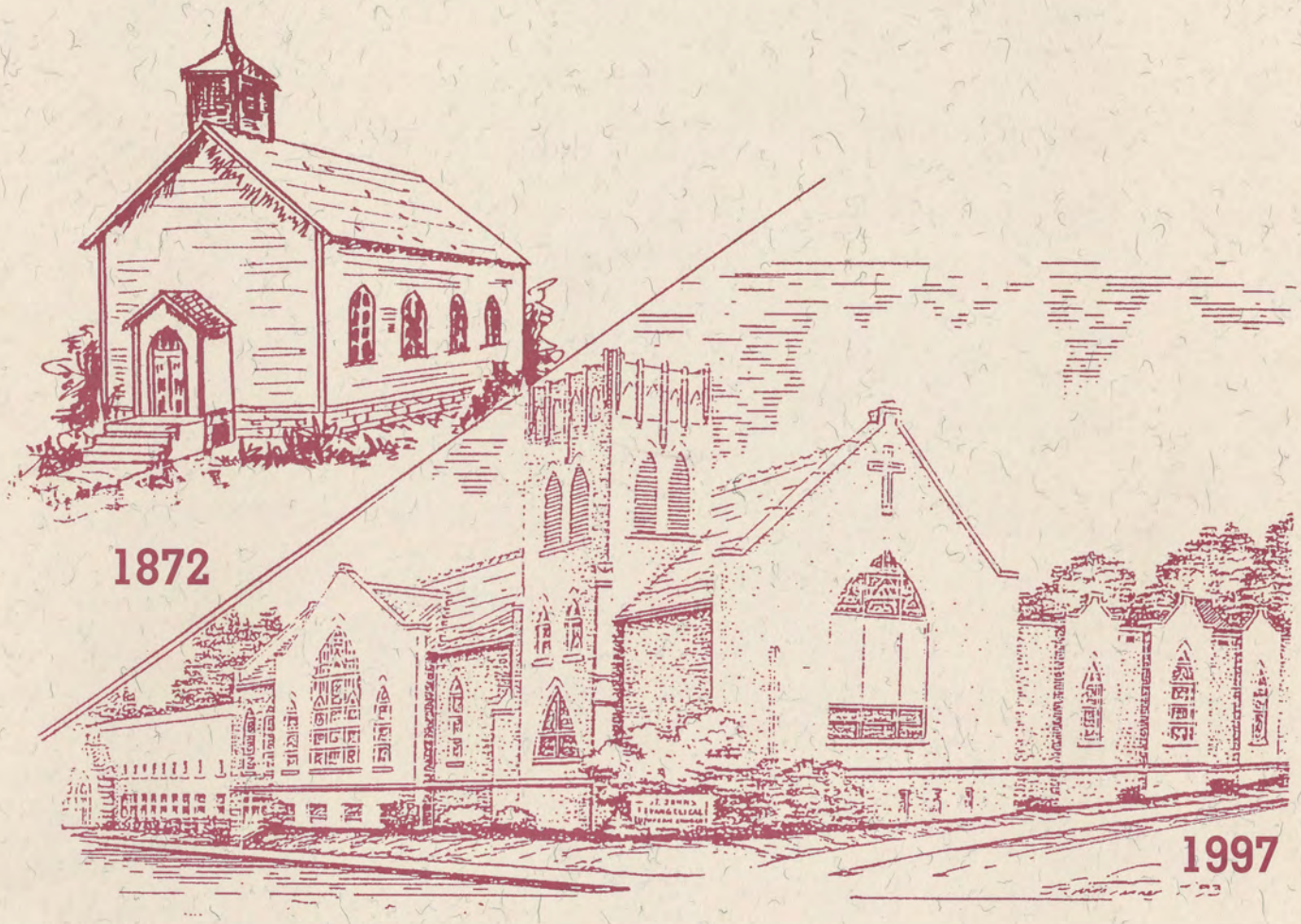
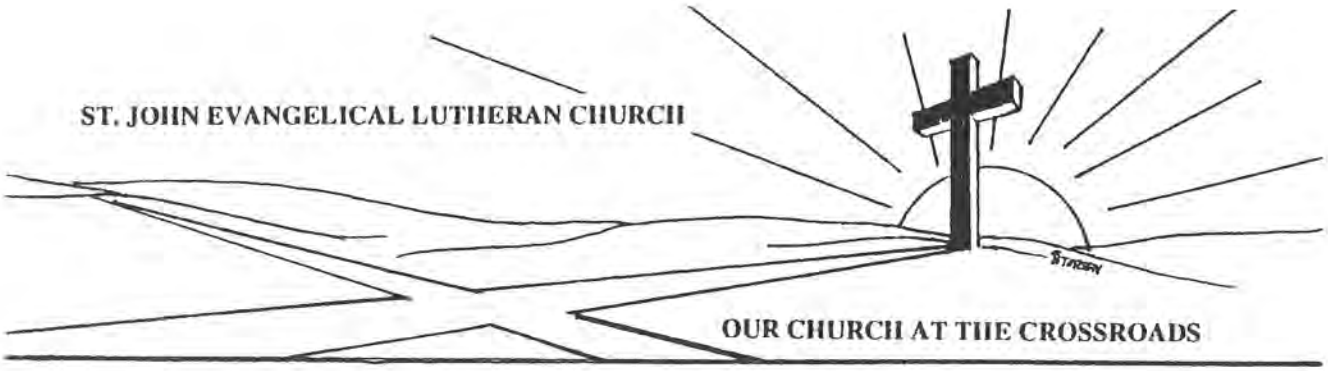
ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

CHARLES CITY, IOWA



ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

1872 TO 1997

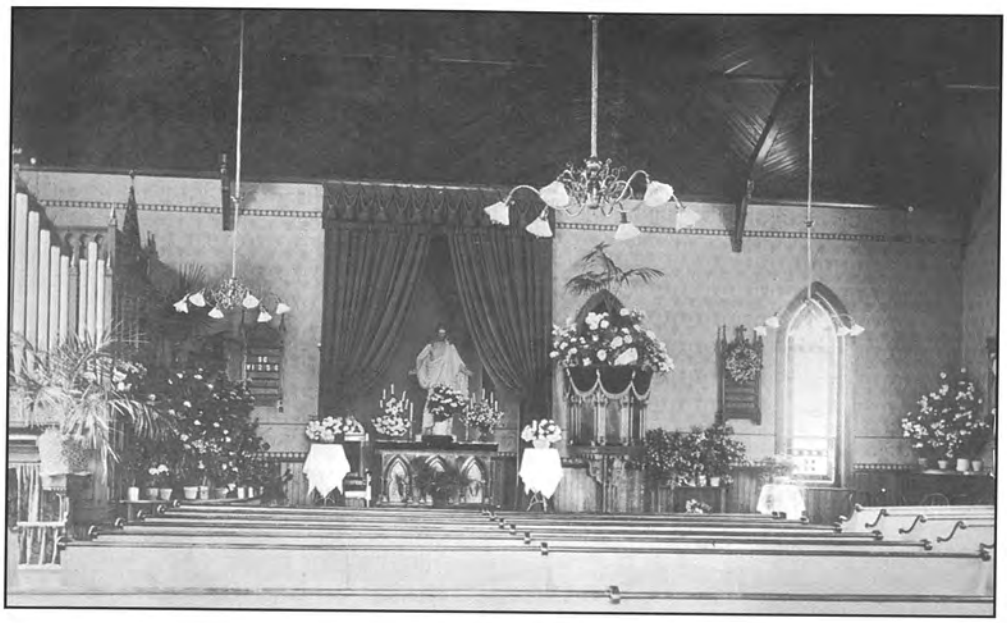


Lord, I have loved the habitation

of thy house, and, the place where

thine honor dwelleth ——Psalm 26:8

SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO MAXINE EGGERT - HISTORIAN



1872

1972

1997

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH FROM 1872 TO 1997

"In the spring of 1871, a meeting of German immigrants was held, a society organized and church trustees were elected. Rev. Adeeser, a pastor of the Swiss Reformed Church at Plainfield, offered to preach in Charles City every alternate Sunday. The meetings were held in a small school house on the Rockford Road, just outside the city limits. Later the old stone schoolhouse in the central part of the city, and diverse store buildings were used for the purpose. In February, 1972, the Lutherans of Charles City extended a call to Rev. Christian Wilke. At a meeting on June 15, 1872, a resolution was passed to build a church and three lots were purchased.

The cornerstone was laid September 1, 1872, the dimensions of the building were 28 x 50, the cost without furniture was $2,500. The first service was held February, 1873, but the dedication was delayed until the seats, altar, and pulpit were placed in the church and was finally solemnized on September 21, 1873. A debit of $825 remained on the property and would have been a hard burden to the small congregation if one of the faithful fathers, Christian Dinkel, had not given his farm in mortgage to offer security for the insolvent flock of Lutheran settlers.

For German school and catechetical instruction, Carl Hoffman offered a room of his house on Main Street. Later a room of the rented parsonage was used for the purpose. February 19, 1882, the congregation celebrated its tenth anniversary. The thank offering of the congregation consisted of the liquidation of the church debts, the purchase of an Estey Chapel Organ and other church furniture and ornaments.

On May 25, 1879, Rev. E. H. Caselmann preached at St. John for the first time and was given a call by the congregation. He began his work on June 4, 1879.

The school house was built in 1884 and cost $442. In July, 1886, two more lots were purchased and in July, 1891, the corner lot was added making a total of seven lots in the church property. In July, 1886, at the congregational meeting, discussion was held in regard to building a new church and committee was appointed to look into the project. It was decided that the cost of $2,300 was too great an undertaking so repairs and improvements were made to the old building.

March, 1893, it was resolved to rebuild the church and on September 17, 1893, the new church was dedicated. From an article in the local paper we quote the following:

> "The services were opened with a hymn by the whole congregation, accompanied by the organ of the church and an instrumental quartet of the Charles City brass band, which is entirely composed of German young men. After the singing, the dedicatory sermon was preached by Rev. Mr. G. Blessin of Eldorado, Iowa. It was a powerful sermon, well delivered and scholarly. It appealed to the hearers, that insomuch as God had blessed them bountiful in this world's goods, it was but meet that they should in return bring from their plenty into the house of the Lord and build him a temple of worship. He was gratified to see the results of their labor crowned by such a beautiful structure."
>
> Then the dedicatory service also was read by the Rev. G. Blessin and the house formally dedicated to the use of worship, after which a second sermon was preached by the Rev. William Nolting of Big Springs, Minnesota. At the close of the sermon, a collection ($172.07) was taken up to clear up all outstanding bills and we believe that the church today stands free of debt.
>
> "The first church was built in the shape of a cross, the altar standing in the upper or smaller end of the same. It was well lighted by beautifully stained glass windows of gothic style, bearing appropriate designs of their faith. The inside was finished in Georgia pine, natural finish. The

ceiling was also of the same material and panelled, and the whole was surmounted by a well proportioned belfry and tower, on top of which is a gilded weathervane. In the belfry were two nice new bells, harmonizing in tone. They cost nearly $300 and were also purchased with money raised by subscription. The side walls on the inside were papered with a neat pattern of light chocolate-colored paper. The pulpit was on a pedestal in the southwest end, above the congregation, and was of nice design, finished in black walnut, as was also the altar. The altar was crafted by Fred Stock. (This was the grandfather of present member, Marian Hoeft.)

The church was beautifully decorated by potted plants about the altar and front of the church, as well as garlands of oak surmounting the outside entrances.

The capacity of the church was about 400, and it was taxed to its uttermost, as a great many had to stand during the service, while others had to stay outside.

The choir consisted of Misses Minnie Fiss, Anna Luckow, Matilda Piskoski, Ella Bier, Lena Grossholz, and Hattie Boeck and the Messrs. Fred Stock, Albert Steinhause, Fred Schmoldt, Lawrence Halle, and Willie Luckow. Miss Pertsborn was organist. Services were also held in the afternoon and evening."

The new church seats were installed in 1907, and the basement finished for church societies in 1908.

This church was later dismantled to make room for the new church, known as the Caselmann Memorial, which was dedicated in 1924.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH SOCIETY GIVE A JUBILEE AT THE AUDITORIUM IN HONOR OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF REV. E. CASELMANN'S PASTORATE. Daily Press, May 26, 1904.

"The Lutheran people celebrated yesterday the 25th anniversary of the pastorate of Rev. E. Caselmann in this city, which was one of the largest and most pleasant affairs of the kind ever given here. The service began in the afternoon at the church, a committee having escorted Pastor Caselmann to the church in a carriage. It then dawned on the good preacher that his people had gotten up a surprise in the form of a jubilee commemoration, but not until evening did the full import of the event dawn upon him....."

"In the evening at 7 o'clock, the guests assembled at the auditorium for the banquet. Over 600 people sat down and partook of one of the most elegant banquets ever served in this city. Rev. Fuchs, New Hampton, acted as toastmaster and opened the festivities with a happy speech. All of the speeches were, of course, in the German language.

Dr. J. Niemack was the first speaker and extended the greetings of the assembled friends to their pastor on the occasion of his silver jubilee, and spoke of the fact that in these 25 years there was much of care and sorrow, as well as of enjoyment that the pastor could look back to, that he had shared these pleasures and sorrows with his people, and his people knew that their pastor was close to them and wanted him to feel the same way. They took this means of showing their love and regard for him at the close of 25 years of labor among them. The Doctor expressed the wish also that the coming 25 years would be as pleasant to both the pastor and people as the last 25 years had been. John G. Legel followed and read a number of letters from absent members of the church, and presented the pastor with a pair of genuine Indian moccasins from the Indian Territory, and with appropriate words well chosen for the occasion presented the Rev. Caselmann with a check for $500, the spontaneous voluntary gift of the people. ELLIS AUDITORIUM

Rev. Caselmann served St. John for 38 years and was succeeded by Rev. C. G. Prottengier in 1917. When Rev. Caselmann passed away in 1918, he left his estate to the congregation for the purpose of building a new church. The money was held for a few years and after the decision was made to start the new church, many delays were encountered. Springs appeared during the excavation for the basement, blue prints of the detailed drawings were delayed, etc., but the new church, known as the "Caselmann Memorial" was dedicated in June, 1924, with three services. The following day the Daily Press reported:

> "The church was well filled at all three services and it is indeed an imposing and beautiful edifice located on one of the finest and most prominent sites of the city at the conjunction of the A.Y.P. trail and Red Ball automobile routes." The church "was erected at a cost of some eighty thousand dollars, sixty thousand of which was given through the will of the late Rev. Caselmann, the other twenty thousand being raised by salvaging the materials from the old church building."

June 22, 1952, marked the completion of the next major improvement when the new $145,000 parish hall was dedicated. Many hundreds of hours of donated labor went into the construction and the congregation was able to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding parish education program.

In the 1960's the church facilities were again taxed to capacity. On October 30, 1966, St. John was again the scene of dedication services. This event was the culmination of a $244,000 building program to remodel the church and add church school facilities and new staff offices. During the building period, the congregation worshipped in the Junior High auditorium from November 1965 until August 1966. What an experience that was!

In 1992, there was a need for more facilities so again a period of time was spent under construction, moving the chapel from downstairs to the main floor, moving and modernizing offices, adding restrooms, a nursery, a larger narthex and handicap parking. This was done at an approximate cost of $ 605,000 being finished during the winter of 1994.

Ten years after the original church was built, the congregation celebrated the event by buying an Estey Chapel organ. This organ was replaced by a pipe organ in 1908. In 1924, a Moeller organ was purchased. The console was placed on the east wall of the north choir loft. This organ served us well until 1947 when a Skinner pipe organ was purchased and the console was moved to its present location. This instrument was one of the last hand-crafted organs Skinner produced. This cost was $22,000. It is estimated that the replacement cost today for a comparable organ with the same number of ranks would be approximately $ 300,000

The first organist was Mrs. Wallburgar Pertsborn Heitz, followed by Mrs. Ed Becker, who played from 1921 to 1931. Mrs. Roy Cates was the next organist followed by Mrs. Darrell Coacher. Earl Stewart became Director of Music in 1940. He served the congregation faithfully for 29 years, training the choirs to follow direction from the organ, thus making the anthems an integral part of the worship. Andrea DeVore followed Mr. Stewart, having been his assistant for a number of years. Charlotte Hoy Klaver was her assistant until this year.

The reference to choirs in the early history is vague, but mention was made of an 11 member choir at the dedication of the new church. The first vested choir (Trinity) was organized in 1924 by Martha and Ed Togstad (parents of Hulda Lindaman). During these years there was a funeral quartet consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Togstad, Otto Fredrick, and Malinda Niemann. In 1940, the Chapel choir was organized followed by the Carol choir in 1941, the Vesper choir in 1948, and the Cherub choir in 1972.

It is interesting to note that several choir members have given of their time and talent for over 55 years. The present record is **62** years held by Harold Friedrich. Members serving over 55 years are Lorraine

Friedrich, Delores Bartman and Gilbert Bartman.

The musical group, Joy Unlimited, was active in the '70's. Since 1995, we have had song leaders for the Celebrate service and also "Four Singers and a Flute". Over the years numerous talented soloists and instrumental groups, including an orchestra, and the inspiring piano-organ duets by Cherie Schafer and Andrea DeVore have also contributed much to our worship.

Rev. Prottengeier guided the congregation through the years of the depression, even though he once complained that his paychecks were always late. The treasurer explained that he was only paid when there was sufficient money to do so!

Upon Rev.. Prottengeier's retirement in 1938, Rev. Walter N. Fritschel was called. His spiritual guidance during World War II was very important. Two sons of the congregation, Roy William Gabe and William Stuart Harris, were killed in action and there were 133 stars on our service flag.

During Rev. Fritschel's pastorate, the German service was discontinued and two English services were held. One year when the average Sunday attendance of 799 was reported at the annual meeting, the president of the congregation, Wendell Obermeier, suggested that if Mrs. Fritschel had attended both services, we would have had an even 800. She immediately responded that she **did** attend both services! In 1946, we had our first intern, Donald Loots. Patrick Appleget was our last intern in 1984.

When the Rev. Dr. Fritschel left in 1956, he was succeeded by Rev. Werner A. Bischoff. In March of 1960, the Second Street parsonage was dedicated. Rev. Terry Exner was called as our first assistant pastor in 1963, and served until 1966. Rev. Bischoff resigned in 1964 and the Rev. Dr. Richard Trost was called.

May 15, 1968, marked the "Day of the Tornado". The 60's also noted the completion of an enlarged parking lot off Clinton Street and the gift of the John G. Legel lot on Main Street.

When Rev. Exner left in 1966, he was succeeded by Rev. Perry Brown as assistant pastor. During Pastor Trost's years at St. John, the congregation passed a resolution to approve the establishment of a mission church in Charles City. Messiah Lutheran Church was dedicated in September of 1966. The Rev. Dr. Trost resigned in 1969 and Rev. Brown served alone until Rev. Palmer Wold was called in October of 1970, and Rev. Brown left to serve in Castalia, Iowa. In 1972, St. John celebrated 100 years of ministry thus ending the century.

The many organizations of St. John have been an important part of the life of the church. They have enriched the congregation spiritually, socially, and through service.

The first was the Jugendverein (later known as Lutheran League and then Luther League) organized in 1890. This was the first league to be organized west of the Mississippi. In the 1917 directory, the boys and girls were listed separately and there were 68 members. They enjoyed many social activities such as sleigh rides, ice skating and scavenger hunts. For many years an annual three-act play, directed by Esther Weissenbuehler Erickson, was presented.

The Frauenverein (Ladies Aid) was organized February, 1892, and is the only group still active from those early years. Other women's groups were Tabitha (1917), Guild (1938), and the Mission Society (1946). In January, 1960, after the merger, these groups were joined to form the ALCW. The individual circles are now known as WELCA.

The men organized in February, 1918, as the Brotherhood. Later they became the ALCM. For several years, they had an active "dartball" team which entered into spirited competition with teams from

neighboring towns.

In November, 1905, Tena Grams started a group known as The Helping Hand. This was revived for a short time in the '60's. During World War I, there was the INIT club and the Altar Guild was formed in 1968 to assist the pastors. Come Double originated in 1954 and the Christian Ones on March 11, 1988. St. John also had a Junior Mission Society, Junior and Senior Luther Leagues and Junior Lutherans. Our "Do-Day" ladies who have made hundreds of quilts, etc., the clothing room, needy fund, and our newest service the card ministry group all say "we care". The most recently organized group is the MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers).

Many choir mothers have given assistance and always prepared and served the annual choir dinners. Although not officially an organization, mention should be made of the many women and men who have spent hours in our kitchen, which is now under the direction of Kathy Michael.

There have been many occasions when the members of St. John have joined in fellowship. There are no records of such events during our first twenty-five years, but the family life of the 19th century centered in home and church. Many of you will remember delightful hours spent at "sociables", ice cream socials, dinners, banquets, picnics, sleigh rides,

Do you remember when.....??

The young people of our congregation attended German school?

The ushers used the long handled klinglbeutel to pick up the Sunday collection?

There was an annual Sunday School picnic and the whole family participated?

Electric lights were introduced in 1899? (For several years, members of the Luther League were appointed to start the fire and light the lamps in the church.)

The Luther League presented a three-act play every year?

The Brotherhood (a men's organization) had a very active dartball team?

St. John had an orchestra?

A "bucket brigade" was formed up the "back stairs" of the church, passing 2,000 pipes for the new Skinner organ to the workmen in the organ chambers?

In 1942, Pastor Fritschel was surprised on the 25th anniversary of his ordination after he had appeared at several group meetings and urged a large attendance at the church night gathering, never suspecting it was planned for him?

The Luther League celebrated their 50th anniversary?

Twin boys were welcomed at the Second Street parsonage?

The 450th anniversary of the Reformation was celebrated with a week of activity devoted to renewal and reformation?

St. John had the best decorated Red Cross disaster center with paper musical notes, candles and red roses?

1972 - 100th anniversary year marked the arrival of Pastor Peter Peterson

1976 - Pastor Wold leaves and Pastor Martin Lieber assists Pastor Peterson for several months.

1977 - Pastor Peterson installed as senior pastor and Pastor. David Heck is called as the associate pastor and serves until 1978.

1979 - Pastor Frances Griffeth is called as associate pastor.

1983 - Rev. Dr. Paul Mork is called as senior pastor after Pastor Peterson accepts another call. Pastor Dennis Niezwaag is called as associate pastor.

1987 - Parsonage on Hillside Drive is purchased.

1989 - Main Street parsonage is torn down and parking lot is enlarged.

1992 to 1993 - The church and parish hall are extensively enlarged.

1993 - Pastor Eldon Person agrees to assist Pastor Niezwaag.

1994 - Pastor Dennis Niezwaag is called as senior pastor.

1994 - Pastor Karen Rask Behling arrives as associate pastor.

1997 - St. John celebrates their 125th anniversary with many special events

The first visitation pastors joined the staff during Pastor Bischoff's pastorate. They were Pastor H. C. Madsen and Pastor William Plantz. Pastor B. C. Wiebke then served 13-1/2 years. He was succeeded by Pastor Richard Gronwold, who was here from 1980 to 1983. Pastor Robert Fitzgerald came in 1984 and resigned in 1995 due to ill health. Our present visitation pastor of Pastor Andrew Oppedahl.

The intern program at St. John began in 1946. A total of 35 interns served the congregation until the program was discontinued in 1984. We have also had one parish worker. At least 12 "sons of the congregation" have joined the ministry. They are: Rev. Albert Sommer, Dr. Julius Bodensieck, Rev. Laverne Meinecke, Rev. Loren Buehlow, Rev. LaVerne Streich, Dr. Wayne Weissenbuehler, Rev. Glenn Davidson, Rev. Martin Lieber, Rev. Dennis Johnson, Rev. Mark Becker, and Rev. Bruce Hobert.

St. John has been home to many interns starting in 1946. The program ended in 1984.

1946 - Donald Loots
1947 - Elroy E. Buhr
1948 - LaVerne Streich
1949 - Arthur Baehmann
1950 - Donald Fallon
1951 - Robert Gronland
1952 - Kenneth A. Kruger
1953 - Roy Schwartz
1954 - Richard Wangen
1955 - Leonard L. Rudolph
1956 - George Hanusa
1957 - Paul Baehmann
1958 - Harold L. Darrow
1959 - Myron D. Bentz
1960 - Robert R. Sauer
1961 - John E. Holten
1962 - Roy C. Nilson
1963 - Harlan F. Studheit
1964 - 1967 - no intern program
1967 - Delmas Luedke
1968 - William Spencer
1969 - Steven Hein
1970 - Paul Laursen
1971 - Peter Sherven
1972 - David Matuchek
1973 - Charles Gilmore
1974 - James Johnson
1975 - Gerold Sevig
1976 - James Rushton
1977 - James Fladland
1978 - Roger Rotvold
1979 - William Blundell
1980 - Mark Gravdal
1981 - Dennis Niezwaag
1982 - Robert Sorensen
1983 - Patrick Appleget

Education for the young has always been important at St. John. For German school and catechetical instruction, first a room in a private home and then a room of the parsonage were used. The school house was built in 1884, and candidates for confirmation attended full time for a year of instruction. This plan came to an end at the time of World War I. For some time, confirmation classes met on Saturday mornings. They now meet on Wednesday evening. The largest class of 108 was confirmed in 1939.

No record is available of the date of the first meeting of the Sunday School, but there are copies of Sunday School programs for the 1890's. The program on Christmas Eve was one of the most important events of the year. The directory of 1917 lists 17 teachers and an organist. Every child either "spoke a piece" or participated in the musical portion of the program. There was always a large Christmas tree, which was illuminated for many years with candles (the janitor standing by in case of fire). There were gifts for everyone.

Hundreds of dedicated teachers have helped lay the ground work for a strong faith and given many, many hours of service. However, no one served longer or with more dedication than Otto Fredrick, who was an inspiration to so many. Daily Vacation Bible School has been an important annual event. For a few years, religious education classes for school credit were held on released time through the cooperation of the local school board and administration.

In 1946, the Snyder property was purchased to provide space for classes when there was not enough space available in the church building. In 1952 and 1966, enlarged space in the parish hall provided separate classrooms. There have been several "up-grades" since then.

In 1940, the Cradle Roll was organized to provide a link between baptism and Sunday School. There have been four Cradle Roll secretaries: Mrs. Irving Nieman, Mrs. Carl Queel, Mrs. Raymond Meyer, and Mrs. Jim Nielsen. The Cradle Roll is now under the direction of the Parish Education Board.

In 1975, twenty-nine children were welcomed to the newly organized Jack and Jill Preschool. Marie Elliott Haase was the first director and served 15 years. Marj Groth was the first assistant followed by Carol Teeter. The present director of Jack and Jill Christian Preschool is Rhonda Christensen with Cindy Zirbel as the full time assistant. In 1996, there was an average of 81 students enrolled. In these 22 years there have been several full and part-time assistants, foster grandparents and volunteers. All of these and the pastors have made this an exciting and important ministry of our church.

November 7, 1948, the adult Sunday School class met for the first time. Bible study continues through the organizations of the church.

On May 15, 1968, the parish hall was a very busy place. It was the date set for the annual choir dinner, held to recognize the many choir members and their families. It was the custom to honor those who had perfect attendance by awarding a rose for each year they had achieved this record. Several members received more than a dozen roses. Bouquets of these roses had been placed on the tables and the walls had been decorated with paper musical notes. Choir mothers were busy in the kitchen preparing dinner for more than 300 people.

At approximately ten minutes to five, a devastating tornado roared through Charles City leaving a path of destruction from the extreme south part of town to the north city limits. The power station was one of the first buildings to be destroyed, which cut off all electricity. Miraculously, the church building was spared except for damage to some stained glass windows and the roof. St. John immediately became a sanctuary for those in need of help. The Red Cross set up their headquarters here. At about 1:00 a.m., a generator arrived from the Air Force Base in Waverly and electricity replaced candlelight.

Keith Sylvester provided mattresses from his store, which were placed in the Sunday School rooms for those who had lost their homes and their possessions. As the need became known, bedding, towels, clothing and other items began to appear. The food for the choir dinner became food for the homeless and the disaster workers. Donations of food and money kept coming in. For many days, the church was a place of refuge.

The following Sunday, five church services were held to provide a place of worship for all. On Thursday, May 23, the festival of the Ascension was observed.

The tornado left a path of this kind of destruction a mile wide from 11th Street to far past Washington School and into the rural area.

This is the flag that hung outside the church to let people know this was a place of refuge.

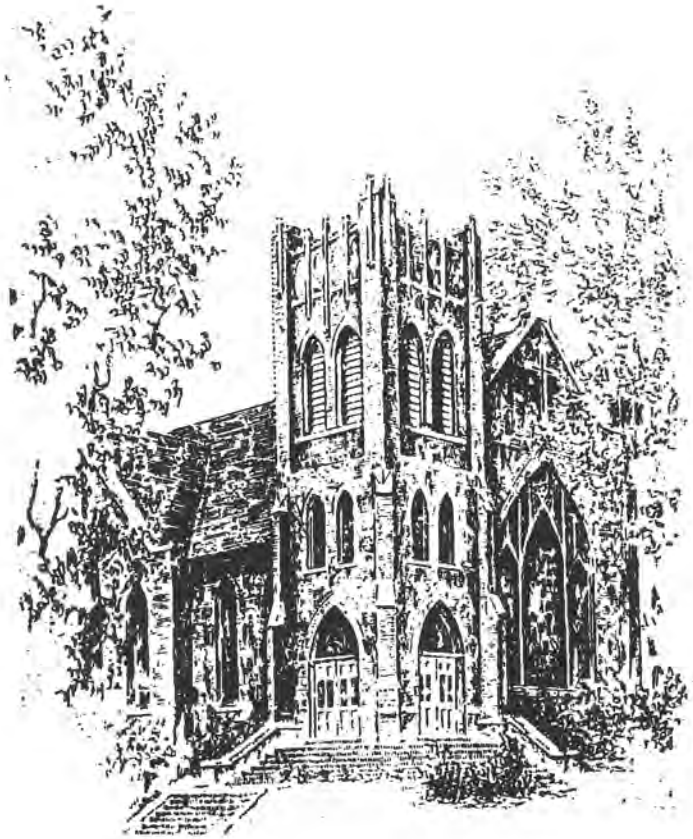
This stained glass window was installed in place of one that was destroyed to depict the destruction.

The Red Cross flag that identified our church as a place of help was given to St. John and serves to remind us of a time when we were able to be of service to the whole community.

The money left after helping victims of this disaster became the "seed money" for the Meals on Wheels program. For 125 years, through the many, many projects of the church, the members of St. John have provided spiritual and material help to people of our area and around the world.

Many, many dedicated people have made possible the growth of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church from that small group in 1871 to the membership of 2,335 in 1972 at the time of the 100th anniversary. The membership in 1997 is 1,460, noting that in 1972 the population in Charles City was 11,000 and there were several thriving industries that are now gone. The population is now approximately 8,000.

During the 1940's and 1950's, it was not unusual to have a transient knock on your door asking for a meal. One day Nina Fritschel answered her door to find a man asking for a meal, which she graciously prepared for him. A little later in the day, there was again a knock on her door and the gentleman presented her with this sketch which he sat on the curb and drew in payment for his meal. It is amazingly correct and details the church in its original gothic glory. It has been used on plates and stationery.



We have spent this year looking back to those who built the foundation and to say "thank you" to the many, many dedicated people who have made possible the growth of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church.

We take this opportunity to salute:

The pastors from Rev. Adeeser to Pastors Niezwaag and Behling without whom there would be no church.

The intern pastors, visitation pastors.

The officers and members of the council and boards who have served as representatives of the congregation in sharing with the pastors the work of the church and the problems of a growing congregation.

The custodians, secretaries, music directors, and organists.

The faithful members and officers of the many organizations of the church.

The members of the congregation who are always willing to support the work of the church through the gift of time, talents and money. We wish we could name all those who have helped St. John reach this anniversary year.

We have been sad at farewell gatherings for our pastors, as they have moved on to other pastoral duties and also happy to welcome new pastors. We have worshipped together, worked together and enjoyed much fellowship with each other in the past. Now we look forward to the future growth of our congregation, as we carry on the work which began in Charles City in 1872.

There are several members of St. John who are direct descendants of the original group who were instrumental in the formation of the church. We have been unable to find a record of all the original members, but the trustees in 1872 were: Henry Nieman, William Herring, Christian Boeck, John Stolle, and Edwin Von Berg.

One family has seven generations at this time:
Loren Schreiber, Carrie Schreiber Nehls, Elsa Nehls Dumont, Delores Dumont Bartman, Andrea Bartman DeVore, Kurt and Justin DeVore, and Timothy DeVore.

Six generation families are:
George Koepke (Kapka), Fred Kapka, Lorraine Kapka Friedrich, Harold Friedrich Jr., Jim Friedrich, and Madison Friedrich.

Fredrick Ebert, Gusta Ebert Volbrecht, Martha Volbrecht Togstad, Hulda Togstad Lindaman, Viva Lindaman Boerschel, and Bobby and Becky Boerschel.

August Merten, Mary Merten Stock, Erma Stock (Chris) Begemann, Marian Begemann (Wayne) Hoeft, Kent and Kurt Hoeft, and Sarah, Chris and Katie Hoeft.

August Merten, Mary Merten Stock, Erma Stock (Chris) Begemann, Harold Begemann, Craig and Denny Begemann, and Lindsay and Lauren and Alexandra and Ryan Begemann.

Five generation families are:
Ferdinand Fredrick, Herman Fredrick, Lester Fredrick, Carol Fredrick Herron, and Anthony Herron.

Ferdinand Fredrick, Herman Fredrick, Lester Fredrick, Steve Fredrick and Angie Fredrick.

Henry Horn, Helen Horn Miller, Dale Miller, Janan Miller Wegner and Tammy Miller Jakel, and Cody Wegner and Amber Jakel and triplets Kyle, Kaleb, and Kirsten.

There are probably more of these families who have not come forward.

The oldest members in 1997 are Louise Witzel and Marie Knock.

FOOTNOTES

During the years, the sanctuary was not always the place of solemnity and liturgy. On occasion, due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, many "unchurch-like" things occurred.

There were the animal encounters such as a bat and a sparrow which came out of the ornamental pipes, swooping dangerously low over the heads of the congregation and choir. Then there was the cat that ambled through the balcony, across the rail, down the stairs, down the aisle, across the altar, through the sacristy and out the back door.

One Sunday, during a worship service, a lady became ill in the balcony close to the end of Pastor Peterson's sermon. The ambulance came quietly , the attendants went up the stairs into the balcony and Pastor Peterson preached **and** preached **and** preached **and** preached until they left. The people in the lower part of the sanctuary did not even know anything had happened. They just thought Pastor Peterson overdid it a bit.

In the days of Rev. Prottengeier, people were chided severely for laughing in the sanctuary. During a long picture taking session of the choirs, Pastor Fritschel scolded them for singing "Jingle Bells" to pass the time.

In 1957, while Pastor Bischoff was here, there was a banner in the Sunday School with an attendance of **638** children.

While visiting with a parishioner (now deceased), the story was told of Rev. Caselmann's daily travels on his bicycle managing to arrive at the home of a good cook at meal time. In fact, (so it was said), small children were to watch the road so they could run in and tell the lady of the house - - "preacher's coming". Perhaps this was one reason he was able to amass such great wealth?

It is interesting to note that previous to 1972, the church doors were never locked, day or night.

In 1946, the congregation celebrated the Fritschel 25th wedding anniversary, at which the congregation proudly presented them with a new car.

Fred Stock hand built the altar in the first church. This was the grandfather of Marian Hoeft.

The first couple married in the present church were Frank H. and Selma Hoeft.

The earliest baptismal records state the time within 15 minutes of when the birth occurred.

The earliest communion register listed men and women separately. The privilege of the vote at congregational meetings was extended to women in 1928. The congregation progressed to a woman pastor in 1995, sixty seven years later.

In 1924, the minutes show the janitor's salary should be increased to $200 per year and the organist should receive $100 per year. Hulda Lindaman's grandfather was custodian at that time.

The common cup was replaced by individual cups in 1940.

The largest confirmation class was 108 in 1939.

Did you know there is a carillon in the bell tower which chimed hymns over the city for many years before services began. These were played on the organ. During the remodeling, it has become inoperable though an attempt was made to restore it.

In 1997, the two senior members are Marie Knock, born on March 24, 1897, and Louise Witzel, born on February 1, 1897.

In the first book of minutes, the first half is written in German and changing to English in the middle of the book. As the language changes from German to English, it is apparent that there was a great deal of strife within the congregation. We are indeed grateful that it ended so peacefully and we have had this wonderful place to worship over 125 years.

May God bless the ministry of St. John for it is and has been a powerful force in many lives.

OUR HERITAGE

"O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good" – PSALM 106:1

In the Sixteenth Century Martin Luther founded a new religious faith in Germany that was to spread gradually through Europe and become the established religion in many countries. In the years that followed many immigrants crossed the stormy Atlantic and eventually settled in the middle west of the New World. One hundred years ago it was no easy task for Lutheran settlers in Floyd County to remain steadfast in their Lutheran belief as there was no Lutheran Church in this vicinity. Some moved to other settlements, a few lapsed into indifference, and others associated with the German Methodist Church in the town of Charles City.

The faithful few were a number of settlers from Pommerania and Hanover in Germany. In the spring of 1871 a society was organized and church trustees were elected. Rev. Adeeser, a pastor of the Swiss Reformed Church at Plainfield preached in Charles City on alternate Sundays. The meetings were held in a small schoolhouse on the Rockford Road. Later, the old stone schoolhouse in the central part of the town and several store buildings were used as meeting places. In October, 1871, when Pastor Adeeser accepted a call to Indiana, the congregation applied to the Lutheran Synod of Iowa to provide them with a pastor.

1872-1875 REV. CHRISTIAN WILKE

In February, 1872, the congregation extended a call to Rev. Christian Wilke who became the first Lutheran pastor to settle in Charles City. The congregation organized as the Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Congregation and elected as the trustees; Henry Niemann, William Herring, Christian Boeck, John Stolle, and Edwin Von Berg. On June 15, 1872, a resolution was passed to build a church and three lots were purchased in the vicinity of the present Gilbert and Main Street. The corner stone was laid on September 1, 1872. The dimensions of the building were 28x50, and the cost without furnishings was $2,500. The first service was held in the new church in February, 1873, but the dedication was delayed until the seats, altar and pulpit were placed in the church on September 21, 1973. A debt of $825 remained on the property and would have been a hard burden to the small congregation, but one of the faithful founders, Christian Dinkel, gave his farm in mortgage to offer security for the insolvent flock of Lutheran settlers. Rev. Wilke resigned his pastorate on January 24, 1875.

1875-1876 REV. HENRY VOGEL

Although Rev. Henry Vogel served the new church from January, 1875 until April, 1876, he was, in part, responsible for seeing that the remaining debts of the congregation were paid.

1876-1879 REV. FREDERICK MUTSCHMANN

There are no recorded documents during this period of the history of St. John's, other than that the congregation remained faithful to the Lutheran beliefs and grew in numbers.

1879-1917 REV. E.H. CASELMANN

During the pastorate of Rev. E.H. Caselmann from June, 1879, to November, 1917, a great many events occurred and can only briefly be recorded. In the printed German language history of 1909-1910, and in the Directory of 1915 there are photos and names of members who are still active in St. John today. Perhaps their memories of these events can be shared in detail with their families, and with the younger members.

It is interesting to note that on the tenth anniversary of the church in 1882, the Estey Chapel Organ was purchased. A schoolhouse was built in 1884, and one of our elders is apt to say, "I went to German School there!" The Luther League was organized in 1890. By 1891 seven lots had been purchased. The Ladies Aid was organized in 1892. Early in 1893 it was resolved to rebuild the church, and it was dedicated in September of that year. The Pipe Organ was installed in 1898.

In 1905 the Helping Hand Society was formed. In 1913 the Main Street parsonage was secured.

In February, 1918, the congregation was saddened by the death of Rev. Caselmann. Although he had made several extended visits to his native homeland, Germany, he had chosen Riverside Cemetery as his last resting place, near the church and the congregation that he had served so long and well.

1917-1938 REV. CONRAD PROTTENGEIER

Rev. Conrad Prottengeier came to St. John in 1917, and soon thereafter joined the congregation in building a new church; the Caselmann Memorial, a gift from the late pastor, which was dedicated in June, 1924. This included the great Moeller Organ which was to serve the congregation for many years in the musical part of the Lutheran Service. It marked the beginning of the choirs of St. John which have become so much a part of our heritage.

1938-1956 REV. WALTER N. FRITSCHEL

Soon after Rev. Walter N. Fritschel came to St. John in 1938, the Cradle Roll was organized in 1940. The individual Communion Cup was introduced that same year. For a great many of our present day members the years 1941-1945 were marked by World War II, and the spiritual guidance given by Rev. Fritschel during those trying years. In 1946 the Snyder Property was acquired for later expansion use, and that same year our first intern, Mr. Don Loots, served the congregation. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the church was celebrated in 1947. In October, 1949, the Rev. Conrad Prottengeier Memorial was dedicated and are still a part of our altar – the Altar Cross and Candelabra. In 1947 the present Skinner Organ was installed, and in April of that year ground breaking ceremonies were held for the new Parish Hall which was dedicated in June, 1952.

1956-1964 REV. WERNER A. BISCHOFF

During the time that Rev. W.A. Bischoff served the congregation, two Visitation Pastors joined the staff, Rev. H.S. Madsen, and Rev. William Planz. In March, 1960, the new parsonage on Second Street was dedicated.

1964-1969 DR. RICHARD TROST

During the time that Dr. Trost was at St. John, Rev. Terry Exner was assistant Pastor from 1963-1966. Soon after he left for his own congregation, Pastor Perry Brown arrived to serve as Associate from 1965 to 1972. Rev. B.C. Wiebke came as Visitation Pastor. In 1964 the congregation passed a resolution to approve the establishment of a Lutheran Mission Church in Charles City and Messiah Lutheran was dedicated in September, 1966.

In October, 1966, the dedication of the remodeling of St. John as it is today with the addition to the Parish Hall was held.

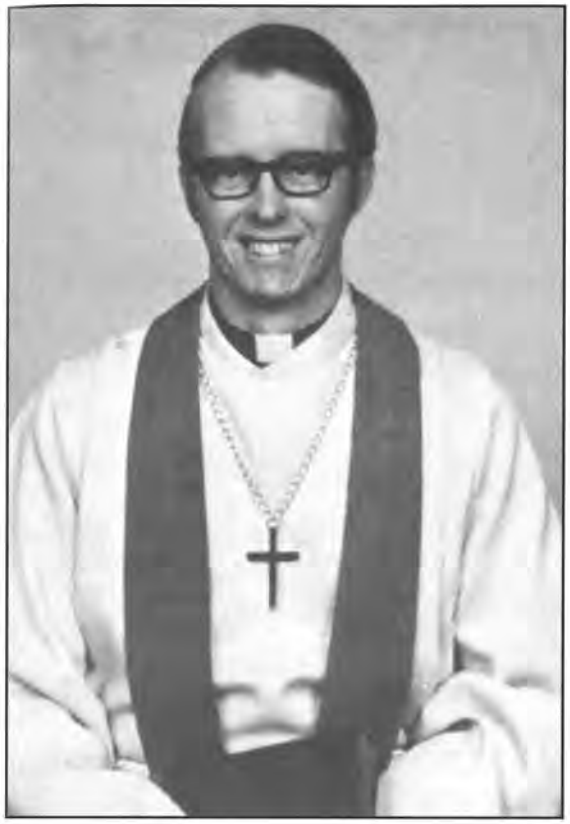
Although the devasting tornado of May 15, 1968, destroyed most of the churches in Charles City, St. John Lutheran was spared and for some period of time served as Red Cross and Rehabilitation Headquarters for relief and rescue work.

These years marked the completion of the enlarged off-street parking lot on Clinton Street, and the acquisition of the John G. Legel property facing Main Street, a gift from the estate.

1970-1976 PASTOR PALMER WOLD

Associate Pastor Perry Brown served the congregation for several months until Pastor Palmer Wold came in October, 1970. Pastor Wold brought with him a renewed enthusiasm for Christian family living in the church, and in the community as well. During the summer of 1971 the old John G. Legel house was demolished as was the only remaining house on the corner of Clinton and Second Street immediately adjacent to the present parking lot.

To quote Pastor Wold, "The year, 1972, is a wonderful experience for the parish," – The One Hundredth Anniversary of St. John Lutheran Church.



Pastor Peterson served St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church from 1971 to 1983.

"It is hard to comprehend all that has happened during these years. But we know there have been many good things and much growth among our members. For this we thank God. We also have great hopes and expectations for the future. I believe we can all sense that we are on the verge of new exciting forms of ministry in several areas; perhaps particularly to the aging. As we move ahead, the cross of Christ will, as always, be the basis of our ministry and vision. God bless you!"
Pastor D. Peterson
During that time Pastors Benjamin Wiebke and Richard Gronwold were the visitation pastors.

"I've only been at St. John for a relatively short period (4 months), but I'm grateful for the staff of St. John and the individual people of this congregation who live their lives as reflections of God's grace. You have caught a glimpse of His grace and glory and forgiveness and you share that sight to those around you. People see God, Christ and religion through us who label ourselves Christians.

May god continue to minister through all of us to the community and the world around us.

Francis C. Griffeth
1980-1983

Rev. Dr. Paul D. Mork served St. John from May 1983 to June 1993

"God has richly blessed our church with faithful, gifted and committed members — about 1,600 of them. Our prayer is that St. John will be able to serve you, give you rich and varied opportunities to be fed with the Word of God, and provide the challenges necessary so that you can grow and utilize your gifts in serving others for Jesus' sake.
Pastor Mork

Associate pastor from August of 1987 and senior pastor since March of 1994.

Pastor Dennis D. Niezwaag was born and raised in a small town in southeastern South Dakota by the name of Marion. He attended South Dakota State University from 1966-1969, and 1971-1974, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy. He worked in the field of pharmacy for five years in Beaver Dame, Wisconsin; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Fairbanks, Alaska; and Houston, Texas.
In 1979, he entered Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. Pastor Niezwaag served his internship year of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Charles City and was ordained at St. John on August 21, 1983.

In 1994, Pastor Niezwaag was called to serve St. John as senior pastor and was installed on June 5, 1994.

Pastor Karen Rask Behling Associate pastor, November 1994

In November 1994, Pastor Karen Rask Behling joined the St. John staff as associate pastor. Pastor Behling brought with her a commitment of ministry with youth and their families. As she says, "One of the great joys in my ministry is working with youth." She and visitation pastor Andrew Oppedahl have also been involved in working with dedicated lay leaders at St. John to expand the congregation's ministries for hospitality and visitation.