, Ohio, in the year 1869."

"The beginning, for founding this congregation took place in 1869, Pastor Strauss preached there once. Since there were prospects of founding a Church at this place, and he could not carry this out because he already had too much work, Pastor Strauss requested Pastor Beroset to continue what was begun and found a Church. This I did and preached there every 14 days since August, 1869. On the first day of the year 1871, a congregational meeting was held for the purpose of designating a place for the Church and cemetery. This decision was made at this meeting by a majority vote. In this meeting, arrangements were also made to build a Church."

Following this short report the first Constitution is recorded. This summary is then continued by a short history that was written by Pastor L. W. Dulitz. He writes - -

"The Evangelical Lutheran St. Johns Congregation in Freedom Township (The place was later called Lueneburg) was provided with Word and Sacrament by Mr. Beroset, a Pastor of the Iowa Synod. But when the congregation did not believe it had to obey the pastor regarding the reception of a man into membership, Pastor Beroset forsok the congregation. The congregation then called Mr. Karrer in Napoleon of the Missouri Synod to serve it from Napoleon as an added Church. After a short time Pastor Karrer was called away from Napoleon. Thereby the Church at Lueneburg was compelled to call another pastor. Therefore in cooperation with four other neighboring congregations, it called Pastor L. Dulitz of Huntington, Indiana. He was installed on June, 1872, by Pastor A. Detzer of Defiance. The congregation in Lueneburg increased so much in 10 years that the old log church simply could not hold all the listeners and a new church had to be built. On November 18, 1883, it was dedicated with prayer and reading of God's Word by Pastor Dulitz and through sermons by Pastors Reichhardt and Detzer.

About this time, Pastor Dulitz was afflicted by repeated headaches that continued to increase. It repeatedly became a hindrance to carrying out his duties. Therefore on May, 1884, he took a four months vacation in hope that rest and travel and other things might with God's help, restore his health. But since his health was not restored during that time to take care of his churches, he resigned on August 31, 1884."

These are the two earliest records of the history of our Church. Some very interesting details are noted. The most surprising is that this community was called Lueneburg. This name was taken from a city in Germany. It was no doubt used as we speak of the Hannover Settlement in Napoleon Twp. A reasonable explanation for the term Hannover Settlement being retained while Lueneburg was lost, lies in the fact that Napoleon Township was not adequately distinctive from Napoleon while Freedom Township supplied adequate identity and to speak of Lueneburg Settlement was superfluous.

The other is the disagreement between Pastor Berzset and the congregation. In Germany the members of the congregation had very little to say over church policy. It was in the hands of the clergy. This policy was brought to the United States. But the Saxons immigrants had a very sad experience that taught them that responsibility for the Church's policies is not in the clergy but is the responsibilities of the members. Thus the sovereignty of the congregation in matters not decided by God's Word was again stressed as the Scripture stresses it. But Missouri's stress on the authority of the local congregation brought it into disagreement with Loehle and other leaders. Loehle sponsored the Iowa Synod. The question was repeatedly put to the test whether the congregation would have any say so in matters of policy. Quite a number of churches joined the Missouri Synod when some pastors insisted that the congregation do it their way in all matters.

We can thank the Lord for putting our Saxon leaders to the test. Interest and leadership of lay people has been a very blessed aspect of Lutheranism in America. Eventually all Lutheran Churches adopted a policy much like that of the Missouri Synod.

So much could be noted in addition regarding these first historical records.

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WE EXTEND a warm welcome to all who have joined us in worship this morning, and pray God's blessing upon your worship. Please sign our guest book.

Today we extend a special welcome to those present for the reunion of classes from 1930-1949.

The ladies will serve the noon meal. Be our guests and enjoy memorable moments of Christian Fellowship.

HIS TOO - Our Centennial Thankoffering to be received in the afternoon service August 17th is for His Too (Bethesda and other institutions for Handicapped). Please pick up your envelopes in Church entrance. The Deacons will assist you.

LADIES SERVING - The Chairmen for next Sunday's dinner are Mrs. John Kruse and Mrs. Adolph Langenhop. For August 17th - Mrs. John Rosebrock and Mrs. Lillian Ruetz. We're very grateful for the fine co-operation last Sunday. May the Lord bless the willing efforts of all. We are confident of receiving the same co-operation throughout our Centennial.

FLOWERS FOR "THIS IS THE LIFE" RALLY will be welcomed by the decoration committee. If you would like to donate some flowers from your garden, have them at Church by 6:00 P.M. on August 9. Place them in a disposable bottle with the top cut out. This will eliminate the returning of vases. The committee thanks you for your cooperation.

IN THE HOSPITAL - Mr. Carl Stockman was admitted to Wauseon Hospital on Wednesday for surgery Thursday. May the Lord grant him a speedy convalescence.