

The First 150 Years: History of St. John

by Donna Weber

Faces and names have come and gone at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church. Births, deaths and marriages have changed the make-up of the congregation.

The dedication to worship and Christian education, however, have remained constant. This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of our congregation.

An article in the "Fort Wayne Journal" from 1897 discussing early churches in Fort Wayne includes a mention of St. John's. "St John's Lutheran church was founded in the year 1853. The congregation was small and weak, and dissensions at first hindered its growth. Difficulties, however, were finally overcome, and for twenty-five years the church has had a prosperous existence."

Our Origins

Henry Rudisill, arriving in Fort Wayne in 1829, found no organized Lutheran church. Although he and his wife were invited to join other Protestant congregations, they wanted to remain Lutherans. He addressed letters to both the Lutheran Boards of Immigration and a mission society in the east with the request to direct new Lutheran immigrants to Fort Wayne. There eventually came a fair number in response and in 1837, the First Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized. It was also the first Lutheran church in Indiana, and was known as "The German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Fort Wayne". The name was changed to St. Paul in 1846.

Dr. William Sihler was the Pastor of St. Paul's during the time our congregation was formed. In 1846, a number of members wished to attend services in the English language, which Dr. Sihler spoke poorly. There was no friction when this group, led by Mr. Rudisill, started Trinity English Lutheran Church. However, a mention was made in St. Paul's 125th anniversary history book that "withdrawal of members in 1852 to organize the local St. John's congregation was, to be sure, fraught with some bitterness and provoked some sharp debate".

Our founding members had previously attended, but did not belong to, St Paul's. Versions of the reasons for the split slightly differ, but essentially cultural and language differences were the main reasons. There were apparently hard feelings for a while, since members of both congrega-

tions seem to have been "recruited" to join the other. However, our 50th Anniversary book (written in German in 1903) states the ministers of both congregations had a

meeting and "extended the hand of friendship" to each other. (Of course they also made a vow that neither would accept anyone from the others' congregation as members!)

Pastor Christian Hochstetter served our congregation from August 1853 to October 1854. There is no record yet found of where he resided, whether he rented a house or lived in a boarding house or even if he had a

family. He arrived in the city via canal boat on August 11, 1853, and conducted his first Sunday service in the recently erected church. Pastor Hochstetter traveled to Bucyrus, Ohio in the spring of 1854 to a meeting of the Northern District of the Ohio Synod where the congregation was accepted into synodical membership.

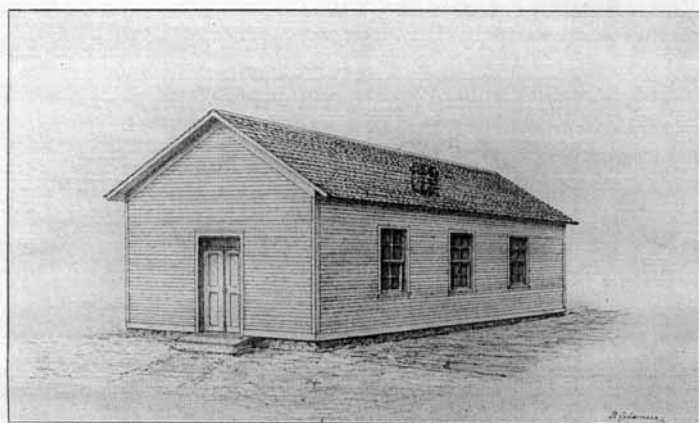
Services for the German Evangelical Lutheran St. John Church were held in a one-room 14x35x21 foot structure ("Die erste Kirche") which faced Van Buren Street. The congregation sat on wooden benches without backs, and a table served as pulpit. Women and men communed separately, with men first, as was the custom of the time.

In the 50th Anniversary book, there is a description and a drawing of the first church.

According to the information provided in this book, the building was sold and moved to Wilt Street in 1861 to make room for the new church. The City of Fort Wayne has no record of this and dates the dwellings we think are our original church to 1881 because of the building style. Research is underway to determine the accuracy of our legend.



PASTOR HOCHSTETTER



Die erste Kirche.

The Land

Land abstracts tell a detailed history of the property to which our congregation holds title. Lot 171 was on the corner of Washington and Van Buren, and 172 east of that; 173 and 174 are further east and approximately where the school is currently located.

The earliest owner of these plots was John Tipton, who purchased a parcel containing over 73 acres from the General Land Office, in the District of Fort Wayne and State of Indiana, in 1828. Twelve years later (1835) he sold this and other property to William Rockhill of Allen County, Indiana, for \$1200. Mr. Rockhill developed the land and created the Rockhill Addition in 1839. The streets were to be 66 feet wide and the alleys 14 feet wide. The area that is now Broadway in front of St Joseph Hospital was originally called Market Space, where a farmers' market was once held, and was 136 feet wide. Most of the lots, including ours, were 150 feet long and 50 feet wide.

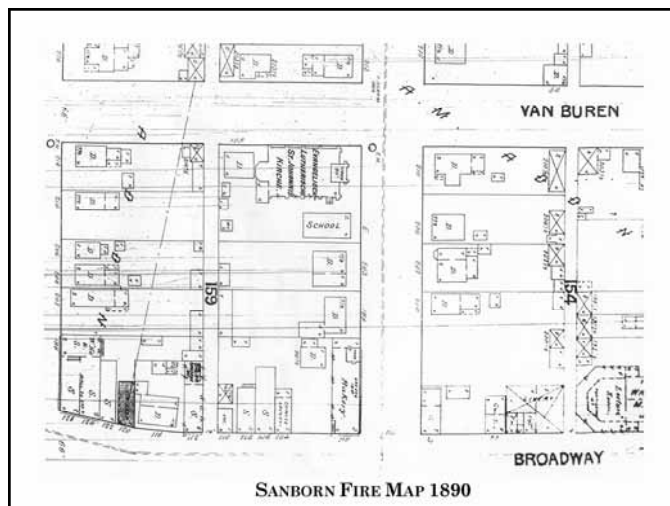
Lot 171 was sold by William Rockhill to four trustees of the German Evangelical Lutheran Saint Johns Church on June 8, 1853, for \$350. These trustees included August Deitten, Michael Miller and August Reiting. (Michael Miller is the only one named as a founding father, the others not being credited.)

On September 1, 1854, Rockhill sold lot 172 to Michael Schust, Henry Misselhem and John Koepf, new trustees of the church, for \$411. Meanwhile, Lots 173 and 174 went through several owners before being acquired by Jacob Klett, Charles W. Jacobs and Gustav Raub, trustees in 1891 and 1892 for a total of \$7,275, quite an increase in property value in less than 40 years.

Lot 172 was mortgaged to pay for the property, and money was borrowed from Jacob Keopf to pay for Lot 171. Somehow the congregation did not repay these loans and Keopf sued trustees Michael Muller, William Peters, Michael Schust and John Keopf in 1856. The court ordered both properties sold in a sheriff's sale if the loans were not repaid. Members Michael Bauman, Henry Moehlmaster and Jacob Thum came to the rescue and paid the entire amount.

The Sanborn Fire Maps were used by the city fire departments to give firefighters information about the structures if they needed to fight a fire. The 1890 Sanborn Fire Map (earliest found) identifies 199 W. Washington as a 1½ story dwelling on Lot 174 (or the farthest east area of our current school). However, according to land abstracts, we did not

purchase this property until 1892, so presumably the dwelling was rented. The fire map of 1902 gives both the old and new house numbers.



The School

The school was started at the same time as the church. In fact, the constitution states that "if the church ceases to exist, so will the school". It is assumed that Pastor Hochstetter was the first teacher as well. An article in a Fort Wayne newspaper dated October 7, 1897, announced near-completion of a new school-house (before the present one). There is a detailed history

of the parish school written by Prof. J. Stumpf. The following is taken from that article, which is preserved in our vault.

The history of this school begins with the organization of the congregation, which maintains and controls it. The Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Church was the second [sic] Lutheran church organized in Fort Wayne. The first movement to establish the church dates back to 1851, but its first congregational meeting was held February 4, 1854. In the minutes of the first meeting, mention is made of a parish school-house. On the 27th of August 1854, the congregation secured its first teacher, William Burger, and on the 30th of November elected its first school board, constituting of the pastor, Rev. A. Kleinegees, and two lay-members, Henry Gegendt and Andrew Schust.



From that time up to the present the school was kept in operation, experiencing the difficulties of all parish schools, sometimes flourishing with a large enrollment of scholars, a good teaching force and bright prospects for the future, then again drooping beneath all kinds of reverses . . . While they would have a parish school in which their children would be instructed in all the doctrines of God's Word as they are taught in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, they nevertheless wanted a school that should be thoroughly American

– a school competent to train their children not only to be intelligent Christians but to be good, law-abiding citizens.

To this end, its friends and promoters have always striven to make the English language the medium of instruction in all branches except religion. The St. Johns' School is NO GERMAN SCHOOL. Aside from its religious branches that are taught in German, the German language is only taught as a separate branch and the English language is the medium of instruction in all other branches.



PASTOR KLEINEGEES

The Early Years

The second pastor, Rev. A. Kleinegees, served October 1, 1854, to September 20, 1857. The Centennial book of 1953 relates he was paid \$200 per year and lived in the first parsonage (a one-story frame house located next to the church on lot 172). The first School Board and Sewing Society were formed and the

constitution was revised under his guidance.

The church was without a pastor from September 1857 to March 1858, when Rev. Hugo B. Kuhn arrived to serve the sixty voting members and their families. The 1860 federal census lists Hugo B. Kuhn as the 44-year-old "Pastor of St John Lutheran Congregation". He owned no real estate and declared a personal worth of \$100. His wife was 33 years old and born in Germany (her name as written is illegible). They had a 2-year-old daughter named Hameter, born in Indiana. The 1860 city directory lists his address as 199 W. Washington Blvd. and his job as "Pastor of St. John Church".

The pulpit was empty from December 1860 until April 1861, when Pastor Bauman was installed. The congregation changed the constitution to join the Pittsburgh Synod the year Rev. Bauman was called from the Pittsburgh Synod; it is not known whether this was expediency or coincidence.



PASTOR BAUMANN

Pastor Baumann's salary was \$400 plus firewood (supplied by the congregation members) and increased in May 1863 to \$500 without firewood. Communion was offered four times a year in 1866.

The 50th Anniversary book (1903), written in German, lists 12 men as founders "as the older members could remember". It is possible, especially

since two of the trustees buying the original property are not included in this list, that this list is not complete. The original constitution, also in German, was found also to list many names that had not previously been documented.

During the 50th Anniversary year, after a review of the original constitution as well as its 1871 revision, all male members signed it as a symbol of their willingness to follow its precepts. As new members were accepted into the congregation, the men in the family also signed the constitution. The tradition of male members signing the constitution apparently continued well into the 1930s. (Women were not regarded as voting members.)

The second church (see photo "Die zweite Kirche mit dem fleinen Engel"), built in 1861 and dedicated in October 1862, was constructed of brick with a wooden steeple and cost \$8,885.12. The bell cost \$244 and a new 12-stop organ was purchased for \$950. The building was 50 x 80 ft, with the interior being 28 feet high. The Sanborn Fire



Die zweite Kirche mit dem fleinen Engel.

map of 1885 describes the interior of the church as being 38 feet high to the eaves and having a layout similar to the current church without the transepts. (Transepts are the extensions or "wings" that project out from the long walls of the building.) The map also identifies a one-story dwelling behind the church.

The school is pictured next to the church building

and is a two-story structure with four windows on each side. It appears the door also faced Washington Blvd. To the east of the school there are two dwellings. The first at 203 W. Washington (Lot 173), has ceilings of 7½ ft and is one story tall. The second house at Lot 174 is one story tall with an outbuilding attached. (In the 1890 fire map this house also has ceilings of 7½ ft.) In the 1902 fire map, the second building is described as "the teacher's house". It is unclear if this same house is what is described as the second parsonage in the 1953 Centennial book.

The Centennial book describes lots 174 and 173 as being purchased in 1869 and 1873. The land abstracts, however, and city records have them being purchased in 1892 from Mary Waters and Jacob Klett. Did we rent the buildings for a Parsonage? Was the building on Lot 173 the one that is described as the old parsonage being moved to the rear of the church lot? It is doubtful, because the 1890 fire map shows a dwelling behind the church, but still has the house on Lot 173. Where was it moved? By 1902, after the large third school was built (in 1897), there is no longer a dwelling seen on the fire map on Lot 173.

Pastor Baumann served until October 11, 1868. The Rev. Johannes Kucher was installed October 25, 1868 and served until February 18, 1890.

The third parsonage was supposedly purchased from a Dr. Brueback sometime after 1869 (probably in the mid-1870s). It was located directly across from the church on the northeast corner of Washington and Van Buren. Although it was said the congregation (or Pastor and his family) was dissatisfied with this building (because it had 8-foot ceilings instead of the fashionable 10-foot or higher), it was used until a fourth parsonage was built on the same site 29 years later.

Beginning in 1877 Pastor Kucher, with the assistance of our congregation, conducted services in Lake Township. A church was formally organized there in 1882 and Rev. Kucher continued to hold services for this congregation every other Sunday afternoon until April 1883 when they called their own pastor. This is the parish of St. John's Lake Township.

The Silver Anniversary of our congregation was celebrated October 6, 1878, with a guest speaker and the festivities continuing at the Fair Grounds (Swinney Park).

The third church included an addition and extensive remodeling in 1882. It is likely that the second church was the basis for the third, as the footprints are the same on the



PASTOR KUCHER

Fire Maps and there is evidence in the attic of a remodel. The present three bells were placed in the new steeple, and an iron ornamental fence was placed around the property. There is no record of the second church being demolished and a third actually being built.

The teachers of 1897 were all graduates of the Ohio Synod's Normal School at Woodville, Ohio, whose course extended over five years. The 1897 schoolhouse was the third built by St. John's, a two-story brick with four large schoolrooms and an assembly hall in the second story costing nearly \$15,000. The first was a frame building costing about \$200, and the second a two-story brick with a two-school room costing \$4,676. Enrollment in 1897 was over 200.

Tuition for one child in 1897 was \$2.50 per year. Two children (same family) tuition was \$4, and three or more children \$5. Mr. Buerger taught for 6 months and was replaced by J.M. Koch; annual teacher salary was \$100.



SECOND PARSONAGE

Pastor Dannecker

Rev. H.P. Dannecker was installed as Pastor in May 1890 and served until January 1, 1924. Many of the changes that occurred under his guidance are listed below.

1. English services every other Sunday and eventually on Sunday evenings.
2. Children's mission programs were developed.
3. In 1891, the congregation started a mission in the eastern part of the city (now Grace Lutheran Church). Pastor Dannecker provided afternoon services for about a year.
4. The Pastor's salary was increased from \$900 to \$1,000 per year.
5. In 1892, George Motz was elected treasurer and inaugurated an efficient bookkeeping system. The congregation was divided into districts "to facilitate collection of church dues".
6. The third school building was built in 1897 at a cost of \$15,000 on Lot 172, just east of the church building. At the time, it was the most modern school building in Fort Wayne according to the newspaper.
7. The Golden Anniversary was celebrated October 2, 1903. A book was printed (in German) with some photos that have been reproduced in succeeding anniversary booklets.
8. The new parsonage (replacing the third one) was built on the northeast corner of Washington and Van Buren, directly across from the church sometime between 1903 and 1909 (Congregational minutes are missing for most of this decade).
9. In 1913, the Luther Society was given permission to add two bowling alleys in the basement of the school building.
10. In 1913, major interior redecoration of the church occurred at a cost of \$8,186.58. This included \$700 for new windows. It is possible these are the same stained glass in our sanctuary today (in the 1928 remodel and addition only the art glass in the transepts is mentioned as being new.)
11. A new constitution in English and German was written by Pastor Dannecker in 1914 and was approved with only minor changes by the congregation.
12. The envelope system of church dues collection was inaugurated.



PASTOR H. P. DANNECKER

13. German was discontinued as being spoken and taught in the school during WWI.
14. 1918 - The first English confirmation of children.
15. 1920 - The iron fence around the church and school, dating from 1882, was taken down.
16. 1921 - Collections of clothing, money and even cows were sent to Germany following WWI.
17. 1922 - Due to a shortage of teachers, it was agreed to share school grades between Emmanuel Lutheran and St John's. Because of objections from the Missouri Synod, this only lasted for one year.

Member Alice (Immel) Zimmerman was born in 1908, and her brother John 15 months later. Her parents were Amelia (Rothenberger) and John Immel, and maternal grandmother was Caroline (Brunner) Rothenberger (born 1860). The Brunners and Rothenbergers were early members of the congregation. Alice relates that Pastor Danneker, as head of the Luther League, encouraged the Luther Leaguers to marry each other and stay in St John's. Many of the youth followed the Pastor's advice, including her parents.

Pastor Boerger

Pastor Boerger was installed as sixth Pastor of the congregation on May 11, 1924 and remained at St. John's until 1946. Occurrences during his tenure included the following.

1. Alternate using German and English language each month to celebrate the Lord's Supper in 1924. Rev. Boerger was allowed to decide which language he wanted to use for "Big Holidays". Apparently, communion was offered once a month.
2. A garage requested by Pastor Boerger in 1925 was built behind the parsonage.
3. A special congregational meeting was held to grant Pastor Boerger two weeks vacation with no service being held one of those weeks.
4. The Men's Society was given permission to take down the hitching rail along Van Buren St in 1926.
5. The congregation contributed \$1000 over a 3-year period to the building fund for the Lutheran Hospital on Fairfield Ave in 1926.

6. The church began paying the church Treasurer a salary of \$300 per year because of the number of members in the congregation.
7. April 1927 during a congregational meeting, a motion was made and carried to have a fund drive for two years to be used for improving the church, re-facing it with brick, installing a new pipe organ, putting new toilets in the school building and canceling of the church debt. This was to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the church.
8. In 1928, the newly remodeled and decorated church was dedicated. A new organ was placed in the front east corner of the church along with the new choir loft (it had previously been located in the balcony). A



DEDICATION OF THE 1929 CHURCH

new 25-foot addition to the south end of the church created the two side transepts where the new art glass was installed. The large stained glass windows were made to closely resemble the others in the church that dated to at least 1913. The dome-like ceiling structure we see today identifies the location of the original chancel and altar area prior to the addition.

9. Restrooms were installed inside the school hall and the outside W.C. removed. According to Alice Zimmerman, this occurred as a result of a young student being accosted by a vagrant at the outside facilities.

10. Around 1929 bulletins began to be used for the church services. John Immel, father of Alice Zimmerman, as bookkeeper at the Wayne Hotel, was asked by Pastor Boerger to use his type-

writer and mimeograph machine to make the bulletins. Members would call the Immel home and give information they wanted in the bulletin. The family copied this on Saturday and early Sunday morning the family went to church to make sure the bulletin was there before church members arrived. The Immel family performed this service until Alice's father passed away in 1932. At that time other individuals in the congregation took over this task until an office secretary was hired.

11. The first lay member was elected Chairman of the Congregation in 1930. (Previously this had been one of the Pastor's responsibilities.)
12. At the Quarterly Congregational Meeting June 1, 1932, the Pastor, teachers and janitor returned 10 percent of their salary "to tide the treasury over the period of depression".

13. June 26, 1932 the Pastor was granted a two-week vacation. During this vacation on one Sunday church was not held, while on the second Sunday an outside Pastor officiated at the services. An amendment to the constitution was adopted to make this arrangement perpetual.
14. In 1939 (nine years before it was sold), the congregation gave permission for the trustees to "look into" the sale of the old parsonage on the NE corner of Washington and Van Buren or to evaluate the cost of making it into a duplex or apartment.
15. Permission was given to install a dumbwaiter in the school "not to exceed \$300". The Mission Society gave \$100; the Adult Society contributed \$75, while the Sewing Society gave \$25. The installation was completed in April 1939 for \$361.59. The dumbwaiter went from the kitchen to the second-floor auditorium.
16. Also in 1939, the janitor was no longer elected (from the congregation) but appointed by the Vestry.
17. The first mention of a discussion of use of individual cups for communion was in 1939. (It was not accepted however.)
18. On December 10, 1939, a proposal was made and adopted to elect only one secretary rather than one English and one German and for the congregational minutes to be written and read in English only.
19. In 1941, the glass enclosure under the balcony was installed, creating the narthex.
20. In 1941, two frame houses belonging to the church, one on Van Buren and one on Washington Blvd were torn down. It is unclear if the house on Washington was identified as "teachers house" Lot 174 on the Fire Map. Dorothy (Schirm) Rodewald remembers the principal F. Wiechert and his family living on the North side of Washington where the old Kiefer Printing building is located when she first came to teach at St. John's school in 1938. She remembers the house on Lot 174 as being rented and happened to be walking by one day and saw the living room on fire.
21. The Honor Roll for servicemen during WWII was placed in the Narthex in 1942.
22. The Endowment Fund board was organized in 1944.



INTERIOR OF 1929 CHURCH

23. 1946 George Reinke became the first Intern at St. John's.
24. A financial secretary was hired for \$80 per month about the same time.

1928 Remodeling and Expansion

The remodeling and addition to the church in 1928 was a major event for the congregation. The dedication booklet of 1929 describes this as follows:



PASTOR BOERGER

The entire structure has been remodeled and enlarged. A new addition, extending twenty-five feet toward the south, has been added. The whole structure has been wonderfully beautified and architecturally perfected.

A transept to the East in which Hoffman's "Resurrection" is depicted in a large art glass window and a transept in the West of Guido Reni's "Crucifixion" add materially to both the interior and exterior art and beauty of the building.

A new Sanctuary with a music room and specially constructed organ chamber to the left and a Sacristy to the right have been added in the rear.

The whole structure has been covered with a fine maroon-red colored pressed brick and ornamental stone on the exterior, as well as a cross-crowned cupola. The entire interior has been re-decorated and re-frescoed; new ornamental lights and fixtures added; a new double boiler heating system installed and a new carpet laid in the Sanctuary, sacristy, music room, choir loft and transepts.

A new four manual direct electric action pipe organ with the great, swell and choir sections in front in the main auditorium and the echo organ with harp and chimes in the balcony in the rear has also been installed.

The church auditorium together with the balcony has a seating capacity of one thousand.

The cost of this project was approximately \$55,000. A large part of this was covered by "liberal original subscrip-

tions, funds from the various societies, large hearted gifts and memorials of love in addition to love gifts by many individuals”.

Recommended reading for anyone interested in the names of early and charter members of the congregation is the 1929 dedication booklet for the remodeled and renovated church building. These names and family members as well as the gifts they gave and the role they played in the congregation at that time are itemized. In the vault is also a ledger itemizing pledges from members for this project. Some of these pledges are 10 cents per week - which in those days must have been a large amount.

Pastor Streng

Rev. William Streng was installed May 18, 1947, and served until 1951. During his time as pastor:

1. A church secretary was hired to work 20 hours a week.
2. The fourth parsonage (on the corner of Washington and Van Buren (NE), was sold for \$25,000 in 1948. It was felt to be too large for the Pastor and needed major work to modernize it. (That property has undergone several evolutions, including a nursing home, apartments and - most lately - a hair styling salon with an apartment upstairs.) The congregation purchased the house and property on California Ave. in the Lakeside District at that time (1948) to become the fifth parsonage.
3. The constitution changed to make all communicant members over 18 became voting members and eligible to hold congregational offices except trustee.
4. Funds drive for the Centennial celebration and another remodel of the church.
5. 1950 - Bethany Mission on Engle road was founded. Approximately 2 acres was deeded from our cemetery property as well as financial support, and given to this new congregation.

Pastor Schoenbohm

Rev. F. E. Schoenbohm was installed as Pastor January 6, 1952, and remained until October 1955. During his tenure:

1. Radio ministry began broadcasting the church service in 1952.

2. Also in 1952 as part of the centennial remodeling project, the side balconies were removed on the inside, the crosses gilded and woodwork was painted on the exterior of the church. A new roof was placed over all except the south side of the church.
3. In 1953, the first phase of the remodeling projects was completed. This included removing radiators and replacing them with baseboard heating, a hot air system for heating the chancel installed, and all new chancel furniture including a new altar and reredos.

The chancel, choir loft and aisles carpeted and the entire interior of the church was redecorated. New light fixtures were installed and a stairway was built leading from the west side of the sacristy to the basement.



MIXED CHOIR 1929

Pastor Amelung

Rev. Carl H. Amelung became our ninth Pastor on Jan 8, 1956, and stayed until his retirement from the ministry December 31, 1976. He remained a member of the congregation until his death in August 2001. His office was the sacristy and he often answered the side door of the church when individuals in need came requesting alms. During Pastor Amelung's service to the congregation the following occurred.

1. Chancel chairs (still being used) were purchased through special gifts in 1957.
2. The October 1957 congregational meeting approved plans for a financial drive for a new Education Building. Planning and Building Committee consisted of Richard Helmke, Harold Gerbers, Loy Reitz, Donald Erwin, Louis Culmann and George Hemmeter.
3. Groundbreaking for the new Educational Facility was held May 15, 1960. The Christian Day School continued to be held in a rented space at Wayne Street Methodist Church until January 1961.
4. Dedication for the new Educational Facility was January 22, 1961. This facility cost \$250,000
5. 1962 saw the dedication of the aluminum sculpture depicting Christ and the Children by sculptor Marshall Fredericks on the front of the Education Facility.
6. In 1964, *The Journal-Gazette* ran a three-column headline and photograph remarking upon the burning of the mortgage on the Educational Facility. Pictured were Dick Helmke, Pastoral Intern Darrell Neves, Pastor Amelung and Louis Culmann.
7. Over time, property on Jefferson St. and Van Buren St, across the alley from the church property, had been purchased, willed, or donated to the congrega-

tion. The Forward Phase projects established in 1965 had five specific goals. These were: an expansion for parking facilities, repair of the Bell tower and steeple, tuck pointing of the church, new pews and repair of floors and carpeting, and a new organ.

8. The first section of the new parking lot opened in 1965 giving space to 28 cars at Van Buren and Jefferson St.
9. In 1966, the steeple was replaced at a cost of \$26,000.
10. Tuck-pointing of the church was completed in 1966 at a cost of approximately \$10,000.
11. In 1968, organ consultant Dr. Frederick Jacksich advised the congregation on the purchase of a new organ from Casavant-Freres costing \$58,325.
12. The Casavant-Freres organ dedication was held June 8, 1969 with Dr. Jacksich giving a recital.
13. The congregation voted to call an Assistant Pastor in 1969 and ending the church's participation in the Seminary Internship programs.
14. In 1969 the 8 am Worship Service began.
15. In 1970 Rev. Harold E. Heidegger accepted a call as Assistant Pastor and was installed November 8.
16. The church office remodeling and refurbishing was completed in 1970.
17. The first pictorial directory was published in 1973.
18. Pastor and Mrs. William Weiss, members of St. John, concluded their work in India as foreign missionaries after 37 years and returned home to Fort Wayne and St. John's.



Pictured at the 1964 Note Burning are Dick Helmke, Pastoral Intern Darrell Neves, Pastor Amelung and Louis Culmann

Sunday during 1976 to 415 average in 1977. In 1978, the average attendance was 427 while 500 or more attended 6 Sundays.

3. The Luther League purchased one communion tray and individual glasses and donated them to the congregation.
4. The green Lutheran Book of Worship arrived early in 1979 to replace the ALC red book. This was fully funded by donations without any budget liability.
5. In 1979, Hall Aluminum and City Glass reframed all stained glass windows to replace the wood and help with decreasing heat loss at a cost of \$40,000.
6. ALCW sent information to the congregation regarding sponsoring a refugee family.
7. 25 men volunteered to be Deacons for the 10:15 am service and 18 for the 8 am service for 1979.

8. June 1979 Congregational Meeting minutes reflect a motion made, seconded and carried to give a refugee committee approval to go ahead with the project of sponsoring a family. The Refugee Committee included Mrs. Vonda Celmins, Mrs. Jan Rodewald and Mr. Blake Prentice.

9. Our first Refugee family, the Mathas, arrived in late 1979 and moved into the Jefferson St house before January 1980.

10. January 1980 second service time changed from 10:15 to 10:30 AM.

11. February 20, 1980

Men's Prayer Breakfast started during Lent at 6:45 am every Wednesday.

12. Also in 1980, an usher schedule was set up with volunteers rather than elected individuals.

Pastor Herbon

In 1976, Pastor Thomas A. Herbon, a former intern, accepted our call and was installed February 20, 1977 as Senior Pastor, serving until July 1980. Some of the occurrences during his tenure are listed below.

1. Jan. 15, 1978 Rev. Dan Meuschke was installed as Assistant Pastor. He and wife Kris resided at 2828 Trent Drive at an additional Parsonage. (It is unclear when this was purchased.)
2. According to Pastor Herbon's 1978 report to the congregation, Church attendance increased from 384 per

Pastor Pannkuk

Rev. John Pannkuk was installed February 15, 1981 and presided as spiritual leader for the congregation until his retirement in September 2000. During his tenure some of the occurrences were:

1. In 1981, laypersons were first used for reading the lesson and as communion assistants.
2. The last two rows of pews were removed in the Sanctuary and the Narthex enlarged and dedicated October 1982.
3. Ceiling fans were installed in the church in late 1983.

4. 1984 - The Broadway House began being used as a meetinghouse for the congregation instead of being leased out.
5. June 1985 we were notified of the church building being included into the West Central Historic District (the school and other property are not included).
6. In 1987, "First Communion" was offered to five children at the fifth grade level for the first time.
7. Communion with both common and individual cups was offered at every communion service (instead of alternating services) beginning in 1987.
8. In 1987, the fourth Laotian refugee family moved into the Jefferson Street house.



PASTOR PANNKUK

9. In 1987, the practice of purchasing and giving Bibles to all 3rd grade students in the church and school was inaugurated.
10. The congregation voted to become part of the new ELCA in 1987.
11. Joined the Associated Churches of Fort Wayne and Allen County in May 1988.
12. The sanctuary was refurbished and St. John's 135th anniversary celebrated in 1988. Bishop Kempfski was the guest minister for the celebration.
13. Admitted as delegates to the Lutheran Hospital governing body in 1989.
14. Church directory information was computerized in 1991.
15. The remaining Jefferson St. house and garage were demolished in 1991.
16. 1992: Averaged only 32 percent of the 942 baptized members and 727 confirmed members in attendance at church services.
17. For the second year, Thursday evening services were held during the summer.
18. Vision 2000 capital campaign initiated in 1992 by engaging Lutheran Laity Movement for Stewardship. The 5 phases of Vision 2000 were:
 - Parking lot improvements
 - Cress property renovation
 - Storage area for school
 - Atrium entrance
 - Air conditioning sanctuary
19. In 1993, a mortgage not to exceed monies pledged was secured by the property south of the alley to help fund Vision 2000. Projects in 1993 included:
 - The remaining metal building and all of the existing paving was removed from the property south of the school and church from Van Buren street east to the Cress building and the Broadway house. (The Cress building stood on the site

of our current playground) Concrete curbing was installed to separate the new landscape areas from the new 101 car capacity asphalt paved parking lot. Sidewalks connecting the school, church, Broadway house and Cress building were installed along with new parking lot lighting and an illuminated sign at the corner of Jefferson and Van Buren. Congregational members worked together to install new landscape materials.

- A 400 square foot masonry storage building was added to the south side of the gym at the east corner for storing tables, chairs and school equipment.
 - The old west gym storage room was divided into two separate rooms. One room was designed to hold maintenance tools and supplies. The second room was lined with wall shelving for storing athletic equipment and educational supplies.
 - A new roof was installed on the Cress building.
 - The cemetery house (built in 1872) was demolished.
 - 140th anniversary celebrated and pictorial directory published.
 - The backup oil burner furnace was updated with a new gas burner. As part of the parking lot renovation's, it was decided to remove the old fuel oil storage tank. Interestingly, the old tank proved to be an old railroad tanker without the wheels.
20. Summer worship changed to a single service at 9 a.m. in 1994.
 21. Assisting Ministers of Holy Communion to the homebound was inaugurated in 1994.
 22. Recommendation to call a Deaconess in October of 1994 to assist with pastoral duties was put on "hold" due to lack of funding.
 23. School Principle Ronald Fiebig resigned in 1995 after serving 25 years.
 24. In 1996, a new glass entry door and sidelight were installed in the south entrance to the school.
 25. The organizational room on the 2nd floor of the school was divided to create a new classroom and a larger library/computer room in the summer of 1996.
 26. Fall of 1997 — A Kurzweil PC88 electronic keyboard was purchased for the church.
 27. Stephen Ministry was established within the congregation in 1998.
 28. 1998, new computers purchased for the church.
 29. Energy-efficient fluorescent lighting was installed in the kitchen and in the school's first and second floor classrooms and hallways in 1999.
 30. 1998 the Cress building was demolished and the Coffee House Ministry held there ended. A new fenced in playground and asphalt paved basketball court

were installed in its place. The former playground area to the north of the Broadway house was paved to provide additional parking.

31. Renovations continued in 1999.

- Volunteers installed new landscaping around the playground and the Broadway house. In the fall, new landscaping was installed in front of the church and school. Accent lighting installed in front of the school with flood lights on the school's sculpture of Christ and on the church bell tower.
- The former locker and shower room was removed between the first floor rest rooms and two handicap rest rooms were added. In an effort to make the church more handicap accessible, the front entry area of the school was remodeled and interior ramp added. The coat room was remodeled and storage cabinets installed.
- Porcelain floor tile was installed at the rear entrance of the school and around the outside kitchen area. New carpet installed in the balance of the 1st floor hallways.
- Slate roof installed on the sanctuary.
- School tuck pointed and various exterior repairs made.
- Illuminated sign with reader board added at the northeast corner of the school. The illuminated sign at the corner of Washington and Van Buren was removed, refurbished and moved to the corner of Broadway and Jefferson.

32. Upgrades in 2000 included:

- New phone system installed in church and school with phones available in all classrooms. Computer wiring installed in church and school to interconnect all computers and to connect computers to the Internet.
- Security camera installed at back entrance to school along with an electronic door latch release.
- School principal and school secretary's offices remodeled with new office fixtures, carpet and fresh paint.
- Air conditioning installed in library/computer room to prevent computer equipment malfunctioning.

Pastor Windhorn

Rev. E. Dean Windhorn was appointed Interim Pastor in November 2000 and served in this capacity until September of 2001.

Pastor Meuter

In September of 2001, Rev. Dr. Frederick W. Meuter III accepted the call to the Pastor of this congregation. When asked to give some remembrances of important events in the two years he has served, he lists three things:

1. He arrived two days before the terrorist attacks of 9/11. A service of prayer and remembrance was held on Friday for those lost.
2. The congregation began taking steps to acquire the rest of the property on the block.
3. Mission Enablers was engaged to help grow our mission for the future.

In addition:

4. In 2001, the church steeple was restored with new copper roof.
5. In 2002, school gym repainted and new glass basketball backboards installed.
6. Vacation Bible School was held in 2003 as a cooperative effort between our parish and Broadway Christian Church.
7. Kurt Simerman came to St. John as Vicar in August of 2003, signifying a return to a seminary internship program.
8. Renovation of the interior of the Broadway House started with new wall coverings installed on all walls and ceilings painted. Energy efficient light and new kitchen cabinetry installed. Porcelain flooring installed in kitchen in 2003. New carpet to be installed in 2004.
9. New insulated windows installed in the school in 2003.
10. Phillips A-1 building (2nd lot south of Washington) on Broadway was purchased in 2003.
11. Water-damaged walls and ceiling areas of the sanctuary repaired in 2003. Walls touched-up and repainted as needed in preparation of the 150th anniversary celebration.
12. 2004 — New Welcome and Information Center installed in church narthex.
13. A new constitution and bylaws were proposed.
14. The web site was launched in 2002.



PASTOR MEUTER

As a Christian community, this congregation has experienced many changes over the last 150 years. With God's help, we will continue to grow in Christ, to grow with this community and to grow with the needs of this congregation. - *with reporting by Sue and Terry Kienzle*