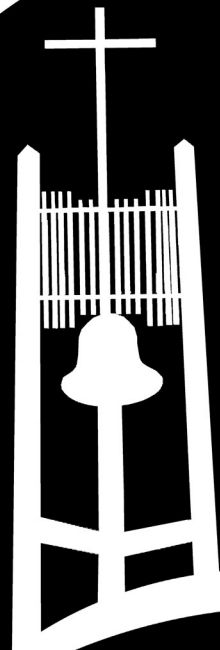


ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

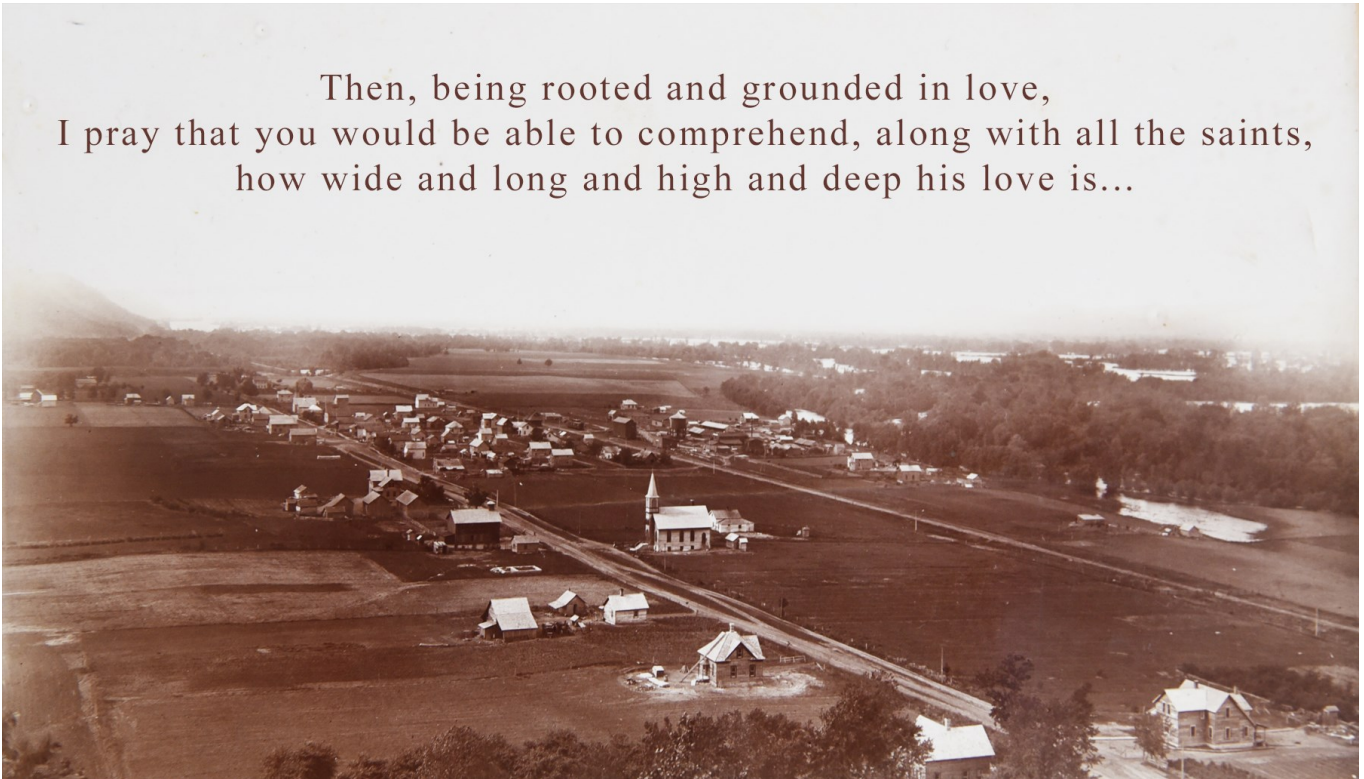


150
YEARS

1870 ■ 2020
STODDARD, WI

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

Then, being rooted and grounded in love,
I pray that you would be able to comprehend, along with all the saints,
how wide and long and high and deep his love is...



Stoddard, WI Early 1900's

Special thanks to the Vernon County Historical Society for early Stoddard pictures.

...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.



Stoddard, WI August 2020

Photo Credit: Nicholas Joseph Passe

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Early Beginnings



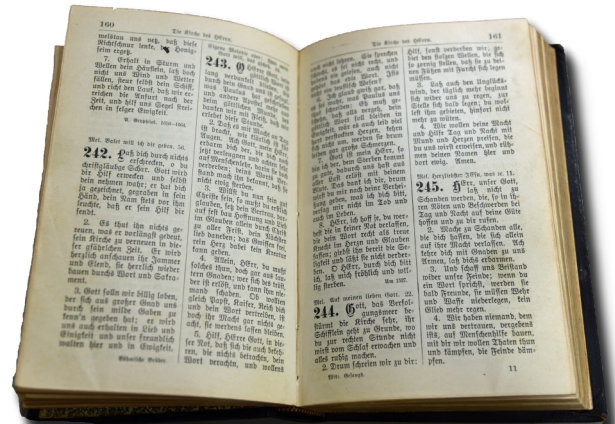
Our nation was not yet 100 years old. General Ulysses S. Grant was president of our 37 United States. Wisconsin was only 22 years old. The Civil War had ended only five years earlier. One hundred and fifty years ago, in 1870, the population of our nation was 38,500,000. That year,

the National Weather Service made its first official meteorological forecast.

That same year, the 15th Amendment gave black Americans the right to vote, the Standard Oil Company was incorporated by John D. Rockefeller, and in a small town in Wisconsin on the banks of the Mississippi River, a small group of Christians was gathering to establish a congregation so they could worship together. These pioneers wanted to be sure that they and their children could regularly hear the Word of God and receive the Sacraments.

You might think that in a part of the world where help was scarce, doctors were few and far between, roads were often not much more than wagon trails, and winters were long and harsh that these people would have had more important things to do than start up a congregation and build a house of worship. But they didn't think so. You might think that they would have had more important things to spend their time and hard earned money on than a church building and paying a pastor to come from La Crosse to preach and administer the Lord's Supper to them. But that's not how they felt. The Word of God was of utmost importance to them.

One hundred and fifty years later a lot has changed at St. Matthew's. The population of our nation is now 327,000,000 in 50 states. The Mississippi River is no longer a major frontier, but outer space is. Horses and buggies have been replaced by airplanes and cars - even electric ones. Electricity, internet and cell phone technology have completely changed the way we live our lives. Much has changed but some things have not and will never change. Everyone who lives here is a sinner in need of a relationship with our heavenly Father. Because we all still sin, it doesn't matter how fine of medical center we have in this country, people will get sick, grow old and die. The Holy Spirit still works through Baptism, the Word of God, and the Lord's Supper to bring people to faith in Jesus as our Savior, and strengthen that faith within us. God's Word is still the only source of forgiveness for our sins and eternal salvation. And this congregation, so humbly incorporated 150 years ago, continues to preach that life-giving Word. With God's gracious blessing, and the Holy Spirit's power and the support of God's people, may this church continue to proclaim the gospel to ourselves, to our community and to the next generation until our Lord comes again.



The founders of St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church came from the country of Germany. These immigrants heard about Wisconsin, a land of opportunity. It offered beautiful thick forest, fertile soil, clear springs and streams, and an abundance of fish and game. Above all these physical opportunities that this land had to offer, Wisconsin had the freedom of worship.

Inspired by letters sent to them from friends and relatives already here, the families packed their personal belongings and sailed to America and on to the port of Milwaukee. From there they moved across the vast wilderness to the Mississippi River, a frontier barrier.

These early pioneers found and settled in this area south of La Crosse in the 1860's. The Town of Bergen had been organized in or about 1853, five years after Wisconsin was admitted to the Union and twelve years after the first log cabins were built by Nathan Myrick in La Crosse. After their farms were established, they met at the homes of neighbors to discuss the establishment of a congregation and a house of worship. A site was picked on a knoll overlooking this picturesque valley east of what is now Stoddard. Land was donated by William Wehling for the purpose of building a house of worship and plotting a cemetery.

The Town of Bergen in 1870

From the 1870 Census

795 People

283 born in Wisconsin

106 born in Norway

152 Born in Prussia

Remainder came from other parts of Germany, Western Europe and the United States, mostly from the north-east

147 families

409 males

386 females

Occupations

Farmers - 109

Farm laborers - 43

Teachers - 3

Shoemakers - 2

Domestic servant - 1

Retired merchant - 1

Blacksmith - 1

Showman - 1

Retail merchant - 1

Carpenter - 1

Ship carpenter - 1

Brewer - 1

Mill laborer - 1

Agricultural Statistics (Production for home use not included)

In addition to sheep, cows, and swine, there were 76 oxen and 180 horses

2,177 acres of "improved land"

17,528 bushels spring wheat

556 bushels winter wheat

514 bushels rye

10,826 bushels Indian corn

11,745 bushels oats

1,392 bushels barley

5,019 pounds of Irish potatoes

4,945 lbs. honey

16,985 lbs. butter

420 lbs. cheese

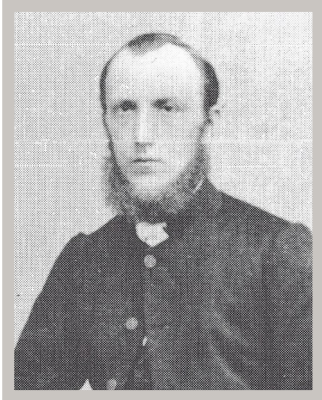
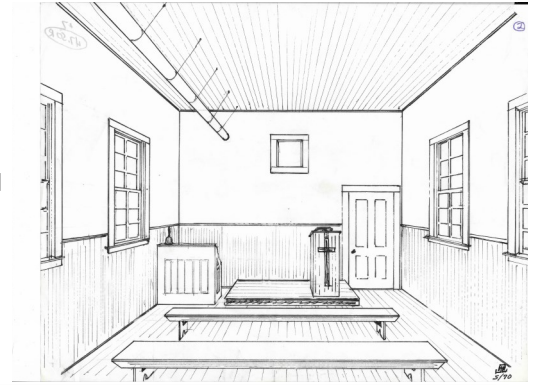




Sketches done by Adolph Lindahl

A 25'x20' white frame building was constructed and completed in 1869.

On January 16 and 23, 1870, informational meetings were held in the small building to discuss the formation of a congregation and adopting a constitution. Pastor H. Kittel of La Crosse conducted the meetings.



Pastor Herman Kittel

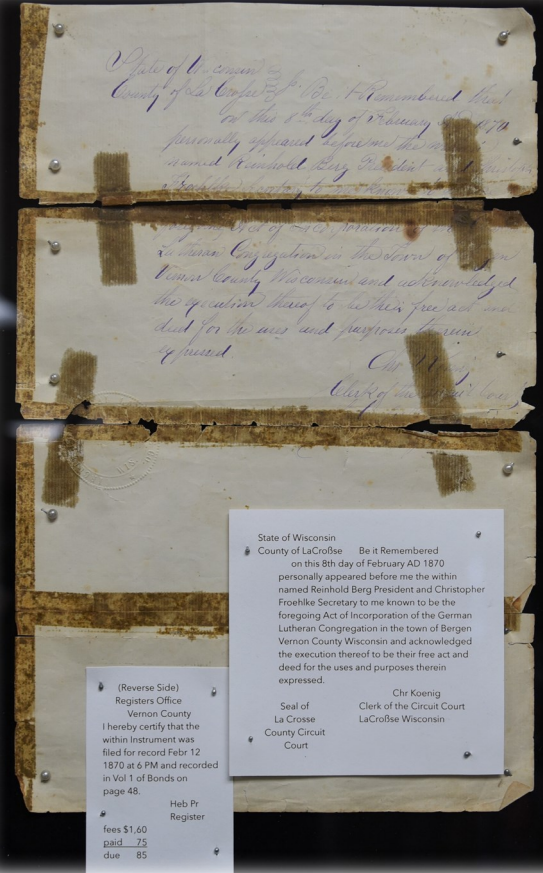
On January 27, 1870, a meeting was called. Reinhold Bey was appointed chairman and Christoph Froehlike, secretary.

Rev. H. Kittel of First Lutheran, La Crosse was the pastor. It was at this meeting that a constitution was adopted and the new congregation became known as the German Evangelical Lutheran St. Matthew's Congregation in Town Bergen, Vernon County, Wisconsin.

Signers of the Constitution

Wilhelm Wehling
Reinhold Bey
Christoph Froehlike
Chas. H. Wiele
Rudolph Wiele
F. Wilhelm Will
Jacob Groenke
George Mueller
Henry Hecht
Johann Grulke
August Thiele

Henry Leihson
Friedrich Schwake
Carl Jonas F. Hecht
Wilhelm Lamprich
Joseph Proksch
Ole Anderson
Julius Groenke
William Jonas
John Zurk
Ferinand Groenke
William Lamprich



On February 8, 1870, two leaders of our newly established church went to La Crosse to have a document notarized declaring the new congregation had been founded and established. The cost was \$1.60.

Pastor W. Hass



Pastor Kittel served as pastor and then Pastor W. Hass, who served other groups in the vicinity, finished the year. His salary was \$59 per year. Services were probably held only once every three or four weeks in each church. Pastor Hass then entered another mission field some miles away and no longer felt able to devote adequate time to the Hamburg Parish which included the Hamburg Congregation, St. Matthew's, and another nearby church. (Perhaps St. Johannes on Chipmunk Ridge.) On a side note, Pastor Hass gave his last sermon on a Sunday at Hamburg in 1890. He was stricken in the pulpit and within a week, he died.



There were 6 baptisms during St. Matthew's first year, and one occurring before the church was established.

Emilie Will, daughter of William and Wilhelmina Will, October 17, 1869

Friedrich Lamprecht, son of Wilhelm and Christiane Lamprecht, April 18, 1870

Gustav Bluschke, son of Johann and Henrietta Bluschke, April 18, 1870

Johann Grosskopf son of Georg and Marie Grosskopf, April 14, 1870

Paul Wiele, son of Robert and Bertha Wiele, June 6, 1870

Auguste Bey, daughter of Reinhold and Hulda Bey, December 26, 1870

Emma Wehling daughter of Wilhelm and Katherina Wehling, December 4, 1870

The German Language

One of the by-laws of the church concerned the German language. It stated: "Because the congregation is a German one and wishes to remain so, therefore all teaching and preaching, as well as all open discussions shall be carried on in the German language and remain so, as long as three members of the church wish to keep up the German language. Guest preachers may speak in another language if they ask permission, and if the pastor and the congregation gives the speaker such permission." The German language would continue to be used, if not just once a month in latter years, until 1951, 81 years after St. Matthew's began.

One of the conditions of membership was that one "partake regularly in the church services and partake, if possible, of Holy Communion at Easter time".



Pastor R. Baarts

In 1871, Rev. R. Baarts was called to serve this congregation along with the Hamburg parish and another nearby congregation. His contract included a yearly income of \$300, twenty bushels of wheat, fifteen to twenty bushels of potatoes, and wood for fuel.

In return for this he was asked to conduct services in this congregation on alternate Sundays and to teach at Hamburg two months of the entire six month teaching period which was to be distributed in the three districts.

Up until 1874, St, Matthews was served through the Hamburg parish, along with the congregation in Chaseburg . In that year, St. Matthew's discontinued affiliation with this group for a number of years.

On July 5, 1874, a congregational meeting consisting of St. Matthew's and St. Johannes on Chipmunk Ridge assembled in order to call a pastor for these two congregations which formed one parish. Unanimously they called the former teacher, Joh. Theodor Kuchmann as pastor. He was inducted into his office on July 19, 1874 by Carl Bothe of St. Johannes Congregation and by President Reinhold Bay of St. Matthew's. It was approved on August 16, 1874, by Pastor G. Fachtinam of Henderson, Minnesota at St. Matthew's. Witnesses were members of both congregations.

Top left picture and picture below from a 1918 baptism certificate from St. Johannes church.



Suffer the little children unto come to me, and forbid them not:
For of such is the kingdom of God. Mark 10:14



Sketch of St. Johannes Church on Chipmunk Ridge

Gifts to St. Matthew's Congregation in 1874

On Easter Sunday, April 5th, Mr. and Mrs. William Will presented a chandelier for the church in memory of their mother/mother-in-law, Anna Kelm, and brothers Friedrich, Wilhelm, Heinrich and sister Augusta Kelm, who were killed in a railroad accident near Montreal, Canada on June 29, 1864 while emigrating from Germany to America.

May 17, On Sunday Exandi (the Sunday after the Ascension) School elder Mr. Bay and Church Elder George Mueller, presented a crucifix in memory of their sister/sister-in-law, Ottilie Bay who died on March 28, 1865

Also on May 17, Johann Helke and his wife presented to St. Matthews two altar chandeliers and wax candles in memory of their children:

Heinrich Hermann— July 19, 1869—December 29, 1871
 Rosalie- December 8, 1864-January 1, 1872
 Caroline Mathiilda— June 8, 1867-January 20, 1872
 Eva—Born and died on July 29, 1873

May 24, 1874—An altar cloth and pulpit covering were presented on First Pentecost Day by Mr. Wilhelm Wehling, Mr. Reinhold Bay and Mr. George Mueller. They were dedicated by teacher Kuchmann, who spoke appropriate words of dedication to the assembled congregation.



Above is the only known photo of St. Johannes Church. It is in the background of this Leisso family photo. It was described as a quaint small frame church with a small vestibule, large small-framed windows, high pulpit and Cottage organ. A cemetery still marks the nearby location. Pictured are— Row 1: Earl Leisso, Irene Leisso, Earl Kuester, Margaret Leisso Granke, Martin Roesler, Jr., and Arthur Leisso. Row 2: William and Mary Leisso and Amelia Kuester. (sisters)

After church services on January 3, 1875, a meeting was held for the election of officers, and also to vote on a building site for a parsonage. No agreement was reached by the two parties until the president of the St. John's (Johannes) congregation, Carl Bothe volunteered to build a parsonage on his own land if the congregation would give him an annual rent of \$30. This suggestion was unanimously approved.

Records were not found of the whereabouts of this parsonage, or if it was ever built.

Pastor Kuchmann served here until October of 1880.

Rules of the Church Cemetery

1876—Non-members had to pay \$1.00 to be buried in the church cemetery

1879— It was resolved that every church member pay 50 cents by March for fencing and deliver four fence posts. Whoever did not would never have the right to be buried in the church cemetery.

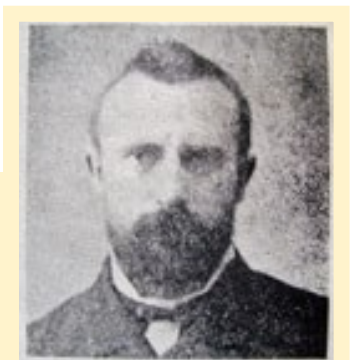
1881—Non-members had to pay \$2.00 to be buried in the church cemetery and be buried at the north end.

1882— Non-members could no longer be buried in the cemetery.

Pastor O. Oerding was called on October 24, 1880 and arrived in November. Once again, we shared a pastor with Chaseburg and Hamburg, as well as St. Johannes. Services were probably held once or twice a month. His annual salary consisted of \$120 from Chaseburg, \$180 from

Hamburg, a parsonage, fuel, a bushel of wheat and a bushel of potatoes from the head of each family, and the use of the land belonging to the church property. It was not recorded what St. Matthew's contributed.

Pastor O. Oerding





Hamburg Church, built in 1891 (2013 view)

The first Hamburg church was located at the foot of the hill of its present day location on the ridge top. Built in 1871, it was a box shaped log building with small frame windows and a shingled roof and brick chimney. It was in 1891 that the present day church was constructed on the ridge.



The first Chaseburg Church, built in 1885, with school and parsonage

It is interesting to note how dedicated these early pastors have had to have been. Traveling long distances to these various churches on horse and buggy through hills and valleys in all kinds of weather had to be very discouraging at times. But the Lord sustained them, allowing his Word to be spread throughout the countryside and into the hearts of his people.

According to Vernon County history, St. Matthew's began with twenty some families and grew to thirty-five by 1884.



Pastor E.H. Palechek

Upon Pastor Oerding's retirement at the end of 1890, A meeting was held on January 25, 1891. Representatives from Chaseburg, Hamburg, and Stoddard voted to call Pastor E.H. Palechek of Alma, Wisconsin. On Easter Sunday, March 29, 1891 he came to serve our congregation. The contract called for one service to be held on each Sunday so that each location was to be served once in three weeks. The pastor was also to

teach a parish school at Chaseburg three times a week from three to four months a year. The salary consisted of \$450 a year, parsonage, (which was located in Chaseburg) fuel, the use of eight acres of land connected with the church property, and provisions to compensate for teaching. St. Johannes Church was still included in this parish and was served once a month.

St. Matthew's membership continued to grow and the church became too small. It was decided that a larger building would be more suitably located in the village of Stoddard. The land that the church was built on was donated by the White family, who lived at the north edge of town. The frame building was constructed and the cornerstone was laid in 1897. Later, brick veneer and stained glass windows were added.

To allow for more services, in 1897, St. Matthew's conceded to have its meetings in the afternoons of the Sunday in which morning services were held in Chaseburg. St. Johannes congregation was also served in the afternoon of alternate Sundays when Hamburg was served in the morning. Typically, morning services were at 10:00 am and afternoon services at 2:00 pm.

1897

Below: 1903 View of Stoddard

At this time, Stoddard had few trees, as most people farmed a few acres of land behind their buildings. Residents numbered around 200 when the village was incorporated in 1903.





Above: Main Street Stoddard, 1895



Above: The Burlington Northern Railroad Depot in Stoddard. At this time, passenger trains also came through this area. In 1967, this service was discontinued and the depot in Stoddard was removed.



Left: Picture from a portion of a confirmation picture from 1898. Translated— Take and eat! - Take and drink!



The Ladies' Aid was organized in 1904

Below, left and right: Two different scenes of Main Street, Stoddard, originally known as Lover's Lane, facing north. Imagine our early members gathering to worship, traveling on these paths and dirt roads..



TORNADO KILLS FOUR AND INJURES SCORE

On June 6, 1906, at 6 pm, a tornado swept through the Stoddard region. While the church had no reported damage, some of our members suffered some losses. It was also stated that the Hamburg church seemed to be miraculously spared

while many other buildings were destroyed in the surrounding area. Witnesses reported that when the funnel came over the river, it sucked the water into the air and they could see the bottom of the river. Fish were found on a farm on Oak Ridge.

DEATH AND RUIN IN TORNADO'S PATH

ONE FATALITY AT STODDARD
AND OTHERS ELSEWHERE.

MANY BUILDINGS RAZED

Widespread Property Loss Reported
—Bridge on Burlington Road Carried Out and Passenger Train Flagged on Brink of the Gap by a Farmer.

Storm's Center.

The hurricane centered, apparently, one and one-half miles east of Stoddard, Vernon county. It passed up Coon valley and Mormon coulee, striking Stoddard and Brinkman most heavily. Telephone communication is crippled and telegraph wires are down toward the south.

There was some damage in La Crosse, but no one was injured.

Washouts are reported on the railroads in this vicinity.

Many farms are reported to be completely devastated.

La Crosse, Monroe and Vernon counties in Wisconsin and Houston county in Minnesota suffered most heavily and a vast amount of property was destroyed.

In a strip of farming country in Coon valley on the north side of Coon creek, everything was swept clean, residences, stables, tobacco warehouses and everything above the ground being laid flat. The brick house of Carl Scheck fell to pieces and all of the inmates were badly injured by falling bricks. The dead body of Halvor Halvorsen was found in the road outside. He is supposed to have been struck by flying missiles.

A special train on the La Crosse & Southeastern brought the injured to La Crosse late last night.

Viroqua, Melvin and Sparta escaped damage. The villages of Coon Valley and Chaseburg were in the path of the storm, but it is not known what occurred there.

How Farmer Saved Train.

A terrible catastrophe was barely averted at the Burlington railway crossing over Coon creek, south of Stoddard. Forty feet of bridge was taken out by the tornado.

The new Daylight Limited, a palatial train, which last night carried over 200 passengers from Chicago to La Crosse and the twin cities, was running a half hour late, which fact alone saved it from running into the open bridge.

Shortly before it reached the bridge, the danger was discovered by John Miller, a farmer, who flagged the train, stopping it within ten feet of the bridge. The damage to the bridge was not discovered until after the regular time for the daylight limited to pass. Had it been on time the whole train with its load of passengers would have plunged into the creek, swollen by heavy rains of several times its original size.

The dead and injured at Stoddard were sheltered in a brick house owned by Carl Scheck. The building was crumpled by the gale. Fourteen houses are known to have been destroyed up Coon valley.

Their owners and the distance from Stoddard are:

Edward Twit, 3 miles east, building all down.

Mrs. Hoff, 3½ miles east.

Mrs. Onetta Peterson, 2½ miles east.

Peter Peterson, 2½ miles east.

Hals Halvorsen, 2½ miles east.

Chas. Cink, 1 mile south, small building down.

Ludwig Scheck, 1½ miles south-east.

Carl Scheck, 1 mile east, home totally destroyed.

William Wehling, 1 mile northeast, small buildings down.

Julius Granke, 1 mile east.

William Jonas, 1 mile east.

Below: The Charlie Zink farm



Below: Stoddard, 1916



On April 27, 1916, the whole parish together with the Mississippi Valley Conference celebrated the 25th anniversary of Pastor Palechek's uninterrupted service in the congregations. Pastor Siegler, who officiated at the time of his installation, preached the sermon. On the following day, Pastor Palechek and his wife celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. Pastor Nicolaus, who performed their ceremony, again officiated. Pastor Palechek was presented with a pail of silver dollars sufficient to purchase the first car to be used by a pastor in this area.

The first confirmation class was confirmed in St. Matthew's in 1910. Before that time, they were confirmed at Chaseburg.

Holy communion services were conducted on a quarterly basis until 1910, when they repeated every two months.

Services were originally conducted entirely in German. As early as 1912, English began to be used, as the younger generation drifted from the native language.

DOUBLE EVENT IS CELEBRATED BY CHASEBURG PASTOR

Rev. E. H. Polechek's Silver
Wedding Anniversary
Comes on Anniversary
of Service

CHASEBURG, Wis., May 4.—
(Special.)—Thursday and Friday of last week, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Rev. E. H. Palechek's wedding and also of his occupancy as pastor of the German Lutheran church as pastor, was celebrated. Special services

were held Thursday afternoon in the church, while all visiting ministers were treated to auto rides to nearby towns Friday morning. Friday noon Mrs. Palechek was hostess at a dinner given in their honor. Other services were held during Friday afternoon at which time the congregation presented Rev. and Mrs. Palechek with a purse of \$450.

Ministers were in attendance from points in this state as well as some from adjoining states.

From the La Crosse Tribune
May 4, 1916

The 20's – the 50's

Below: The first known photo of a confirmation class at St. Matthew's

March 18, 1923



Back: Helma Levendoski, Lucien Wrobel, Esther Bay, Pastor Palecheck, Elsie Proksch, Mildred Wrobel, Mabel Wrobel
Middle: Caroline Scheck, Harry Beitlich, Raymond Krause, Alfred Krause, Minnie Scheck
Front: Wesley Proksch, Lorene Wrobel, Gertrude Loeffler, Nona Springer, Hazel Hass, Erma Bay, Elmer Seidel

The present parsonage was purchased from Lonnie Scholl in the 1920's. The church park property was purchased in 1927 from the Nottingham family for \$1400. This included a Catholic church building which was later used as our Christian Day School and Saturday School.

Below: From left to right— the parsonage, the school, and the church.



Pastor Brackebusch was involved in mission work. Below is a clip from September of 1924. His guests from Germany gave a presentation of work done among orphans and the elderly in their country.

Mrs. Kock and son of Lowell, Wis., and Sister Anna Friedland of Gerlin, Germany, were week-end guests of Rev. and Mrs. Brackebusch. Sister Friedland spoke in the St. Matthews Lutheran church on work among the orphans and old people of Germany.

He also officiated at a Lutheran English mission in La Crosse in 1928.

LUTHERAN ENGLISH MISSION
 Services at 10:30 a. m. Rev. & M. Brackebusch of Stoddard will officiate. Sunday school at 9:30 a. m. Our Sunday school is growing. This Sunday definite classes will be organized and pins distributed. Any children living in the vicinity are urgently invited to be with us. A contest to see which boy or girl can bring the most newcomers is proving close. Four are now tied for first place. Children, you can all be missionaries!

On May 6, 1923, St. Matthew's became an independent parish and Pastor I.M. Brackebusch, at age 29, became our first resident pastor. Day school was conducted one month on the ridge and one month at Stoddard.



It was during the ministry of Pastor Brackebusch that St. John's of Genoa joined our congregation in sharing a pastor. The St. Johannes congregation on the ridge dissolved around this time, with its members joining either St. Peter's of Hamburg, or St. Matthew's in Stoddard.

Note the rug in the 1923 photo.



Below: St. Johns, Genoa (1960's view)



Heating was done with wood in the church and school buildings. The price was \$4.00 per load. Total for the 1925-1926 winter was \$49.00.



1926 Confirmation Class

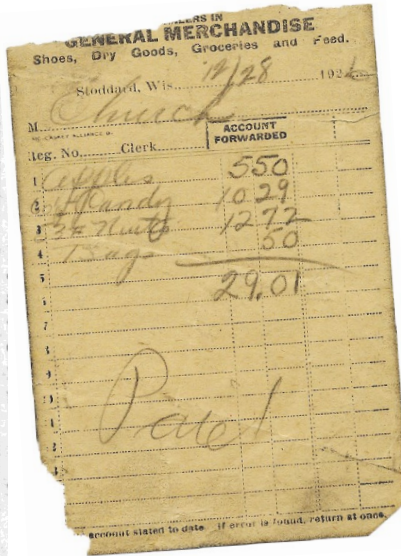
Back: Alvin Granke, Alice Krause, Alvin Stellick, Elmer Stellick, Walter Scheck, Amanda Chase, Kenneth Groetsch, Carl Schwake
Front: Marie Scheck, Margaret Leisso, Earl Leisso, Pastor Brackebusch, Elmer Beitlich, Lucille Springer, Bertha Levendoski

April 29, 1928

MRS. BRACKEBUSCH, STODDARD, PASSES AWAY SUDDENLY

Mrs. Esther Brackebusch, wife of Rev. I. M. Brackebusch of Stoddard, passed away at a local hospital Saturday morning after a brief illness. She is survived by her husband, one daughter, Dorothy, age 4, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Humphrey of Palmyra, Ill., one sister, Mrs. Bernice Hogan of Springfield, Ill., three brothers, Carl S. Humphrey of Chicago, Fred V. Humphrey of Philadelphia, and Coy C. Humphrey of Mason City, Iowa. Mrs. Brackebusch was a correspondent for The Tribune.

Funeral services will be held Monday afternoon, April 4, at 2:30 in the afternoon, from the St. Matthews Evangelical Lutheran church, Stoddard, Rev. J. Bergholz officiating. The remains will be shipped to Palmyra, Ill., where interment will be made.



A long time tradition was evident back in 1926. Pictured at left is the bill for the treat bags given out at Christmas. The apples were \$5.50, candy \$10.29; nuts \$12.72 and 75 bags were 50 cents, for a total cost of \$29.01

November 28, 1928

STODDARD CHURCH SOCIETIES GIVE PARTY FOR PASTOR

STODDARD, Wis.—The St. Matthew's Lutheran church at Stoddard was the scene of a unique birthday celebration Sunday evening, when the auxiliaries of the congregation sponsored the celebration of the 33rd birthday of their pastor, the Rev. I. M. Brackebusch.

Every detail of the celebration was so skillfully planned and arranged by the committees in charge that they succeeded not only in making it a surprise party, but also a very pleasant and joyful evening for the entire congregation and friends.

A short service was held in the church where the Rev. Bergholz of La Crosse spoke appropriate words. The quartet sang "Onward Christian Soldiers." After services all members were invited to a delicious luncheon served by the ladies of the congregation. The Rev. Bergholz acted as toastmaster and a very delightful evening was spent.

The congregation, Ladies' Aid and Walther League remembered their pastor with several gifts.

Electricity Comes to St. Matthew's

The church, school, and parsonage were wired for electricity for \$399.01 in 1929-1930 by Oscar Stellner.

December 26, 1929

La Crosse Nurse and Stoddard Pastor Wed Christmas Day

AT St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran church in Stoddard at three o'clock the afternoon of Christmas day Miss Ethel Evangeline Fjelsgaard, daughter of the Rev. A. B. Fjelsgaard of Paxton, Ill., became the bride of the Rev. I. M. Brackebusch of Stoddard, pastor of St. Matthew's church. The bridegroom's father, the Rev. Imm. Brackebusch of Stoddard, performed the ceremony.

Ladies of the congregation entertained at a reception following the ceremony, when the gift of a Kelvinator was made to the couple from the Ladies' Aid society.

Following a trip to Milwaukee the Rev. and Mrs. Brackebusch will be at home at the parsonage of St. Matthew's church in Stoddard. The bride is a graduate of Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing in La Crosse.

"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 1:21. This Bible verse may have come to mind to Pastor Brackebusch when, during his fifth year in his ministry here in 1928, God called his wife Esther home to heaven, leaving him with their four year old daughter, Dorothy.

Members of St. Matthew's surely had compassion for him, and demonstrating their Christian love, surprised him with a party on his 33rd birthday later that year.

God had blessed Pastor Brackebusch with a second wife, the wedding taking place on Christmas day, 1929. They were later blessed with a baby girl who was baptized on Christmas day the following year.

December 28, 1930

Lois Adelle, daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. I. M. Brackebusch, was christened Christmas day at St. Matthews church. The sponsors were Miss Agnes Brackebusch and Elmer Granke.

Pastor Brackebusch directed the Stoddard choir at the 400th anniversary of Luther's catechism and the anniversary of his birth.

1
9
2
9

LUTHERAN CHURCH CELEBRATES BIRTH OF MARTIN LUTHER

City Thronged Today For
Quadricentennial; Mass
Services Planned

MAJESTIC AND RIVOLI
THEATERS ARE UTILIZED

Choir of Three Hundred and
Fifty Voices to Sing

LUTHERANS from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa are in La Crosse today to celebrate the quadricentennial anniversary of the writing of the catechism by Dr. Martin Luther. Today is also the anniversary of the birth of the founder of the Lutheran church.

Because so large a crowd is expected in La Crosse to attend the celebration the executive committee in charge of the event has engaged two of the largest city theaters, the Rivoli and the Majestic.

Although the services will be conducted in the Rivoli theater, amplifiers have been placed in the Majestic theater so that persons unable to secure entrance to the Rivoli may hear the entire program.

"Now Thank We All Our God,"
Bach, mass chorus.
"Praise Ye the Lord," Palmer,
Stoddard choir directed by the Rev. I. Brackebusch.



Back: Walter Bay, Lorene Schlicht, Viola Loeffler, Illa Rumsey, Ray Krause
 Middle: Oscar Zink, Wilburt Beitlich, Pastor Brachebusch, Edwin Groth, Roy Krause
 Front: Ludwig Scheck, Arthur Leisso, George Groth



Top: Art Wiese, Margaret Groth, Hilda Klahn, Carl Klahn
 Bottom: John Helke, Bernice Wiese, Pastor Brachebusch, Lucille Beitlich, Harold Clements

In 1930, new monthly envelopes for offerings were introduced, replacing the quarterly ones.

1932



Top: Alvin Hanson, Dorothy Wolfe, Viola Woodhouse, Rueben Anderson, Viola Schaldach, Ruth Adams, Harold Simons Michel
 Middle: Fred Levendoski, Ruth Wolfe, Edna Wolfe, Pastor Brachebusch, Irene Veglahn, Gladys Jonas
 Bottom: Donald Wrobel, Leonard Klahn, Hazel Hanson, Mildred Phillips, Edwin Schlicht, Gerald Klum



Pastor H. E. Bentrup became our pastor in December of 1932.

GALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH SCHEDULES MISSION FESTIVAL

Three Outside Pastors Will Conduct Services Afternoon and Evening

The fifth annual Mission Festival of the Mount Calvary Lutheran church, of which the Rev. T. J. Mueller is pastor, will be held next Sunday, September 10 in three special services.

In this September 7, 1933 clipping from the La Crosse Tribune at right, it states that Pastor Bentrup was a missionary among the Chinese people. He was one of the speakers at Mt. Calvary's Mission Festival.

A fitting program has been arranged in which Mission-work will be the chief topic of discussion. The speakers for the day include the second, vice president of the West Wisconsin district of the Wisconsin Synod, the Rev. H. Kirchner, of Baraboo, Wis., who will have charge of the forenoon service, beginning at 10 a. m.; the Rev. Theophil Mahnke of Cataract, Wis., who will deliver the German address at 2:30 p. m., and the Rev. H. E. Bentrup, of Stoddard, Wis., who will be the principal speaker in the evening service, beginning at 7:45 p. m.

Rev. Bentrup promises to give an interesting lecture on his experiences, as missionary among the Chinese. Both morning and evening services will be in English. Special music will be provided by the Mount Calvary quartet, the male choir of the First Lutheran church, and the mixed choir of Immanuel Lutheran church. Anticipating a large attendance at these services, the congregation has arranged to increase its seating capacity and the ladies of the congregation will serve both dinner and supper in the church basement.

In January of 1933, St. Matthews' voted to start a Christian Day School. The vote was 20 for and 14 against. Pastor Bentrup offered to teach it himself if that were the only way of getting it started, but urged the congregation to get a teacher. Twenty students were promised for the fall, but not for the winter. The question was to start it immediately, with five months left to the school year, or wait until fall. Pastor Bentrup believed in "hitting the iron when it is hot", and sent a request letter to the president of Dr. Martin Luther College. The salary was fixed at \$50 per month. The requested qualifications were the ability to play the organ, help with choir and Sunday school, and above else, have a passion for souls. His hope was, with the help of God, that the school would flourish and grow to forty pupils.

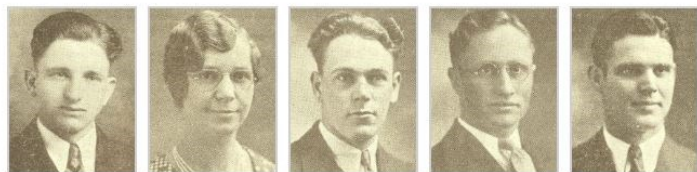
Realizing that the request was made in the middle of the school year, Pastor Bentrup was hoping for just a student. But he received a reply from Professor E.R. Bliefernicht stating that there were two male graduates who had not received calls in last June's graduating class. One was Ervin Humann from South Dakota who would fit our needs and was "very earnest and conscientious, a fair organist, and one whose heart is in the right place, who will in every way cooperate with his pastor". Professor Bliefernicht found it refreshing and encouraging that we wanted to start a Christian school when so many pastors at that time claimed it was impossible to begin one. He also stated that salary wasn't a concern because all of the young men were expecting to go into this work for the Lord's sake, and not for earthly gain.



St. Matthew's began a Christian Day School in 1933. Our first teacher was Mr. Ervin Humann. On the following pages, beginning with his time here with us, are his memoirs that he wrote during his later years at the urging of his family. We thank the Humann family for granting us permission to include this glimpse at life during the Great Depression.

June 18, 1933

1932- Dr. Martin Luther College



Gruenhagen, Henry St. Paul, MN
 Hamisch, Marguerite Puyallup, WA
 Hormann, Frederick West Salem, WI
 Huhn, Armin New Ulm, MN
 Humann, Ervin White Butte, SD



Back: Arnold Miller, Bernard Scheck, Wilfred Leisso
 Front: Esther Beitlich, Louise Beitlich, Pastor H. E. Bentrup, Mabel Beitlich

1934



Top: Lorine Groth, Minnie Scheck, Rev. H. E. Bentrup, Ruby Olson, Mildred Adams
 Middle: Virgil Phillips, Eleanor Bakken, Dorothy Groth, Herman Bentrup
 Bottom: Edward Scheck, LaVern Clemments, Teacher Ervin Humann, Alvin Proksch, Carl Stellner

COMMENCEMENT AT STODDARD WILL BE HELD NEXT SUNDAY

STODDARD, Wis. — (Special) — High school commencement exercises will be held Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock in the St. Matthew's Lutheran church. The Rev. Gustav Fischer of La Crosse will be the speaker. Eleanor Bakken and Carl Stellner are valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

Those who are to graduate are: Eleanor Bakken, Ruby Olson, Lorine Groth, Carl Stellner, Herman Bentrup, and Alvin Proksch. Following the exercises a picnic and program will be held on the school grounds.

May 22, 1934

A brighter note occurred that summer when Pastor Blume asked me to play for church services at White Butte. My sister had purchased a piano, so now I could utilize a lot of time practising my music. Later that autumn, I was also asked to direct the choir at Lemmon. I was most grateful to the Lord for these opportunities to bolster my self confidence and overcome more of my inferiority complex. These good people gave me a lot of encouragement in my lowly endeavors.

My big break came the week before Christmas, 1932, when the Heavenly Shepherd directed a call to me from St. Matthew's Congregation at Stoddard, Wisconsin, to organize and start a Christian Day School after New Year's 1933. My duties as listed were * to resume the responsibility of principal, teach graded one through eight, play the organ for church services, the choir, young people's leader, and other duties as they may arise. The salary was stipulated at forty-five dollars a month for nine months - out of this I would be obligated to pay fifteen dollars a month for board and room.

The congregation only had about two hundred and twenty-five communicants. Those in favor of starting a Christian Day School won out by only three votes. Viewing the size of the congregation and the close vote, it hardly seemed feasible to start a school. But fully realizing that with the Heavenly Father's blessing all things are possible, I was eager and anxious to launch into the task laid before me and put to practice the talents, which the Lord had endowed me with in preparation all these years. This was especially true after spending such an uneventful, unfruitful and unprofitable six months on the parched prairies of South Dakota.

Hence, a day or two after Christmas, I again clankety-clanked and choo-chooed toward an unknown, brand new destination. Stoddard is located fifteen miles south of LaCrosse, Wis., along the Mississippi River - surrounded by high hills - better known as ridges. I arrived in this sleepy, little river town about ten o'clock in the forenoon - wearing my bright orange, college sweater and lugging my suitcase. I headed for the parsonage and the town-folk along the way must have awed and wondered who the new arrival in town was. Pastor and Mrs. Bentrup welcomed me with open arms. They had four children, three sons and a daughter, all of school age. Since they were crowded for sleeping quarters, we decided that I eat my meals at the parsonage and sleep at a member's across the street from there. They were fine people and very accommodating. This setup wasn't exactly ideal, but worked out quite satisfactorily.

The schoolhouse was an old, flimsy, abandoned, Catholic Church, which the congregation had purchased and converted into a schoolroom. The same was heated with a tall, round, black woodburner. The naughty boys had the pleasure to keep the large wood-box filled during recess and the noonhour. The seats were still the double type and some triple. The temptation was great to push the end ones off. This always gave me an excuse to have enough wood carriers listed for duty. Good books and adequate teaching materials were almost non-existent. Monetary-wise, these were difficult times. Most of our supplies were second-hand donations from First German Lutheran School at LaCrosse.

I had been brought up in the school of hard knocks, and this was just a continuation of the same. Someone brought up in a more affluent environment, would most likely have thrown up his hands in utter disgust and defeat.

My first day of classes was filled with fear and trembling knees like all beginner teachers experience. The Good Shepherd had blessed us with an enrollment of twenty-four blood bought lambs, eagerly staring me in the face, wondering what I had to say to them. All grades from one through eight were represented. Suffice it to say that with the Lord's help, I managed to get my feet on the ground, and soon things were progressing quite smoothly. My good pastor was a wonderful schoolman, and his kind, fatherly encouragement helped me over the hurdles.

Another jolt awaited me when I received my first forty-five dollar check. By this time, I was almost penniless and hurried to the bank to have it cashed. To my surprise and dismay, I found a sign on the entrance which read, "BANK CLOSED." This happened to be the day when President Roosevelt had unexpectedly declared a nation wide "Bank Moratorium", It took two or three weeks before the banks opened again and people were allowed to withdraw a certain percentage of their deposits. After some shrewd maneuvering, I finally received my sorely needed \$45.00.

With a determined, consecrated effort, much praying, and many prayers answered, I successfully plowed through my first school year. I thanked the Lord many times for His gracious help and guidance during this difficult undertaking. The shakey beginning now looked much brighter.

This summer the pastor from Chaseburg prevailed upon me to teach his three different summer schools in the area. Each session was three weeks. The daily schedule was from nine o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. Some days were uncomfortably hot and monotonous. My salary here also was \$45.00 a month - but here I stayed with various families, usually a week at a time, and saved my \$15.00 board and room.

After the above, I only had a few short weeks left to prepare for the 1933-'34 school year opening date. When the day arrived, it wasn't nearly as hectic and confusing as the previous opening day. The enrollment again was twenty some pupils with all grades represented. I still burned the midnight oil preparing daily lessons; but with the many outside activities, I also became quite adept in the art of shaking missing preparations out of my sleeve. I would never recommend that this method become habitual, but as every teacher will attest to - there are times when there is no other alternative.

This year the roof on the parsonage was raised, and the attic space was converted into two cozy rooms. I was offered one of them - now I could eat and sleep under the same roof.

This year the pastor was also wheeling and dealing for a new car. Since I was stuck in the sticks here without a personal means of transportation - I decided to buy his old Durant for fifty dollars. After the close of my first full year of teaching and attending two summer school sessions - I drove the old buggy home to South Dakota. Outside a couple flat tires, the old machine zipped right along without any further delays.

The drought-stricken landscape had not improved one bit since I left the scene a year and a half before. Soon after I arrived home, my mother was taken to the hospital in Bismark, N.D. for a serious tumor operation. The affliction had made her very anemic, and she was in dire need for blood transfusions before they could operate. My dad and the older brothers and sisters submitted to blood tests, but mine was the only type that matched hers. When they proceeded to extract the same from me, they discovered that my veins were too narrow to insert the needle. After pricking here and there, without success, they decided to make an incision and use a pump to obtain the same. Thus within three days, I was drained of three pints of blood. This weakened my physical condition for a long time afterwards.

What we feared the most was verified after the operation - the tumor was cancerous. Still for several months she seemed to rally and was about her daily tasks as usual. In the meantime I meandered back to Stoddard to pursue my teaching duties. After Christmas, I was informed that mother's condition had taken a turn for the worse. The pain was becoming more and more intense, and to keep food down was also an uncontrollable problem. Under such helpless, humanly speaking, circumstances one is tempted to seek relief even from quack doctors. Word had reached my parents about a hospital in Muscatine, Iowa that was noted for curing cancer patients. So out of sheer desperation, mom and dad boarded the train for Iowa to seek relief for the almost unbearable, excruciating pain.

All the foregoing happened about three weeks before the end of another schoolyear. In the meantime, I was informed that mother's condition was not improving but steadily getting worse. So a week after the Good Shepherd of His sheep and lambs had graciously blessed us with another successful schoolyear - I headed for Muscatine, Iowa to take mother home. During the year, I had sold my old Durant for thirty-five dollars and bought an old Essex from one of our pastors in LaCrosse for fifty dollars. This was a good car, and I reached my destination without any trouble.

I found my mother a mere skeleton of skin and bones; yet she was alert and cried for joy when I entered her room. Chills went up and down my spine, the moment I set foot inside the place. People were moaning and groaning everywhere. The next morning before leaving, they gave mother her final water treatment. I could hear her scream way down in the lobby. It was a heartrending experience, and all I could do was pray that the Great Physician from above would ease her pain.

To make a long story short, just let me say, that we placed a hospital bed mattress on the back seat of the car and placed mom on it. In spite of her weakness and agonizing pain, she was bubbling over with joy and happiness at the thought of going home and leaving this place of horror. Incidentally, a few years later the establishment was found guilty of false claims and quackery and was forced to disband.

We were happily homeward bound when suddenly mother went into a state of convulsions. When I turned around to view the situation, our guardian angel was truly with us - I missed by inches going into the ditch and rolling the car over. I braked to a stop and was powerless to come up with any help for a moment. She finally did calm down and went into a deep coma. She never regained consciousness again. I was now desperately hoping to locate a hospital. After stopping to inquire, I was informed that the closest one was at Watertown, S.D. - a distance of over a hundred miles. It seemed an eternity when we finally arrived there about five o'clock in the afternoon, and mother was admitted into the hospital.

I notified my father concerning the predicament which had arisen, and he promised to meet me as soon as possible. After getting a bite to eat and reserving a room for the night, I went back to the hospital. Nothing had changed - sometime after midnight a nurse advised me to go and get some sleep, and if mother's condition grew worse - she would call me. I had barely gotten into bed when the call came for me to return to the hospital. Mother's breathing had become heavier. Toward morning she stopped breathing, and her fervent prayer to be with the Lord and Savior was granted her.

Sometime in the afternoon, dad arrived by train - we immediately contacted an undertaker. Later in the evening, we were informed that the body was ready to be transported to Lemmon. This was a distance of over three hundred miles. We placed the corpse in the backseat of the car and set out for our homeward journey. We arrived at Mobridge about eight o'clock in the morning - where we picked up my brother, who had just completed his first year at our Lutheran Academy there.

We reached Lemmon about ten o'clock that morning and made funeral arrangements with the undertaker and pastor. After this ordeal, we finally arrived at the home-place about noontime. With very little sleep for two days and two nights - combined with the grief and stress, I was physically and mentally exhausted. I tumbled into bed and slept the rest of the day, through the night, and into mid-morning the next day. Mother was laid to rest in the Lemmon Cemetery June 10, 1935 - to await the glorious resurrection unto life everlasting. Her absence was keenly felt - especially by my six year old sister and younger brothers. They always had depended so much on her motherly love, help and guidance.

Evidence of the drought and depression were still prevalent everywhere. Crops again were sowed and planted, but there was no harvest, due to lack of the necessary moisture needed to bring them to maturity.

The time soon drew near again for my departure back to my teaching duties at Stoddard. This trip turned out to be a very memorable and enjoyable event for me. I stopped at Winona, Minn. to visit an old schoolmate of mine for a couple days. Two more friends of this couple came by and stayed over night. One of these characters happened to be a teacher by the name of Edna Gruetzmacher. We had been introduced to each other at a teachers' conference the year before, but neither one of us took a second look. This time it was different - as the evening progressed, I took cognizance of her jolly disposition and her fluent, meaningful manner of holding an interesting conversation. The next day she left, but a happy memory of my new found acquaintance lingered on.

I had been asking the Lord, if it be His will, to help me find a good, Christian helpmeet. The thought struck me that maybe this is the answer to my prayer. Needless to say, the urge persisted to find out more about this amiable, young lady. So one day, I quite timorously roused up enough courage to write her a letter. I merely asked if we could correspond with each other on a friendly basis. To my surprise, she informed me that this would be quite agreeable. So we communicated via letter until shortly before Christmas. Then again I took myself in hand and mustered up enough courage to ask my good friend, if she had any objection to my paying her a visit during Christmas vacation. Without any fanfare, she granted me the privilege to do so. So between Christmas and New Year, I headed the old Essex northeast-ward toward New London. Here I met the whole Gruetzmacher clan, who impressed me as a very nice group of people. Most of our time was spent, visiting her friends and relatives. As I recall, neither one of us was too romantically inclined at this time. This was more or less just a social call and an opportunity to become better acquainted with our individual characteristics. I think the feeling was quite mutual - quoting an old adage, "Better is an ounce of prevention before hand than trying to remedy a blunder with a pound of cure when the damage is done." Nevertheless, this turned out to be a very profitable beginning for better things to come. This slowly budding friendship, gradually bloomed into a full blown, happy romance.

The distance between us prohibited the customary weekly dating - so most of our courtship transpired via letters. This wasn't exactly a drawback for me, because I was more adept to express my inner feelings in writing than amorous verbal phrases. This method of love-making lasted from December 1935 until August 1936 - before we were privileged to enjoy another rendezvous. This happy occasion occurred after I had completed my three summer school sessions again at Chaseburg. At this meeting our admiration for each other had developed beyond the scope of mere friendship. Now subtle hints became apparent on both sides that perhaps this was serious business. The mutual admiration between the twain was progressively becoming more evident.

Time sped by like on eagle's wings, and with heartstrings throbbing, I returned to pursue my duties at Stoddard. I must have thanked the Giver of all good things, many times for the encouragement bestowed upon me to find a good helpmeet.

The next step was to gain the assurance - that this wasn't just a bubble that could still burst. Any fears that I might have harbored, were alleviated about three months later when our State Teachers' Conference convened at LaCrosse, the beginning of November, 1936. I don't recall a thing that was on the Conference Agenda, but it turned out to be the most memorable one in my life's history.

It all happened after sessions one evening - when my lovely, endearing, girl friend and I were driving around viewing the sights of the metropolis and finally landed on top of Grand-dad's Bluff. This is a very high point overlooking LaCrosse. With all the lights below at night, it is, indeed,

a most impressive, romantic lookout. After admiring the breath-taking panorama below for quite sometime - I in an emotional, quivering tone of voice blurted out, "Edna will you marry me?"

After a tense, dramatic moment of silence - the answer came through with a clear resounding "YES!"

Thus another most important event in my life came to a very, happy, enjoyable conclusion. We were now engaged. What an undecipherable sense of happiness and joy one experiences! One's whole outlook on life seems to become much more meaningful and invigorating.

When Christmas vacation rolled around this time, we were very much occupied making wedding plans. This was still during the time of the "Great Depression". Money was still hard to come by, so we decided on a small church wedding, with just relatives and a few close friends, as our witnesses and guests. This gala affair was set for June 15, 1937, at ten o'clock in the forenoon. Having these preliminaries, seemingly well in hand, I left my pretty fiancée to get back to less exciting brain ticklers in the classroom. When things would become somewhat obnoxious, I could now momentarily blot out a bad situation and think of more pleasant events to materialize in the near future.

Our plans for a honeymoon to California also took considerable planning. The old Essex had served me well, but I wasn't about to rely on the old crate to cart us out to California and back. Thus began the task of scouting around for a different car - both new and used. After a lot of dealing and wheeling, I came across a good deal at Coon Valley, Wisconsin. Here I found a new 1937, Little Sixty Ford for \$608.00. This was \$200.00 less than any of the other cronies I tried to bargain with. This was a real buy, but with my forty-five dollars a month, and my meager savings - left me nothing for our trip expenses and otherwise. In this quandary, I sheepishly approached my fiancée to loan me some money to close the car deal. She was very gracious about the whole matter, and we were soon in possession of a new automobile to start on a long road together. This little vehicle served us better than well for ten years.

With the Lord's gracious help and guidance, another successful school-year came to a close. I informed the church council of my impending plans to bring ~~to bring~~ a bride back with me when school opened in the fall. The congregation obligingly voted to provide us with a home and raise my salary to fifty dollars a month for nine months. This was not a very bright picture to set up housekeeping with a young bride - but I had experienced by now that with a strong faith and fully trusting the Lord, this hurdle would turn out for the best also.

After bringing my school records up to date, I in joyful anticipation proceeded toward New London. There were a few days to wait yet for the great moment, so I busied myself helping Edna's brothers with the farm-work and did a little fishing on the Wolf River.

Finally the wedding day had arrived. It was a bright, warm, sunny day. Everything turned out as previously planned. The ceremony, and everything else that went with it, was very impressive. Edna was a beautiful bride. After the nuptial knot was tied, and we were pronounced man and wife - we gathered at the home place for a short reception and a delicious noon meal. Later in the afternoon, we commenced our long journey westward on an extended honeymoon. The farther we travelled together, the more I realized what a great jewel God had given me. It became more and more evident that Christian marriages are consummated in heaven. Rarely is a man blessed with an understanding helpmeet like mine.

We leisurely took our good old Dutch time and finally reached Lemmon, South Dakota. Here my new wife was privileged to meet my relatives and some friends. They all expressed favorable comments on the attractive choice I made. We stayed here a few days and moved on to The Black Hills.

The impressive scenery here and all that goes with it, makes this an ideal honeymoon paradise. Here we were privileged to experience a couple exotic, enjoyable days - before steering the little Ford toward Calif. to visit my sister, Hilda, and her husband, Adolph. On the way out, we took in some interesting sights - like the Great Salt Desert, the Mormon Tabernacle, Temple, and Choir, etc., etc. Under God's protecting hand, we safely and joyfully reached our destination. Adolph was the manager of an orange ranch, and Hilda worked in a packing house close by. Their house was surrounded with orange and grapefruit trees. This was an unusual experience for both of us - to be able to pick ripe, sweet, luscious fruit right off the tree.

Some fantastic, beauty spots for us to visit close by were: General Grant Park, Sequoia National Park, Sherman National Park, etc. The huge trees were breath taking. For another change of scenery, we took a trip over to the Pacific Coast. At Monterey, we tried our luck at deep-sea fishing. We sailed eleven miles out on the deep blue ocean and dropped anchor. Edna and I stuck it out to the bitter end, but many were not so fortunate. We had barely stopped when a motor boat came by asking if any of the seasick passengers wished to abandon ship and go back to shore. Several ashen-faced, seafaring enthusiasts jumped at the opportunity and speedily left us. Soon more faces were hanging over the railing and feeding the fish below. Again the motor boat approached and asked if any more wished to go to shore. By this time Hilda and Adolph had become landlubbers and joined the crowd in the motor boat below. Edna and I enjoyed one of the greatest fishing days in our lives. Between the two of us, we brought in over a hundred pounds of mouth-watering, deepsea fish. A Japanese lady charged us thirty-five cents to clean the catch, plus ten cents to ice them down for us. We hurried home - placed our brain food supply into the Frey freezer and enjoyed many sumptuous, delicious, fish dinners.

But, alas! All good things, including a honeymoon, must eventually come to an end. We were privileged to enjoy some wonderful, fantastic days while staying with Hilda and Adolph, but the time had arrived for us to come out of the clouds and down to mother earth. It was time for us to start our journey eastward again back to Stoddard. To commemorate the event, my good sister arranged to send us off in style with a farewell party. I enjoyed the gala affair immensely - fully unawares of the bombshell that was to explode shortly after the celebration. When the crowd had finally dispersed, my sweet wife handed me a letter, which had arrived in the mail that morning, from the pastor at Stoddard. The contents of the same revealed that at their July meeting, the congregation voted to close the school. The good man went on to profusely explain how one of the elderly, prominent members had committed suicide; the large relationship insisted on a church burial. With the council's permission, he rightfully refused their request. Spitefully now this group sought revenge and ganged up on him to close his beloved school. My compassionate better half was aware of all this, but hid her emotions so well concerning the impending surprise, that I didn't detect anything amiss whatsoever. In her love and good graces, she was unselfishly covering up that I should enjoy the party. I appreciated this unmerited thoughtfulness very much and loved her all the more for it.

Momentarily, the shock produced a feeling of helplessness - like the clock had stopped and the sky had fallen on my head. I keenly felt my responsibility of providing shelter and a decent living for my newly-acquired wife. Calls and jobs were still about as plentiful as hens' teeth. The future, indeed, appeared bleak and dismal for the moment!

However, we soon came to the realization that God was still in control, and was guiding us in His school, like He did Job and Joseph of old - to teach us patience and a firm faith and trust that all things work out for good to them that love and trust Him. With these thoughts again

indelibly imprinted on our minds, things began to look brighter.

Not to wear out our welcome, and impose on our gracious hosts, the Freys - we drove to Visalia to scout around for a place to live. By the Lord's guidance, we were led to a suitable room, owned by a widow lady with three children and a couple of cats. The price for the same was ten dollars a month, including heat, lights and kitchen privileges. Financially, the kind, old lady wasn't much better off than we were - yet she would quite often share a dish of pinto beans and a bowl of soup with her impoverished renters. There was no way of living high off the hog - even with hamburger sometimes two and three pounds for a quarter and good soup bones thrown in free.

To implement our dwindling, meager financial resources, we landed a job selling Larkin Products (similar to Watkin's Products). Edna seemingly, enjoyed this type of work, but as for me - after I had a few doors slammed in my face, I detested such degrading treatment. Nevertheless, in our situation, "beggars can't be choosers", and we earned enough to keep body and soul together.

Occasionally, for varieties sake, we indulged in picking cotton for a penny a pound. The best I could do was about a hundred pounds a day; Edna managed about eighty when we got out early enough to take advantage of the dew on the cotton bolls. She'd get tired - then sit on my long cotton-bag for a free ride to prop up my morale and urging me on to keep up the exhilarating work.

Shortly after Christmas, my brother-in-law, Franklin, came from Wis. to join us. He and I tried our hand at a variety of jobs, such as, working for a hog farmer, picking luscious Emperor Grapes, picking oranges, and finally working in an orange packing house for thirty-five cents an hour. My patient wife, in the meantime, busied herself selling a few Larkin Products, baby - sat occasionally, and sometimes take care of a couple old invalids. All these menial tasks helped us to provide food and clothing and contentment. We were young and could laugh about our various experiences. All in all, it was a blessing in disguise. Our love and admiration for each other became richly enhanced through this schooling.

Our Heavenly Father now was ready to lead us back into the schoolroom to feed His lambs. About the middle of May 1938, we received a letter from the pastor at Chaseburg asking us if we would be interested to teach his four summer schools. We didn't hesitate for a moment to accept the kind man's offer. So after almost a year of honeymooning through thick and thin, we were ready to come out of the clouds, and make plans to wend our way back to Wisconsin. Nevertheless, when the time for our departure arrived, we felt rather sad to leave our friends at the church in Visalia, our other acquaintances in the vicinity, and especially Hilda and Adolph to whom we had become very much attached during our stay in Cal. So it was with sad adieus and mixed emotions that we finally left our memorable, exciting landscape behind to seek greener pastures.

My two cousins, Elsie and Esther Zimmerman, who were well established in California with good paying jobs, accompanied us back for a visit with their parents, who lived about two and a half miles from our homestead. Our faithful, little Ford, loaded to full capacity with luggage and five passengers, now headed for Yosemite National Park. The sights and scenery here were fantastic. We left the park and proceeded northward to Eugene, Oregon. Upon our arrival, the girls began preparing supper in our cabin and Franklin and I decided to take a stroll to the river about a half mile away. On our way back, two savage German Shepherd Police Dogs came tearing across the field and were soon yipping and barking at our heels. We remained calm and kept on walking. Some distance away, the owner came running and shouting. He explained to us how they had escaped from him and how vicious they were. He said it was a miracle that they didn't attack us. Our guardian angel was surely with us.

The next morning we began our itinerary northward to visit friends at Yelm and Seattle, Washington. Then we turned eastward and reached the peak of the Continental Divide - our gas tank showed "EMPTY". We were happy to coast down the slope on the other side and reach a filling station. Gas, by the way, was twenty-five cents a gallon. Many places along the way, it was cheaper than that. The rest of the way, we saw miles and miles of waste land, many queer rock formations, numerous flocks of sheep, numbering in the thousands, and a number of prairie dog towns. Franklin and I changed off driving, and that way we could cover many miles a day over the desolate landscape, until we reached S.D.

Now, on home territory, we delivered my two cousins to their parents - visited relatives and friends a few days and continued our journey toward Wisconsin. Along the way, we paid several surprise visits to uncles and aunts, who loved us dearly for honoring them thus. Franklin enjoyed a field day meeting my various good looking, female cousins. Soon after our gracious Lord and Savior, brought us safely back to the Gruetzmacher farm. What a long, eventful honeymoon this had turned out to be! Instead of the originally planned six weeks, almost a full year had elapsed by now. This whole unexpected episode had firmly impressed upon our minds the importance of man and wife working side by side as a loving, closely knit team through thick and thin through life's rough road. Wish all married couples were privileged to enjoy such a blessed, mutual relationship! During all this adventuresome experience, we weren't exactly letting the grass grow under our feet. The speedometer had chalked up twenty thousand miles. That's remarkable considering the meager, monetary circumstances under which it was accomplished. We did school ourselves in the art of saving and using our few shekels wisely and prudently, which has been second nature with us ever since.

We landed back in Wisconsin the second week in May - just in time for the famous white bass run on the Wolf River. The three Gruetzmacher brothers and I decided to try our luck one cloudy, drizzly morning and hit the jackpot. By noon, we had caught enough white bass to fill a wash tub to the brim. We returned once more after lunch and repeated the fantastical fishing spree within a couple hours. Catching them was exhilarating fun, but disposing of so huge a volume, can become quite a chore. But many willing hands, can soon accomplish great tasks. A goodly mess we scaled and cleaned for immediate consumption, some we distributed to the less fortunate in the neighborhood; and a handsome portion was soaked in a salt brine over night and smoked the next day. I've never again experienced a fishing bonanza like the above.

Soon it was time for us to pack our few earthly possessions and move on to Chaseburg to conduct our six week summer school sessions. A fine, kindly, retired couple made our stay here very pleasant. They supplied us with a homey room, plenty of garden, fresh vegetables, etc., etc. Now, for the present at least, we were again privileged to indulge in the work that was nearest and dearest to us; namely, to instruct the Good Shepherd's precious lambs in His Holy Word. Edna taught the school in the village of Chaseburg for three weeks, and then the one at Hamburg for three weeks. I was assigned to take care of the other two further out in the country. We completed this project the last week in July, 1938.

Job wise our future again appeared rather bleak and discouraging. Somehow a good Irish, batchelor farmer heard of our plight and offered us thirty-five dollars a month with board and room, if we would come and work for him. We felt that a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush - so we went to work as a husband and wife team on a rugged, ridge farm not far from the Mississippi River.

The St. Matthews Lutheran Aid will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary Thursday afternoon. A program befitting the occasion will be given and a lunch will be served.

June 5, 1934, La Crosse Tribune

Graduations, confirmations, anniversaries, mission festivals, and birthday parties were all a part of St. Matthew's events in the 30's. Teacher conferences were also held back in that era.

May 5, 1934

Ervin Humann, teacher in the parochial school, attended the teacher's conference at Lewiston, Minn., Friday and Saturday.

August 28, 1934

MISSION FESTIVAL OF STODDARD CHURCH IS WELL ATTENDED

STODDARD, Wis. — (Special)— St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran church celebrated its annual mission festival Sunday. The services were conducted: a German service in the forenoon and an English service in the afternoon. The afternoon service attracted an overflow crowd, many being unable to get standing room in the church. The Rev. Hertler of La Crescent, Minn., the editor of the Tri-Parish Caller, delivered both sermons.

1935



Back: Art Stellick, Alice Miller, Marcella Schlicht, Wesley Stellick
Front: Teacher Ervin Humann, Helen Scheck, Edmund Bentrup, Mabel Miller, Pastor H. E. Bentrup

October 30, 1935

Stoddard, Wis.—(Special)— Mrs. H. E. Bentrup was honor guest of the members of St. Matthews' Lutheran church, at an informal surprise birthday party, Sunday afternoon in the church parlors. The afternoon was spent in a social way, and Mrs. Bentrup was presented with a purse. The Rev. and Mrs. Theodore Miller and children and Miss Esther Minkel of La Crosse, also attended. Miss Esther Minkel sang a solo, and the Reve. H. E. Bentrup spoke.

August 28, 1936

The parochial school will open Monday, Aug. 31. Ervin Humann will have charge of the school. There will be no services in the St. Matthews Lutheran church next Sunday owing to confirmation at the Bad Ax church, at which services will begin at 10 a. m.

School Days



A glimpse into what school life was like back in the 30's. Not only was there reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion, there appeared to be a lot of hard work going on. And, when a break was needed, there was recess. Can you imagine the ride going down this contraption pictured at right?

May 27, 1936

The parochial school will close Friday and a program will be given Sunday afternoon. Refreshments will be served during the afternoon. Erwin Humann has been the teacher.



May 22, 1937

* * * *

St. Matthew's Lutheran church, Stoddard, Wis. Rev. H. E. Bentrup, pastor.

The baccalaureate services of the St. Matthew's Lutheran school will be held this Sunday at 1:30 p. m. Mr. John Gawrish, principal of the First Lutheran school of La Crosse, will be the speaker. The commencement service will be followed by a program by the school children and a picnic on the church grounds. The public is invited.

* * * *



Stoddard Will Have Services Christmas Eve

Lutheran And Methodist Congregations Plan Programs

Stoddard, Wis. — (Special)— Thursday evening at 7:30 the children's Christmas service, under the direction of Ervin Humann will be held at the St. Matthew's Lutheran church.

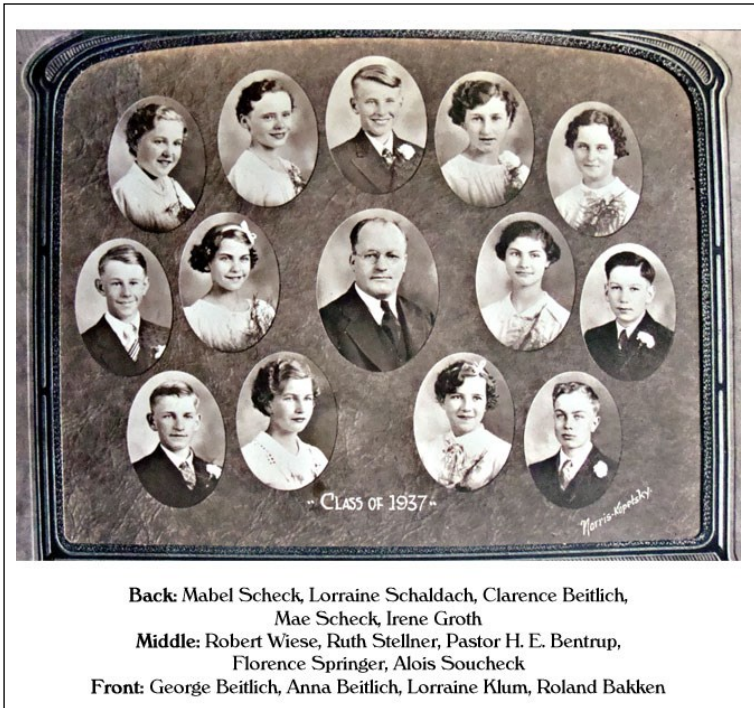
Following is the program to be presented: Processional, Song of the Wise Men; prayer and scripture reading, the Rev. Bentrup; "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht," choir; address of welcome, Waldo Bentrup; "Christmas Greetings," Eldred Groth; "December," Elsie Neurauter; "The Old Precious Story," George Beitlich; song, "The Best of Days," children; "Christmas Day," Margie Proksch; "Christmas," Anna Beitlich; "Prophecies of the Savior," song, "Es Ist Ein Reis Entsprungen," Ruth Stellner.

The December 24, 1936 issue of The La Crosse Tribune had a detailed description of the Children's Christmas Eve service which would take place that evening at 7:30 pm. It gave the children's names, along with the recitations and the songs that would be sung.

"Tell Me the Story," Louise Clements; song, "As Each Happy Christmas;" "The Fulfillment of the Prophecies;" "Journeying to Bethlehem," Mabel Scheck; "Sei Willkommen," Doris Proksch; "Ah, Dearest Jesus," Adolph Anderson; "Welcome Dear Jesus," Earl Helke; "No Room," Evelyn Helke; "Back to Bethlehem," Elsie Wiese; song, "God's Loving Kindness," children; "The Birth of Christ," Marie Beitlich; "The Little Baby Jesus," Harold Wrobel; "Christmas Day," Laura Scheck; "A Christmas Wish," Rueben Wiese; "Of All the Birthdays," Rap Rieppel; "The Little Children Love Him," Eugene Lenser; song, "Away in a Manger," children.

"Hark, What Mean Those Holy Voices," Florence Springer; "Beginning Christmas Joys," Norman Anderson; "The Hillside of Judea," Clarence Beitlich; "While Shepherds Watched," Ruby and Dora Anderson, Ruth Bentrup, Audrey Bakken and Ruth Stellner; "Reception of the Tidings," all; "Kommet, Ihr Hirten," Irene Groth; "The Christmas Spirit," Lorine Schaldach; "While They Watched Their Flocks," Robert Wiese; "I'm Only a Little Boy," Orin Bakken; "Hark a Voice From Yonder Manger," Alois Soucheck; "We Come Each Christmastide," Phyllis Rieple; "Du Kindlein in Der Krippe," Ruth Bentrup; song, "Beside a Manger Lowly and on Earth Peace," Mae Scheck; "We Hail Thee With Rejoicing," Lois Bakken; song, "The Star, God's Silent Messenger," children; "Most Sacred," Arthur Miller; "Shine, Stars Tonight," Gerhart Groth; "Like The Wise Men," Arnold Miller; "Gifts For Jesus," Frank Rieple; "Gifts to Bring," Phyllis Bakken and Dorothy Miller; "The First Christmas Eve," Elaine Schlicht; "Morning Star," Mildred Beitlich; "Jesus Ist Kommen," Waldo Bentrup; "The Purpose of Christ's Coming," questionnaire; "A Christmas Prayer," Marion Leisso; song, "Sing Thou Holy Heavenly Nation," Children; "Good Night Wish," Joyce Wolf.

June 17, 1937



Stoddard, Wis.—(Special)—Announcements have been received of the marriage of Miss Edna Gruetzmacher, daughter of Mrs. Elise Gruetzmacher of New London, and Ervin Humann, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Humann, of White Butte, S. D., at St. John's Lutheran church at New London, Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock. After the ceremony a reception was held at the home of the bride. The couple will visit his parents at White Butte and then leave for Woodlake, Calif., where they will spend the summer at the home of his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. C. Frey. Mr. Humann taught in the St. Matthews Lutheran parochial school at Stoddard for the past three years.

After the school closed, the Humanns took on various jobs until he got a call in late 1937, teaching briefly in Fairmont, MN, then 6 years in Helenville, WI, and 18 years at Stevensville, MI. They then taught in Wausau, WI until 1967 when the both retired.

August 18, 1937

Noted Harpist To Play At Stoddard

Otto Boganz Will Appear In Concert At Church Aug. 23

Stoddard, Wis.—(Special)—The Reverend Bentrup of St. Matthews' Evangelical church of Stoddard advises that he has been successful in securing Otto Boganz, one of the outstanding harpists of the United States and his two children for a concert in St. Matthews church Aug. 23 at 8 p. m.

Mr. Boganz started playing the harp when he was nine years of age, his first harp being a rather small affair that sat upon the table, quite a contrast to his present harp, which is one of the finest built and stands six feet high.

When Mr. Boganz started, his talent for the harp soon became apparent, with the result that he was sent to music schools and his ability furthered. However, since his first music was the old hymns and chorals, and being the music he loves to play, they have been his life work.

The concert is free and open to all, and the public is urged to attend. A free-will offering will be taken.

Ice cream and cake will be served in the basement of the church after the concert.

St. Matthew's was outreach-minded even back in the 30's as we invited the public to school programs and picnics. Pastor Bentrup also arranged for a well known harpist to give a free concert here to which the public was invited.



Above: Pastor Bentrup, his wife, and children - Ruth, Herman, Edmund, and Waldo. Ruth attended Dr. Martin Luther College, and her brothers, Concordia College, St. Paul, MN.

August 25, 1937

The Stoddard public schools and also the St. Matthews' Lutheran school will open on Monday, Aug. 30. The faculty members of the public school are: Frank Paudler, principal; Miss Alma Lienlokken, La Crosse, intermediate grades; and Miss Alice Nelson, primary grades. The Rev. H. E. Bentrup will be in charge of the parochial school.

Friends learned of a tragedy which occurred a few days ago in Canada, involving two cars, in one of which the Rev. I. M. Brackebusch, former pastor of the St. Matthews' Lutheran church at Stoddard, was riding with another man. It was stated they met a car driven by a man 80 years of age, who was on the wrong side of the road. The cars crashed, seriously injuring the Reverend Brackebusch. The other occupants escaped injury. His face was badly lacerated, his hip was injured, and his condition was such that physicians did not attempt to operate for three days.

April 14, 1938

STODDARD

Stoddard, Wis.—(Special)—German communion services will be held in St. Matthew's Lutheran church Friday morning at 9 o'clock. English communion services will be at 9 Sunday morning.



Top: Waldo Bentrup, Pastor H.E. Bentrup, Arnold Miller
 Bottom: Elsie Wiese, Lois Bakken, Dora Anderson, Elaine Schlicht

May 25, 1939

At a meeting of church members of the St. Matthews Lutheran church Sunday afternoon it was decided to build a balcony in the east end of the church and redecorate the interior and exterior of the church. Confirmation services will be held at the St. Matthews Lutheran church Sunday for a class of 12.

In 1940, it was approved to have two English services and one German service.

May 12, 1940



Back: LaVerne Aspenson, Harold Wrobel, Eldred Groth
 Front: Myrna Jean Tate, Pastor H.E. Bentrup, Marie Marshall



Top: Ruby Anderson, Marie Beitlich, Mildred Beitlich, Doris Proksch
 Middle: Joyce Christiansen, Evelyn Helke, Pastor H. E. Bentrup, Ruth Bentrup, Audrey Bakkum
 Front: Marian Leisso, Earl Helke, Arthur Miller, Marcella Scheck

In 1939, a balcony was added and the church proper was redecorated. Also, a new basement entrance was built.

June 17, 1939

There will be no services in the St. Matthew's Lutheran church Sunday morning owing to the construction of a balcony at this time, but there will be services in the Bad Ax church as usual.



An informal picture was taken at the confirmation of these five young people, with the church in the background.

In November of 1940, Pastor Bentrup accepted a call to Wilson, MN. A farewell party was held as noted in this November 20, 1940 clipping at right.

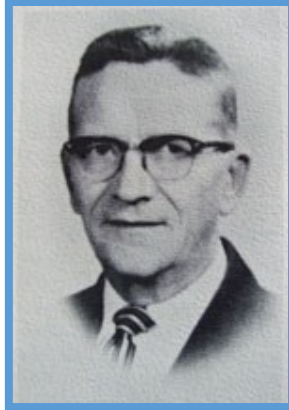
Party Given Stoddard Pastor, Rev. Bentrup

Stoddard, Wis. —(Special)— A farewell party was given in honor of the Rev. and Mrs. H. E. Bentrup Monday evening with about 100 members of the St. Matthew's Lutheran church present.

The Rev. and Mrs. Bentrup left Tuesday for their new home at Wilson, Minn. Services in the St. Matthew's Lutheran church will be held next Sunday at 2 p. m. The Rev. H. F. Backer of Chaseburg, will be guest speaker.

Stoddard Church Gets New Pastor

Stoddard, Wis.—(Special)—The Rev. Fred Schroeder of Berlin, Wis., has accepted the call to serve as pastor of the St. Matthews Lutheran church at Stoddard and the St. John's Lutheran church at Bad Axe. Installation services will be held in the near future. There will be no service in the St. Matthews Lutheran church next Sunday.



Pastor F. Schroeder was installed as our pastor on December 2, 1940.

A Young People's Society began on July 15, 1941. Once confirmed, a young person became a member of this group. It provided a way for them to gather together, study the Bible, and socialize. Special events included bowling, skating, and sledding parties.

July 17, 1941

A group of 18 young people of the St. Matthew Lutheran church met Tuesday evening to organize a bible class. A constitution was adopted and the following were elected for the coming year: Chairman, Alvin Proksch; vice-chairman, Carl Stellner; secretary, Harold Wrobel; treasurer, Aloise Soucheck. The purpose of this organization is to study the bible. The young people will meet the first Tuesday of the month at 8 p. m.

1941

- New hymnals were purchased and a new order of service was used.
- Sunday School was replaced with Saturday School.
- A six week summer school was held.



Back: Norman Anderson, Frank Rieple
Front: Phyllis Rieple, Ruth Wiese, Pastor Fred Schroeder, Frances Miller, Minnie Miller

1943—City water was piped into the parsonage.

1945—Our school bell was donated to Pickwick Mission.

1945 —German services were held on the last Sunday of the month.

June 14, 1942



Back: Rueben Wiese, Eugene Lenser
Front: Garhardt Groth, Dorothy Miller, Pastor Fred Schroeder, Phyllis Bakken, Adolph Anderson

June 6, 1943



Back: Robert Wrobel, Donald Proksch
Front: Pastor Fred Schroeder

75th Anniversary

St. Matthew's Congregation Celebrates Diamond Jubilee

STODDARD, Wis. — (Special) — St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran congregation, Stoddard, will observe the 75th anniversary of its organization Sunday.

Two services will be conducted. An English service will be conducted at 10 a. m. with the Rev. H. E. Bentrup of Wilson, Minn., a former pastor of St. Matthew's, preaching the sermon. Pastor A. L. Mennicke of Winona, Minn., will preach the afternoon sermon in English at 2:30. St. Matthew's congregation was organized on January 27, 1870, with 15 members. Today its membership totals 359 members and 264 communicants.

The first church building of St. Matthew's congregation was located a half mile east of the village of Stoddard near the site of the present parish cemetery. In the year 1897 the congregation relocated in the village of Stoddard, its property consisting only of the land on which the building stood. When Pastor I. M. Brackebusch was called in 1923, the congregation acquired its present parsonage, as well as the property lying between the parsonage and the church building. The house that stood on this property was moved away. The Catholic chapel, however, was left standing and has been used since that time as a school house and meeting place for the various organizations of the congregation.

The first pastors to serve this congregation came out from La Crosse. Later on the congregation was served by pastors from Town Hamburg and from Chaseburg. This latter arrangement was in effect until 1923 when the congregation called its first resident pastor, the Rev. I. M. Brackebusch. The present pastor is Fred A. Schroeder since 1941.

The first officers of the congregation were: Reinhold Bay, president; Christoph Froehlke, secretary; William Wehling, Jacob Granke, John Helke. Present officers are: Joseph Stellick, president; Emil Schlicht, vice-president; Oscar Stellner, secretary; Bernard Stellick, treasurer; George Miller; John Soucek.

La Crosse Tribune, August 16, 1945

1945

In 1945, German services were held on the last Sunday of the month.



Back: Don Pulver, Laura Scheck, Kenneth Proksch, Walter Miller, Laurel Pieper, Marie Miller, Ray Rieple
Front: Howard Zogg, Dorothy Schroeder, Pastor Fred Schroeder, Joyce Wolfe, Donna Hanson

Member Memory

It was a custom that came from Germany that the men would sit on one side of the church and the women on the other. When I got married and joined the church, Pastor Schroeder's goal was to have the families sit together. The first time I came to church after our wedding, I was brave enough to sit with my husband. I felt many eyes staring at me, and I never looked back. After church, Pastor Schroeder had a prayer addressing this goal. In the next few weeks, four or five more women joined their husbands, and eventually families sat together.

- Lucille Klahn

January 9, 1946

Pastor Of 2 Churches Goes Schroeder Accepts Ohio Call

STODDARD, Wis. — (Special) — After serving St. Matthew's congregation at Stoddard and St. John's congregation at Bad Axe for the past five years, the Rev. Fred A. Schroeder accepted a call as missionary to Findlay, Ohio. He left Stoddard Monday with his family to take up his work there.

Pastor Otto Engel of Watertown, Wis., has been called to fill the vacancy created by Schroeder's leaving. To date, no definite information has been received as to whether Engel will accept the call.

A farewell party was given by the Stoddard congregation for Pastor Schroeder and his family on the evening of Jan. 1. A short service was conducted under the direction of Pastor Backer of Chaseburg. The ladies of the congregation then served a lunch. As a farewell gift the congregation presented Schroeder with a purse.

July 7, 1946

New Pastor At Stoddard

Rev. O. Engel Heads Two churches

Pastor Otto Engel came to St. Matthew's on February 3, 1946



STODDARD, Wis. —(Special)—The Rev. Otto Engel recently called to the congregation of Stoddard and Bad Axe, will be installed as pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran congregation at Stoddard and St. John's Lutheran congregation at Bad Axe Sunday.

The Rev. Walter Schumann of La Crosse will be in charge of services in both congregations. Services at Stoddard will begin at 11 a. m. and at Bad Axe at 11 a. m. The choir of both congregations will sing.

Following the services at Bad Axe, dinner will be served in the church basement at the Stoddard church at 12:30 p. m. when a reception will be held.

The Rev. Engel comes to Stoddard from Richmond, where he served a congregation for several and one-half years and before serving at Richmond, he served a congregation at Bruce for four years.

Before receiving his theological training at the Lutheran seminary at Thiensville, Wis., the Rev. Engel attended Northwestern college Watertown, Wis. The Rev. and Mrs. Engel have three children: Doretta, 6, Karen, 4 and Willard



Back: Ervin Abraham, Willard Wrobel, Bernice Stellick
Front: Ralph Proksch, Pastor Otto Engel, Clifford Bakken

July 15, 1946

Lutheran Congregation Buys Stoddard Church

STODDARD, Wis. —(Special)—The St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran parochial school building has been sold for \$1,000 and will be used temporary as a chapel for the Grace Lutheran congregation at La Crosse.

It is planned to move the building on Ward boulevard, near Losey, in the near future. The congregation will use it for a parochial school building later as they plan to build a church when building material is available. Their pastor is the Rev. R. C. Stiemke.



Our school building was no longer being used, and it was sold to Grace Lutheran Church in La Crosse for \$1,000. It was moved to a site on 26th Street and Ward Avenue. Considerable renovation was done on the building. Improvements included a sacristy, altar niche, organ loft, front entrance, and a new steeple. New windows were also put in. The ceiling was arched, and pews, an altar, lectern and a pulpit were added. Pictured at left is the final result. (1960)



Left: The Luther Rally at Myrick Park in 1947.

June 27, 1947

Lutherans Of La Crosse Area Hold City Park Rally Sunday

Lutherans of La Crosse and neighboring communities are expected to turn out in large numbers for a Lutheran rally to be held at Myrick park Sunday. The rally is sponsored by the Mississippi Valley Lutheran High School Association, an organization of Synodical Conference Lutherans, who are interested in establishing and maintaining a Lutheran high school in the city of La Crosse.

Weather permitting, the rally will begin with an open air service at the band shell of the park at 2:30 p. m. The program, prepared by the association's publicity committee, will feature Lutheran hymns and an address by the Rev. Paul Bergmann, well-known Christian educator of Menasha, Wis. On the speaker's platform with Rev. Bergmann will be the Rev. Harold Backer of Cheseburg, chairman of the association's board of directors, who will serve as liturgist, and William Trapp, chairman of the membership committee.

A mass chorus of 200 voices under the direction of Erich Sievert, principal of First Lutheran school, will lead in the singing and present several suitable chorals. Several loud speakers are to be installed in the park so the program will be audible to all who attend.

The Lutheran High School association is at present, through its board of directors, negotiating for a suitable building site. Congregations of the area represented by members include First Lutheran, Immanuel, Mt. Calvary and Grace of La Crosse; St. Paul's of On-

On June 29, 1947, a rally was held for area churches interested in establishing a Lutheran High School in the area. A committee had been formed already in 1944 to look into this matter. It was finally on September 14, 1957 that Luther High School opened its doors to twenty 9th graders. Surrounding the building at that time was sand, and nearby were cows from the neighboring fields.

alaska; St. Peter's, Cheseburg; St. Matthew's, Stoddard; St. Peter's Hamburg; St. Paul's, Bangor; Christ, West Salem; St. John's, Barre Mills; St. John's, Sparta; St. Paul's, Whitehall; St. John's, Caledonia; Zion, Hokah; Immanuel, South Ridge; St. John's, Nodine; and Trinity, Wilson.

In case of inclement weather the rally services are to be held at First Lutheran church, West avenue and Cameron. The offering will be for the high school building fund.



SUMMER SCHOOL
 In keeping with our aim to provide religious training for our children throughout all the days during which they attend the elementary school your congregation conducts a Saturday school. This is followed up at the close of the elementary school term with four weeks of summer school.
 Present plans are to begin summer school in both congregations on June 2. The schedule will be the same as last year. At Stoddard from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon Monday through Friday. At Genoa from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 We have arranged our schedule so as to take care of all children of school age at Stoddard. At Genoa children in grades 4-8. Do not expect the pastor to excuse any child from these instructions. He is bound in his decision by the higher wisdom of God's Word.

The importance of teaching God's Word to our children was emphasized here in this selection from a 1947 bulletin to the left.

Below from the same year is a call for War Relief aid for those yet suffering in Europe two years after World War II.

July 6, 1947



Back: Earl Miller, Pastor Otto Engel, Harold Willenberg
 Front: Iva Lee Yttri, Phyllis Proksch, Beverly Bakken, Bonietta Pieper

May 16, 1948



Roberta Nelson, Elaine Proksch, Pastor Otto Engel, Robert Miller, Kenneth Granke

WAR RELIEF COLLECTION
 The War Relief Committee of our Synod is asking for additional funds to carry on its work of helping war sufferers in Europe. Our congregation is joining in with all the other congregations of Synod for a Synod-wide collection for War Relief on Sunday, May 11. That is next Sunday. Be sure to read the pamphlet distributed at church today. Also to use your envelope on next Sunday.

WAR RELIEF COMMITTEE
 To help prepare clothing boxes for shipment and to act as contact people for the three districts into which our congregation has been divided a special relief committee has been organized at Stoddard. The following ladies, all members of the Ladies' Aid, have consented to serve:
 Village of Stoddard: Mrs. Wm. Groth, Mrs. John Jiracek
 Oak Ridge: Mrs. Awalt Wolfe, Mrs. Oscar Bakken
 North Ridge: Mrs. Adolph Anderson, Mrs. Wm. Proksch

The Committee will be making up its first shipment of relief clothing soon. Have you brought in your box already? If not, why not do it this week before it is again forgotten.

Stoddard Ladies Aid Has Christmas Party
 STODDARD, Wis.—(Special)—The St. Matthews Lutheran Ladies Aid annual Christmas party will be held Thursday, Dec. 8, at 2 p. m. Mrs. John Soucheck, president, has announced all members will serve lunch and all members of the congregation are invited as guests. The ladies will exchange 50-cent gifts at the party.

December 6, 1949

1949



Robert Wolfe, Joyce Miller, Pastor Otto Engel, Delores Stellic, Duane Kromke

The bulletin excerpt at right gives a glimpse of the busy December schedule in 1949. It is interesting to note that back in the 40's, one registered for communion some days prior to the service.

Vol. 3 December 1949 No. 12
 Stoddard - T. Genoa, Wisconsin
 Otto Engel

DECEMBER CALENDAR

December 7	- Bad Axe Aid Christmas party, 2:30, at home of Mrs. C. Huntington
December 8	- Stoddard Aid Christmas party, 2:00 p.m.
December 12	- Joint congregational meeting at Stoddard, 8:00 p.m., for purpose of calling a new pastor
December 13	- Bible class, 8:15 p.m.
December 16	- Registration day at parsonage, English and German communion
December 18	- English communion at Stoddard
December 18	- Children's Christmas service, Bad Axe, 2:00 p.m. No morning service. Special offering for charity.
December 24	- Children's Christmas service, Stoddard, 7:30 p.m. Special offering for charity
December 25	- Christmas Day services, Stoddard 9:00 a.m., T. Genoa at 10:45 a.m. Christmas offering for missions.
December 27	- Young people's social evening, 8:15 p.m.
January 1	- German communion, Stoddard at 9:00 a.m. English communion at T. Genoa at 10:45 a.m.

Install New Area Pastor

Rev. Kionka Gets Stoddard Position

STODDARD, Wis.—(Special)—The Rev. Gerhardt Kionka will be installed as the new pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran church in the township of Genoa, Sunday, March 5, at 2:30 p. m. Rev. Edward Kionka of Wausau, father of the new pastor, will install his son.

Pastor William Lange of La Crosse will preach the sermon and assist with the Rev. G. Horn of Chaseburg in the installation. The Ladies Aid will meet after the services in Bad Axe and at the same time hold a reception for the pastor, his wife and family.

Services in Stoddard will be at 7:30 p. m. in St. Matthews Evangelical Lutheran church, with Pastor Lange preaching the sermon, the Rev. E. Kionka performing the installation, and Pastors O. Schlenner, H. Backer, and F. Miller of La Crosse and G. Horn of Chaseburg assisting.

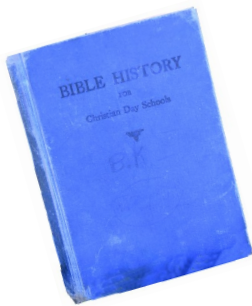
There will be no services in Stoddard in the morning on March 5. After the service in Stoddard the congregation will hold a reception.

Rev. Kionka comes to Stoddard from Nelson, Wis., where he served a congregation for three years and before serving at Nelson, he served a congregation at Rewey for two years. Before receiving his theological training at Lutheran seminary at Thiensville he attended Northwestern college at Watertown.

Rev. and Mrs. Kionka have two children, Norma Jean, two and one-half, and David, one and one-half.



We welcomed Pastor Gerhardt Kionka as our pastor in March of 1950. Pastor Kionka held occasional German services in that year. However, with about eight older German members passing away that same year, by mutual consent, German services were discontinued in 1951.



Student's Bible History book

1950



Back: Orville Wehling, Charles Granke, Katherine Harbecke, Pastor Kionka, Shirley Schnick, Verdin Pieper, Elaine DeGarmo
Front: Madilyn Proksch, Ernest Proksch, Richard Nelson, Elmer Proksch, Jr, Mercill Pieper

May 13, 1951



Back: Ken Abraham, Pastor Gerhardt Kionka, Willis Garbers
Front: Joyce Beiflich, Carol Brosinski, Rodney Lenser, Myrna Wolfe, Arlene Kromke,

December 23, 1951

Yule Marked At Stoddard

76 Lutheran Tots Take Part In Fest

STODDARD, Wis. (Special)—Seventy-six children will participate in the annual Christmas Eve service in St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church at 7:30 p.m. The choir will join the children in singing, "Come Hither, Ye Children."

The children's service is divided into four parts: (1) "Christmas Joys"; (2) "The Birth of the Savior"; (3) "The Visit of the Wise Men"; and (4) "Jesus, the Friend of Little Children." The children will recite the Christmas story.

The primary class will sing "As Each Happy Christmas." "Away in the Manger" will be sung by the intermediate class, and all grades will sing "Silent Night" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem." The congregation will also take part in the service, singing "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful," "Joy To the World" and "As With Gladness Men of Old."

Ralph Proksch is the church organist who will accompany the singing. The Saturday school teachers in charge of the service are Mrs. Clarence Nelson, Mrs. John Soucheck and the Rev. Gerhardt Kionka.

1952



Jerry Hanson, Richard Miller, Pastor Gerhardt Kionka, Jerry Ortmeier, William Proksch

May 24, 1953



Back: Charles Groeschel, Merlin Christianson, Pastor Gerhardt Kionka, LaVern Miller
Middle: Marie Helke, Marcella Huebner, Janice Beitlich, Carol Christianson
Front: Roger Proksch, Marlene Wolfe, Ardis DeGarmo, Marilyn Beitlich

In 1953, a new furnace room and bathrooms were added to the rear of the church. Due to this construction, there was no dinner at that year's Mission Fest.



Old Testament Bible Stories student book

Church At Stoddard Plans Mission Fest

STODDARD, Wis. (Special)—St. Mathew's Evangelical Lutheran Church at Stoddard will observe its annual mission festival Sunday, Sept. 20.
Vicar Robert Baer of St. Mathew's Lutheran Church, Winona, Minn., will be the guest speaker at the 10 a.m. service. Because of the remodeling of the church basement no dinner will be served and no afternoon service will be held.

September 17, 1953

Member Memory

On Christmas eve, to march into church for the children's program, we would come out the basement doorway and walk around to the front steps and into the church. The girls would have their coats draped over their shoulders and hand them to someone before walking up in front.

-Mary Stellick

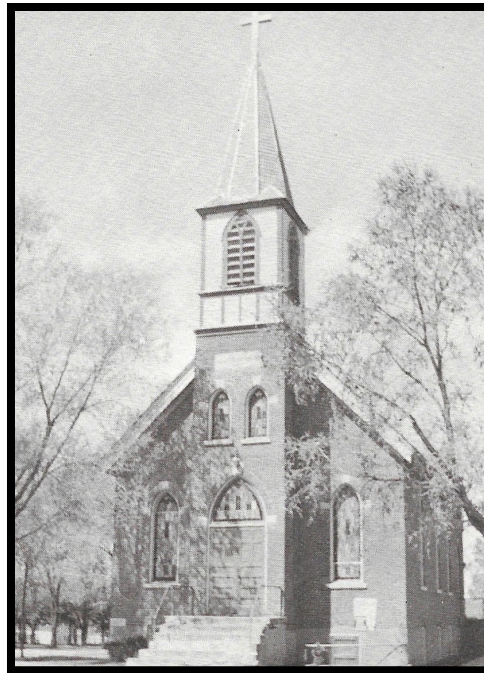


Many couples began their married lives at our church.

Member Memory

The men would gather to talk underneath the shade trees before the service until it was almost time for the worship to begin.

- Ken Abraham



December 23, 1954

Tots To Tell Tale Of Yule

STODDARD, Wis. (Special)—St. Mathew's Lutheran Saturday school will present "O Holy Night," a children's Christmas service with filmstrip, Friday at 8 p.m.

The church choir, under the direction of Oscar Wehling, will sing several well known hymns and carols. Assisting the Rev. Gerhardt Kionka are the teachers: Mrs. John Soucheck, Mrs. Clarence Nelson and Miss Joyce Miller.

While the children recite the Christmas story the congregation will see various scenes of the Nativity on a large screen.

The Rev. Mr. Kionka announces Christmas Day service at 9 a.m.

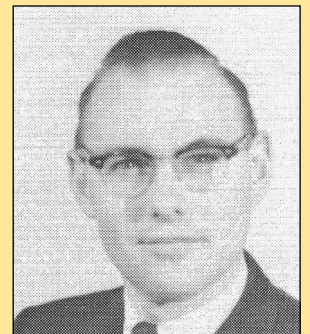
Pastor Gives Farewell Talk In 2 Churches

STODDARD, Wis. (Special) — The Rev. Gerhardt Kionka has accepted the call to St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Newburg, Wis., and preached his farewell sermon at St. Matthew's Lutheran, Stoddard, and St. John's Evangelical Lutheran in Genoa Township on Sunday. The Kionka family moved Tuesday.

The Rev. Jonathan Schaller of La Crosse has accepted the call to the Stoddard and Genoa Township parishes. The Rev. Mr. Schaller has been assistant pastor of First Lutheran Church at La Crosse. He is a graduate of Northwestern College and the Thiensville, Wis., Seminary.

He will be installed at St. John's of Genoa Sunday at 2 p.m. and at St. Matthew's at 8 p.m. by the Rev. Fritz Miller of First Lutheran of La Crosse.

Pastor Kionka was married to Lois Beiderwiden of Milwaukee in 1946. They have three children, Norma, David and Carol.



Pastor Jonathan Schaller was installed as our pastor in April of 1956.

1954



Duaine Anderson, Awalt Wolfe, Joyce Harbecke, Pastor Gerhardt Kionka, Barbara Kromke, Vivan Proksch, Darlene Stilwell

1955



Doris Helke, Janet Christianson, Frances Huebner, Carol Miller, Pastor Gerhardt Kionka, Lyle Proksch, Coy Kohn, Wilbert Proksch, Dean Wrobel

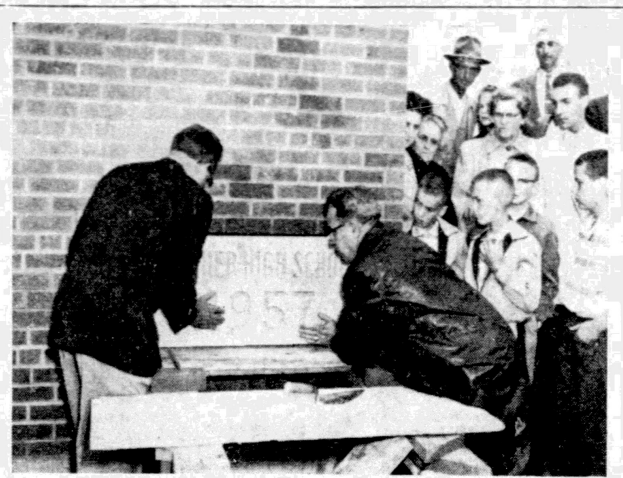
May 20, 1956



Lyle Helke, Karl Nelson, Delores Beitlich, Gordon Helke, Pastor Jonathan Schaller, Ralph Stellick, Cleo Phillips, Ronald DeGarmo

Luther High Cornerstone Laid Sunday

The dreams of the forefathers from the forties were realized when Luther High School opened in 1957. Pastor Schaller served as liturgist at the Cornerstone Laying service on June 23, 1957.



Cornerstone Laying ceremonies were held Sunday at the new Luther High School near Onalaska. W. R. Trapp (left) and Harold Molzahn, contracting firm's representative, are shown putting the stone into place. The school will open in September. —Tribune Photo

The new Luther High School campus in Onalaska was the scene of considerable activity Sunday as a large crowd gathered for the annual Luther High Rally Day.

An open air service was conducted at 11 a.m. The Rev. Wayne Schmidt, principal of Luther High, delivered the sermon. The Rev. Jonathan Schaller of Stoddard, Wis., served as the liturgist.

Accompanying the congregational singing was the Lutheran band under the direction of Frank Italiano. Choir selections were presented by the St. John's Lutheran Church choir of Sparta, Robert Moldenhauer directing.

Since a youth camp had been operated on the campus during last week, about 30 campers also were present to sing two hymns at the service.

During the noon hour a picnic lunch was enjoyed by the large crowd. A small German band entertained the group during this time and at 1:30 p.m. the Lutheran Band presented a one-half hour program of music.

At 2 p.m., the cornerstone for the new high school building was laid. The Rev. Arden Stuebs of Bangor conducted the ceremony and briefly addressed the assembly. The cornerstone was laid by W. R. Trapp and Harold Molzahn.

Included in the cornerstone were a Bible, a Luther High School catalog, an edition of The La Crosse Tribune, as well as the names of the members of the board of trustees of the school, the building committee, the first principal of the school, the names of the congregations participating in this educational program, and the names of several of the present government officials.

Appropriate anthems for the service were presented by the St. John's Lutheran Church male choir of Barre Mills. Armin Huhn was the director of this choral group.

Luther High School will open its doors for the first time in September. The school will begin with a ninth grade and will grow into a four-year high school by adding grades 10, 11 and 12 in succeeding years.

1957



Back: Ruth Groeschel, Burton Christianson, Pastor Jonathan Schaller, Dale Kromke, David Klahn
Front: Nancy Proksch

1958



Back: Sharon Harbecke, Mervin Helke, Pastor Jonathan Schaller, Gary Kromke, Donna Beitlich
Front: Florene Proksch, Harold Beitlich, Glen Huebner, Ronald Stellick, Harley Berra

June 7, 1959



Back: Kenneth Peilhop, Judy Schlicht, Marlin DeGarmo, Pastor Jonathan Schaller
Front: Phyllis Harbecke, Gary Lawrynk, Mary Ann Phillips, Linda Christianson

Mission Fest was a big event with two services. The morning worship time was switched with St. John's, a big dinner was served, and then a 2 pm service was held with a guest preacher.

August 24, 1956



August 30, 1959



The Young People's Society was an active group back in the 1950's

VARIETY NITE
The young people have been rehearsing for weeks. On Sunday nite, May 30, they will present their play and skits. We guarantee plenty of laughs. The program will be given at the Legion Hall at 8:00 P.M. Free-will offering to help defray expenses.

December 12, 1958



November 16, 1958



Pastor Schaller's ministry here ended abruptly in October of 1959 when part of our congregation followed him in forming a new congregation of independent Lutherans called the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

The 60's & the 70's



Pastor Gieschen was installed on February 14, 1960.

New Pastor To Be Installed In 2 Churches

STODDARD, Wis. — The Rev. Norbert A. Gieschen is to be installed as pastor Sunday of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Town of Genoa, at 11 a.m. and St. Matthew's Lutheran church in Stoddard at 8 p.m.

The Rev. Henry Gieschen, pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ft. Atkinson and father of the new pastor, will preach the sermon at both services. The Rev. G. F. Albrecht, pastor of Grace Lutheran, La Crosse, will be the pastor in charge of the installation.

The Rev. Mr. Albrecht served as vacancy pastor while the Rev. L. Boerneke had charge of the Saturday school.

The Rev. Mr. Gieschen graduated from Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., in 1952 and three years later graduated from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at Thiensville.

He was ordained and installed shortly after graduation as pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hillrose, Colo. During the nearly five years that he spent in Colorado he also served congregations at Ft. Morgan and Pueblo.

The Rev. Mr. Gieschen is married and has two children, David, 2½, and Nadine, seven months. Besides his father, two brothers of the pastor are in the Lutheran ministry and a third will enter the ministry early this summer after graduating from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

The Rev. Mr. Gieschen is married to the former Caroline Lehrke of Gibbon, Minn.

1960



Back: Daphne Leary, Arvin Helke, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, Sharon Schlicht, Nancy Berra
Front: Robert Ortmeier, Larry Lawrynck, Henry Huebner, Philip Leisso, Douglas Beitlich

1961



Back: Brian Kruger, Gloria Schlicht, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, Linda Magnuson, Ernest Hass
Front: Charles Beitlich, Mary Ann Beitlich, Pamela Anderson, Ernest Wiese

Ladies gather together for a meeting in 1962



1962



Back: Angela Leary, Gregory Pielhop, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, Linda Berra, Dale Lawrynck
Front: Marvin DeGarmo, Brenda Wiese, Trudy Klahn, Thomas Ward

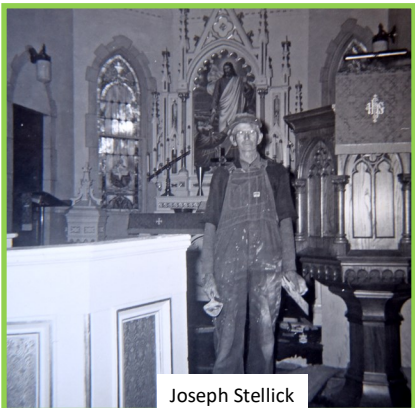


In 1962, the interior of the church was redecorated and the addition of two front rooms and the enclosing of the front steps was completed. One room served as the pastor's study and office, and the other, a classroom. Other renovations included new tile flooring and new ceiling, exterior painting, and redecorating the interior, including a new pulpit. The project was completed in December of 1962.



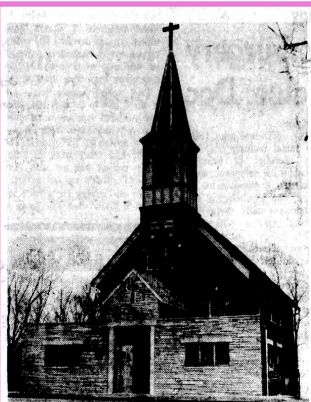
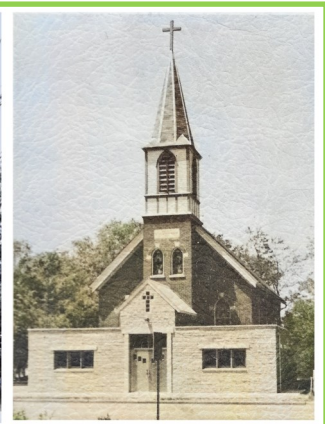
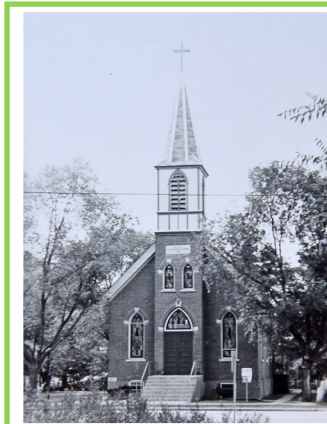
Above right: The old pulpit in front and the new in the back before it was painted.

Below: A before and after view of the church's addition.



Joseph Stellick

We received pews from Immanuel of Lacrosse, which had to be shortened to fit.



DEDICATION SET—St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Stoddard will dedicate the new entrance to the edifice and other improvements in special services at 10 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 17, announces Rev. Norbert A. Gieschen, pastor.

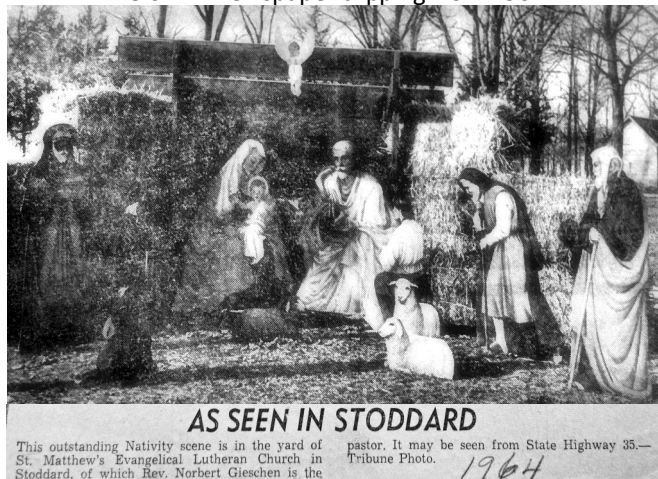
EX-PASTOR SPEAKS

Stoddard Lutherans To Hold Dedication

On February 17, 1963, a dedication service was held for the addition of two rooms and the newly redecorated church. Former St. Matthew's pastor, Rev. Otto Engel, delivered the sermon in the morning service. Lunch was served by the ladies, and a special song service was presented by the St. Matthew's choir under the direction of Oscar Wehling in the afternoon. A song composed by the Rev. Ernest Schoenike, "Behold, Bless Ye the Lord", was dedicated to the St. Matthew's choir, and made its public debut.



Below: A newspaper clipping from 1964



AS SEEN IN STODDARD

This outstanding Nativity scene is in the yard of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Stoddard, of which Rev. Norbert Gieschen is the pastor. It may be seen from State Highway 35.—Tribune Photo. 1964





Back: Debra Huntington, LouAnne Leisso, Barbara Gabrielson, Kathleen Wrobel, Karen Helke, Pat Kruger
Front: Lawrence Anderson, George Wiese, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, Kenneth Hass



Back: Linda Davidson, Gary Davidson, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, Kathleen Erickson
Front: Dale Huntington, Andrew Anderson, Dennis Beitlich, John Wiese



Back: Rhonda Wrobel, Larry Michel, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, Carolyn Leisso, Debra Schlicht
Front: Willard Beitlich, Elaine Phillips, Kathy Jambois, Diane McLees, Dennis Gabrielson



Back: Mark Kruger, Pastor Norbert Gieschen, David Jeffers
Front: Suzanne Jeffers, Ruth Hass

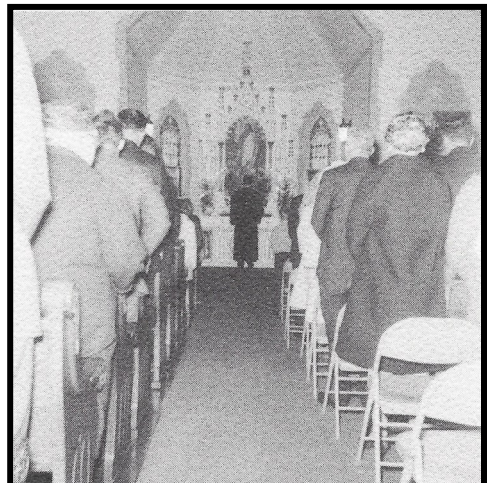


Back: Nancy Oelke, Nancy Jambois, Richard Bakken, LaRae Michel, Daniel DeGarmo
Front: Carol Berra, Bonnie Wrobel, Pastor Albrecht, Sandra Phillips, David DeGarmo

Pastor Gieschen accepted a call and bid us farewell in February of 1967. Pastor Berg, who recently completed his studies at the seminary, was installed on July 9, 1967.



At right:
 A worship scene from the 1960's.



Saturday school teachers were paid \$2.50 each week.

June 2, 1968



Back: Verona Stilwell, Loren Michel
Middle: Diane Kromke, Larry McClellan, Richard Davidson,
 Julie Wolfe, Karen Erickson
Front: Ronald Schlicht, Daniel Leary, Pastor Robert Berg,
 Raymond Soucheck, Terry Proksch

1969



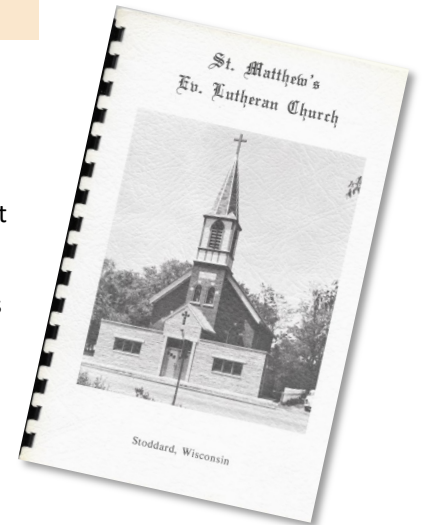
Back: Sharon Stenslien, Neil Ristow, Pastor Robert Berg,
 Debbie McClellan, Dale Proksch
Front: Curtis McLees, Maureen Krueger, Edwin Wiese, Jr., Larry Klahn

The population of Stoddard was 750 in 1970.



Stoddard Lutherans To Mark Centennial

St. Matthew's celebrated its 100th anniversary on August 16, 1970. Pastor Norbert Gieschen, now from St. John's, Wood Lake, MN, returned here to preach the morning sermon. Special music was provided by the St. Matthew's choir and the children of the congregation. Members of the Young People's Society had a picture display of past confirmation pictures on the church grounds and served punch as members visited with each other. Dinner was served at 11:30 at the American Legion Hall. In the afternoon, our former pastor, Rev. Gerhardt Kionka now of Menominee, Michigan, spoke at the outdoor afternoon



service. The choir and children sang once again. A light lunch was served on the south side of the church. Pastor Kionka reminisced that some ladies of the congregation had told him when he left, "You were the first pastor we were not able to fatten up". He said that they were surprised when he returned thirty pounds heavier on this day, and wasn't recognized at first.

Many gifts were donated by members to help beautify our church. Included were:

Stained glass windows in the naïve by Mr. & Mrs. Carl Groth, Mr. & Mrs. Theo Bay, Mr. & Mrs. John Beitlich, Mr. & Mrs. Albert Anderson, Mr. & Mrs. R.J. Beitlich, and the children of Mr. & Mrs. Frank White

Altar by Gust Wrobel

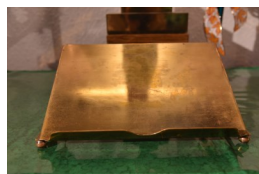
Electric candelabras in memory of Mr. John Soucheck and Mrs. Joseph Stellick by their spouses

Collection plates by Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Stellick on their 46th wedding anniversary

Missal stand in memory of Albert H. Wrobel

Lectern by Mt. Calvary Church, La Crosse

Short stem flower vases by Mr. & Mrs. Albert Klum on their golden wedding anniversary



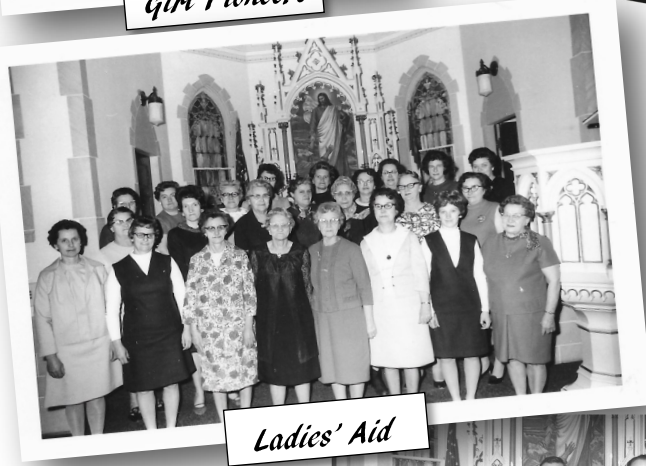


To commemorate the church's 100th anniversary, our first pictorial directory was introduced.

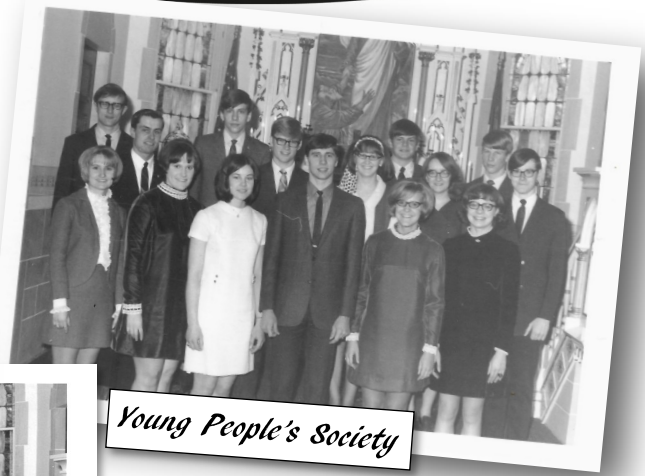
These Saturday school classroom scenes give a glimpse of the interior of other areas of the church.



Girl Pioneers



Ladies' Aid



Young People's Society



Church Council



Choir



Saturday School Children

1970



Back: Gordon Hoiland, Kevin Wuolle, Pastor Robert Berg, Larry Wrobel, Mary McLees
Front: John Oelke, Trudy Hoiland, Karla Erickson, Jerry Erickson

1971



Linda McClellan, Nancy Proksch, Pastor Robert Berg, William Ross, Vern Horstman, Claire Ristow



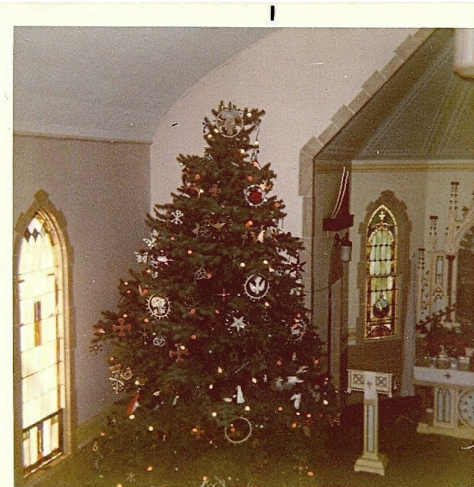
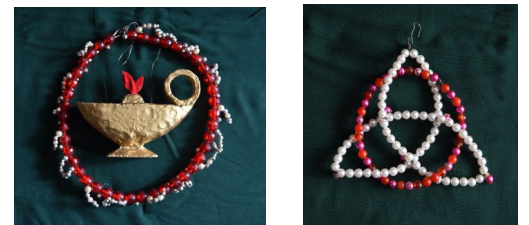
A new church sign, made by Pastor Berg's father, Lyle Berg.



In 1970, the congregation worked together to make christmons for the Christmas tree. Ladies went to rummage sales to search for beads and other materials. Many were assembled at home, and the children worked on simpler ones in Saturday school. Each was a symbol of Christianity. The Children's Christmas Eve service was focused around them, the children explaining the meaning of each. We shared them with St. John's of Genoa for some time, switching every other year, until they were saved just for special years because of their fragility.



For many years, the Lawrynk family provided huge live trees to adorn our sanctuary.



Right: A Christmas gift given by the Saturday school teachers to the children.





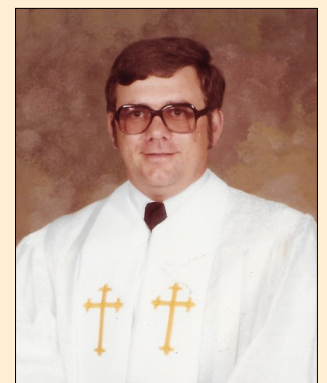
At left: Easter, 1970. The picture on the right shows the Easter tree from 1971. A cross was made from the trunk of the Christmas tree from the previous year. It was then decorated with Easter lilies. Notice the chrismosons representing the trinity towards the top of the tree.



Choir robes were made by the Ladies' Aid for the children to wear on special occasions. The younger children felt proud to wear them, while older ones tolerated them. In later years, they became dish towels for the church.



Pastor Berg accepted a call to Oronoco, MN early in 1972, and Pastor Lambert served as our vacancy pastor. Pastor J.D. Liggett was installed in August of 1972, having recently graduated from the seminary. He arrived with his wife Rosie, and baby daughter, Elizabeth.



Long time members will remember the china that was used for every meal served at church, pictured below.

In 1973, new front doors were installed, along with new lights in the basement and office. A night watch light was also put up.



Back: Mark DeGarmo, Donna Stenslien, Pastor Lambert, Susan Ortloff, Donald Stenslien
Front: Daniel Wiese, John Stillwell, Kenneth Wiese, Arnold Erickson, Kim Volden, Joan Stillwell

1973



Back: Ken Horstman, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Jack Parrish
Front: Colleen Davidson, Sandra Wolfe, Peggy Leeper

May 19, 1974



Back: Arne Wolfe, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Perry McClellan
Front: Julie Parrish, Carol Phillips, Barry Haydysch, Helge Volden, Susan Rieple

In 1974, we began to support a teacher, Mr. David Enter, at Mt. Calvary Lutheran School in La Crosse. Many of our students attended. Pastor Liggett drove a bus, taking the children to Mt. Calvary, taught catechism class there, and then he drove the bus to the hospital to visit people there.



Saturday school chart and Books of the Bible list

May 18, 1975



Back: Jacolin Schultz, Kevin Kromke, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Alan Paggi, Todd Jambois
Front: Cynthia Gobel, Lynn Michel, Marjorie Orloff, Barbara Wiese

The Boy and Girl Pioneers in the parade.



★ ★ ★
1976: America was celebrating its 200th birthday. Stoddard held a big celebration one weekend in June, with a big parade on Sunday. St. Matthew's had its own float, with Ken Abraham posing as a pastor and the Lowry family as church members. The theme: "God Shed His Grace on Thee".





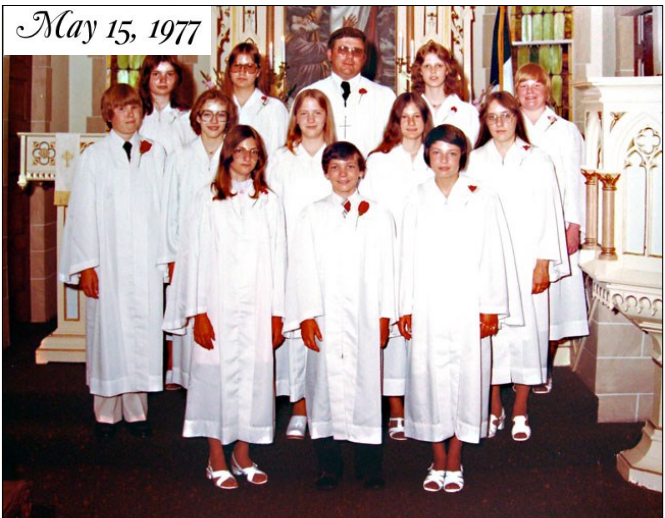
1976

Back: Jacqueline Martell, Laurie Miller, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Craig Wehling, Lester Wiese
Middle: Randy Meyer, David Ortmeier, Trudy Schroeder, Jody McLees
Front: Randy Hanson, Jean Wolfe, James Schultz, Karen Krueger, Jeff Miller



The float from the parade also served as the stage for outdoor services.

Below: Picture taken at St. John's, Genoa



May 15, 1977

Back: Lori McClellan, Lisa Parrish, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Susan Kromke, Julie Schultz
Middle: Jay Wooden, Elayne Hass, Cheri Paggi, Karen Wiese, Laurie McLees
Front: Deborah Klum, Kevin Wolfe, Colleen Mundsack



1978

Back: Susan Schroeder, Greg Miller, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Steve Mundsack, Stacie Shepherd
Front: David Proksch, John Greschel, Michael Zahn, Corey Wehling



The 1978 confirmation class on June 4, taken at St. Matthew's. The newly confirmed members lined up outside to be greeted and congratulated.





Ladies were busy at work making altar cloths in the church basement.
 Pictured are Karen Miller, Mildred Leisso, Helen Soucheck and Dorothy Michel.



A common sight after church every Sunday. People gathered outside in Christian fellowship on the sidewalk to visit after the service.

At this time, St. Matthew's had 330 baptized members, of whom 256 were confirmed. St. John's numbers were 169 baptized and 124 confirmed.

Member Memory
 "I rode with Pastor Liggett to the service at St. John's when I played the organ. After church on our way back from Genoa he would always say 'It's another day closer to heaven.'"
 -Dan Wiese

With many of our children attending Mt. Calvary School, along with some from St. Peter's in Chaseburg and Hamburg, and from St. John's in Genoa, the idea of a Christian Day School in this area seemed to be feasible. Already at the annual meeting in 1977, there was discussion of a future planning and grounds committee.

Also, our present church was showing its age. The basement, made of limestone, was crumbling. The building was not energy efficient. It no longer seemed adequate for the worship and church business activities which needed to be performed with our growing numbers.

Three men were appointed to this committee in February of that year. They met with the Chaseburg, Hamburg, and Genoa congregations in April. A month later they met with the church council to discuss their findings on property and cost of a new church and school. In October, the church council discussed the formation of a building committee, but in December the resolution to form a building committee failed. (Yes- 39, No- 25) 48 yes votes would have been needed to meet the required 75%.

In April of 1978, four congregational members met with the joint council and once again, recommend that a building committee be formed. A vote was taken on June 11, and this time it passed with 30 yes votes and 12 no.

Member Memory
 "One of the pews in the old church had a crack in its back and was uncomfortable to lean back upon. The seat was also slightly tipped downward so you would have to hold yourself in, or else you would slide out. People avoided that one, and if you were one of the later ones in getting to church, you would be the one that ended up in that pew."
 -Karen Fischer

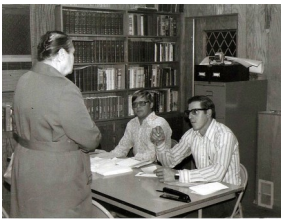
Two weeks later the newly elected joint building committee met for the first time. Their work continued throughout the summer. On October 4, 1978, there was a congregation information meeting to discuss the committee's final report and recommendations. On October 8, these recommendations were put to the vote:

Joint congregation vote on the school:

Yes-40 No-30

St. Matthew's vote on the new church:

Yes-39 No-16



Member Memory

"While the building committee and church council were in the basement making plans for our new church and school, I was up in a side room taking a census of how much money people would donate toward the down payment or how much they could pledge. We needed to come up with \$25,000. It was unbelievable to me how some of our widows would pledge \$1000. Within an hour and a half, I had the greatest joy of being able to go downstairs and tell the guys, 'Go for it. We have the \$25,000 in hand or pledged.'"

-Ralph Stellick

The Last Service in the Old Church & Ground Breaking Service

October 22, 1978 was a bittersweet day at St. Matthew's. After 81 years of people passing through its doors to worship, it marked the last day they would do so. The Ground Breaking service was held afterwards, as people filed outside on a chilly rainy morning. A potluck dinner followed the ceremony. Approximately 325 people were present to mark this historic occasion.





In this church's 81 years, many infants were carried in by their parents to be baptized, young people were confirmed, many happy couple began their married lives, and some came for their last time. One final look:



Members worked at packing up items from the church in preparation of the auction and demolition.



The LACE loan from the Synod for the new church was the largest of its time.

On October 28, 1978, an auction was held to raise money for the parking lot fund. "It looked as if the Lord was having a garage sale." began an article in the La Crosse Tribune. Items for sale included stained glass windows, pews, hymnals, the altar, a lectern, and the pulpit. Mr. R. Jerome Boge, the auctioneer, donated his services to help raise \$5779.00.

Church's furnishings auctioned off

The ladies of the congregation served lunch and had a bake sale at the auction. The proceeds were used to purchase equipment for the new kitchen.



Bidding on a bench — Jerry Hanson of Chaseburg, held up a piano bench for persons to bid on as the furnishings of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Stoddard were auctioned off Saturday. The church, built in 1897, will be torn down Monday and a combination church and school will be built on the site.

The church was turned over to Clements Construction for demolition on October 30. The demolition was handled by Harry Viner Construction Co. and took place the first two weeks in November. The bell was removed and would be saved for the new tower.

“Some people didn’t want change. Some were crying. Some were happy—looking to the future of a new church.”
 -Pastor Liggett



While the new church was being built, meetings were held in members’ homes, and worship services were held at the Stoddard American Legion Hall from the last Sunday in October until the last Sunday in July. People set up chairs before the service and took them down afterwards. It didn’t matter if we weren’t in a church building, as long as God’s Word was preached. The Children’s Christmas Eve Service was held there, complete with treat bags.





Under the able leadership of the chairman, Evan Lowrey, the building committee carried the lion's share of the work in planning, detailing and administering the building program. The twelve men building committee chose Mr. John Clements of Cashton, WI as general contractor. The architect was Tesch-Tesch Association of Fond du Lac, WI. Estimated cost was \$89,800 for the 52 x 52 foot church and \$135,000 for the 64 x 112 foot school. Fall construction was completed in December when the footings were poured. Work resumed in the spring of 1979. This new, energy efficient church would have room for 264 people while the old church had room for 163.



Meanwhile, on a farm where our old sister congregation, St. Johannes Church once stood, construction was underway for the bell tower. Phil Leisso designed and built the tower, with Dave Zahn as engineer. It was an exact fit to the base. It was one of several items donated by a member.



In the base of the bell tower was put the refurbished stone from the old bell tower. The tower also contains the carillon speakers and on top, a stainless steel cross was placed.



The sod for the landscaping was donated by Oscar Miller from his cow pasture. Members cut, rolled, and loaded the sod in a wagon and then unrolled it on the church ground for we could have an instant lawn. (Complete with fertilizer to give it a good start.)





Cornerstone Sunday

An outdoor service was held in the church park on Sunday, July 1, 1979 for the cornerstone laying ceremony. Pastor Lyle Schalow of St. Peter's Chaseburg & Hamburg was the guest preacher.

Among the items placed in the cornerstone were a KJV & a NIV version of the Bible, a catechism, the centennial booklet from 1970, newspaper clippings of our building project, the July 1 issue of the La Crosse Tribune, June 28 issue of the Vernon County Broadcaster, June 27 issue of the Chipmunk Coulee Press (a Stoddard newspaper), our membership directory, our constitution and by-laws, "This We Believe" and various service folders.



229 people gathered together to observe this special occasion. Afterwards, there was an open house and a lunch was served.

We began worshipping and giving thanks to our Lord in the brand new church on July 29.



Dedication

Dedication of the new church was held on the morning of September 16. Pastor Roger Sachs preached a sermon from 1 Samuel 7:5-12, "These Stones Speak to Us". An open house was held and refreshments were served by the Lutheran Pioneer groups.

In the afternoon, the dedication for St. Matthew's-St. John's Lutheran School was held. Pastor Glenn Moldenhauer was our guest speaker, bringing us the message from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, "Everyday Routine".



The balcony wasn't part of the original plans, but one couple from our church took out a loan for its construction and did much of the labor in finishing it.



August 19, 1979



Back: Robert Krueger, John Kromke, Pastor J.D. Liggett,
Jan Mundsack, Tammra Ross
Front: Lori Manske, Brian McClellan, Dan Kocinski, Christina Meyer



David Enter



Barbara Seidl

Our school welcomed 27 students in its first year. Mr. David Enter, whom we supported at Mt. Calvary, became our principal and teacher for grades 5-8. Mrs. Barbara Seidl was called to teach grades 1-4.

St. Matthews—St. John's Lutheran School first students. 1979-1980 school year

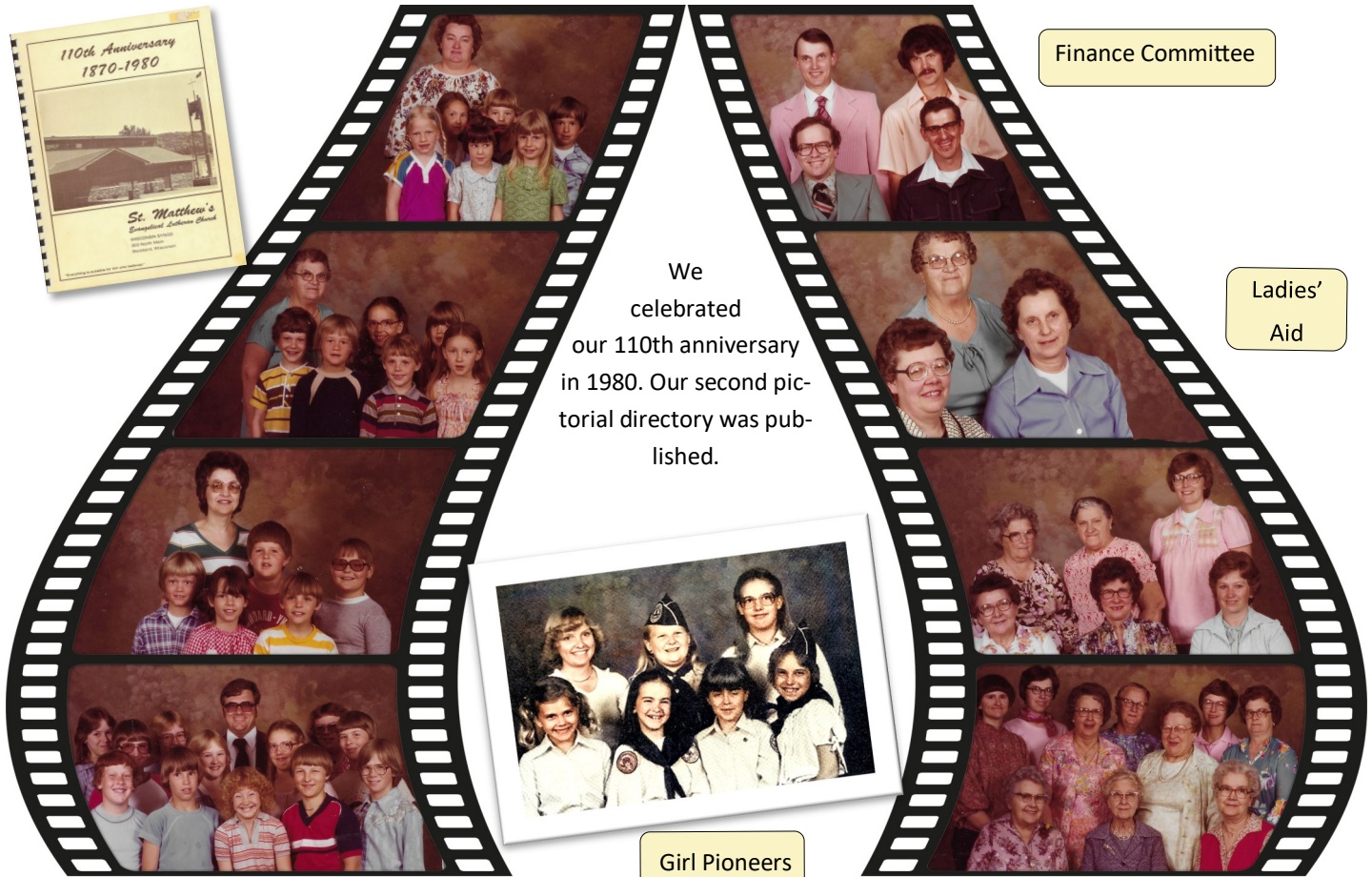


To end the year and the decade, our bell tower was dedicated on Christmas day, 1979.

The tower was built so well that it was said, in jest, that if a train came off the track and hit the tower, it would still stand.



The 80's & the 90's



We celebrated our 110th anniversary in 1980. Our second pictorial directory was published.

Finance Committee

Ladies' Aid



Girl Pioneers

Saturday School



Ushers



Council, School Board, Organists



Choir

May 18, 1980



Back: Julie Meier, Pastor J.D. Liggett, Dawn Zink
Front: Dawn Ross, Trent Hanson, Loren Lowrey

May 17, 1981



Back: David Parrish, Andrea Jambois, Pastor J.D. Liggett,
Nancy Schaack, Sherry Wooden
Front: James Miller, Joan Manske, Chand Wehling, Gregory Ross,
Sandra Wuolle, Christopher Smith



The early 80's brought additional faculty members. Miss Mary Brinkman (who eventually became Mrs. Schalow) began teaching the middle grades in 1980. She was supported by St. Peter's.



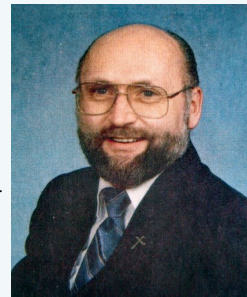
Mrs. Jerene Beitlich saw the need for a pre-school program and began it in the fall of 1981, meeting once a week on Tuesday afternoons.



Luther High School celebrated its 25th year in 1982.

We welcomed Pastor Russell Kloehn and his wife Verona, and children Renee, Sara, Rachel and Jonathan in 1982

after Pastor Liggett accepted a call to Sleepy Eye, Minnesota.



With a gap between pre-school and first grade, it was decided to call a kindergarten teacher to bridge that gap. Mrs. Mary Sill accepted our call and joined us in 1982.

The picture at right may be of poor quality, but older members will remember the many trees around the church property and the gravel driveway.



May 23, 1982



Front: Debbie Gobel, Tony Lawrynck, Pastor R.W. Kloehn,
Brian Zahn, Tim Stellick
Middle: Nancy Kromke, Kristine Shepard, Lynn Lowrey, David Wooden
Front: Renee Kloehn, Miranda Ross, Shar Kromke

May 22, 1983



Back: Kristine Swanson, Kevin Klum, Pastor R.W. Kloehn, Craig Jambois, Kimberley Helke, Starr Halverson
Front: Kristine Aspeslet, Sharlene Proksch, David Stellick, Robert Swanson Jr.

From 1983 to 1987, a Young People's Society was held once again for our youth in 9th grade and up, meeting once a month. Besides discussing a topic, activities included roller-skating, bowling and hayrides.

In 1984, St. Matthew's had 416 baptized members and 334 communicant members.

Enrollment for our school in 1983-1984 was 63.

In 1983, the west half of the Leland Slack property was purchased, thinking ahead for long range building plans.

1984 brought a name change to our school. St. John's of Genoa closed and all ownership of the school went to St. Matthew's, thus instead of being St. Matthew's -St. John's, it was merely St. Matthew's. Families from St. John's transferred either to St. Matthew's or St. Peter's in Chaseburg.

May 20, 1984



Back: Christopher Davis, Pastor R.W. Kloehn, David Zink
Front: Mary Kromke, Sara Kloehn, Malinda Ortmeier, Laurie Burkum

The Duane Beitlich Scholarship Fund was established shortly after our school began. The money is the interest that is earned from a CD and awarded to a graduating 8th grade student continuing their Christian education to be put towards their tuition.

In 1985, with St. John's members joining St. Matthew's, our numbers grew to 457 baptized members and 362 communicant members.

78 children were enrolled in our school during the 1985-1986 school year.

In 1986, Saturday school was changed to Wednesday school, meeting in the evening from 6-8 pm., with an enrollment of 16. In 1988, the change was made to Sunday School.

May 19, 1985



Back: Pastor R. W. Kloehn
Front: April Ross, Brent Swanson

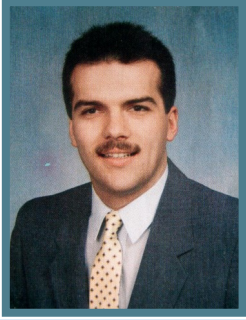
May 18, 1986



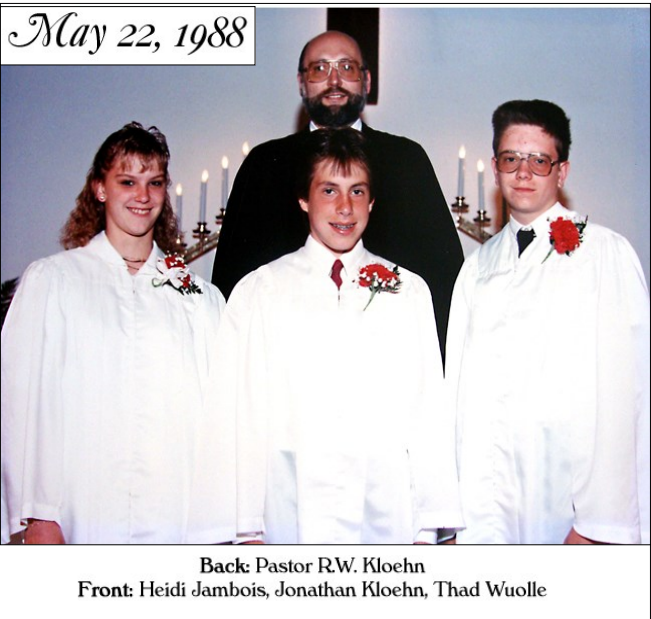
Back: Rachel Kloehn, Pastor R.W. Kloehn, Robert Shepard
Front: Joshua Veglahn, Michele Sadler, Thomas Lawrynk



In 1986, Mr. David Enter accepted a call to teach in Janesville, WI. Mr. Peter Kuske emergency taught the upper grades for the 1986-1987 school year. Pastor Kloehn served as principal that year.



In 1987, Mr. Scott Huebner accepted our call as principal and teacher of grades 6-8.



The congregation voted at a special meeting in 1988 to purchase a bus for the purpose of transporting the children of our congregation who live in the La Crosse school district. This decision bore immediate fruit when our school gained 11 new students directly because of the bus. Bus drivers were Linda Manske and Lorie Proksch. In that year, 20 students rode this bus. Total enrollment for the 1988-1989 school year was 78.



Also in 1989, we were blessed with the addition of the Sunbeams for grades 2-3. This group was directed by Eileen Wuolle and had four members.

The Pioneer program included Scripture based teaching and application of good citizenship, a knowledge of the beauties of God's creation, first aid, crafts, safety, and many other useful skills of interest.

Special activities included a roller skating party, a picnic, a camp-out, and a Halloween party. The boys had an aluminum can drive. The girls made aprons and ornaments for a Christmas craft sale.

The Boy Pioneers had been meeting for the last several years under the leadership of Ken Morey, and also Willard Beitlich in 1989. Eight boys regularly attended. The Girl Pioneers started up again in 1988 with nine girls. Sally Peterson was their leader. The following year, Kris Shepard became leader of the 7-8 grade girls while Karel Leisso was in charge of the 4-6.



May 21, 1989



Back: Amy DeGamo, Pastor R.W. Kloehn, Renae Gabrielson
 Front: William "Billy Joe" Hirschuber, Christine Bolton, Kristina Wuolle, Jason Steinke

■ ST. MATTHEW'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, Stoddard, will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its present church and school building on Sunday. Activities will begin with a 10 a.m. worship service and mortgage burning, with a former pastor, the Rev. J.D. Liggett Jr. of Sleepy Eye, Minn., as the speaker. The service will be followed by a dinner in the Stoddard American Legion Hall and an informal worship service in the church at 1:30 p.m. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation was founded in 1870. The present pastor is the Rev. R.W. Kloehn. There are 401 baptized members. The Christian day school, which opened in 1979, has five teachers and an enrollment of 83 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

September 17, 1989 was a joyous day in the history of St. Matthew's. We celebrated the 10th anniversary of our new church, and through the grace of God, we were able to burn our mortgage. A special service of thanks was held, with Pastor J. D. Liggett returning as our guest speaker. Dinner was served by the American Legion Auxiliary at the Stoddard Legion Hall. Afternoon events included informal fellowship with various appointed speakers along with anyone else who wished to share something. A picture display was put together and the video of the church history was shown throughout the day. Many visitors shared in our celebration, including former pastors and teachers.



Some comments that were heard on this special day:
 "Are we really debt free? Is it ALL paid?"

"I just wanted to clap after the mortgage was burned."
 "I didn't want it to end. I wanted to stay at church and for it all to keep going."
 "The speakers in the afternoon fellowship did a great job; the meal was great; everything was so well done".

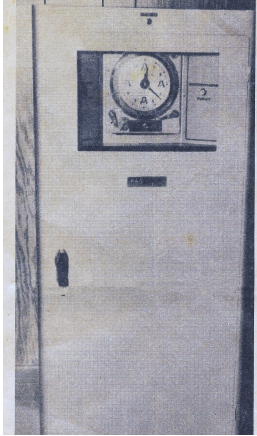
"Many tears of joy and thanksgiving to God are being shed today."
 "God be praised!"



Pastor & Mrs. Robert Berg



Stoddard Church Dedicates Carillon



The Verdin Carillon System (above) was dedicated last Sunday at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Stoddard. The carillon plays hymns, recorded on a vibraharp, at 12:05 and 6:05 p.m. daily. The system doubles as a loud-speaker, which has been made available to the village in case of a disaster. Three families made funds available to purchase the carillon.

Member Memory

"For our 40th wedding anniversary, Harold and I wanted to give a gift to the church, We went together with Oscar and Irma Wehling and Lester Nicholai, and purchased the carillon."
-Elaine Wrobel



In 1989, the new carillon system was dedicated. Stained glass windows replaced the gold colored ones in the sanctuary.



Early on the morning of Sunday, January 21, 1990, there was an electrical fire in the parsonage. All praise and thanks to God that no lives or possessions were lost. At this time, there were two Sunday services—one at 8:30 am and the other at 10:30 am, with Bible study in between. Only the 8:30 service was held on that day.

The Stoddard volunteer firemen were quick to respond. Many people moved the possessions out of the parsonage and stored them. The Kloehns were given use of one of our member's house for four months. Much Christian love was displayed by providing food, helping with the moving, laying sod, sharing their expertise and time in their fields of staining/varnishing, plumbing work, electrical work, and heating and air conditioning; and giving of monetary donations. An open house was held in June.

The old parsonage was sold to a church member who moved it and renovated it. The garage was also moved and used for storage.

Also in January of 1990, the long range planning committee that was formed in 1988 was to check on fixing the siding on the church and investigate development of the property north and west of the school.



Below: 2015 view of the new parsonage.



May 20, 1990



Back: Pastor R.W. Kloehn
Front: Angela Aspeslet, Karla Helke, Stephanie Burkum, Tammy Veglahn

May 19, 1991



Back: Pastor R.W. Kloehn, Matthew Shepard
Front: Hope Michel, Kathy Helke

May 17, 1992



Back: Nathan Leisso, Pastor R.W. Kloehn
Front: Shannon Gertsch, Joseph Stahl, Jennifer Helke

June 7, 1992: A building committee was formed at a special congregational meeting to bring back costs and a preliminary plan for an addition.

February 28, 1993: The building committee presented their recommendations to the congregation.

March 21, 1993: At a special voter's meeting, after the building committee recommended that we build now, trusting that God would continue to provide, the voters approved to obtain bids from contractors, to check on the best funding source and to start a designated building fund.

May 16, 1993: The \$235,000 activity center and classroom addition was approved by the voters. There would also be some remodeling done. Pastor's office would be moved from the front of the church to the fellowship hall area, a storage room added, and the kitchen would be part of the new addition. Some exterior work was also scheduled.

May 23, 1993



Back: Mandy Shepard, Pastor R.W. Kloehn, Becky DeGarmo
Front: Lisa Gabrielson, Erik Bolton, Andrew Beitelich, Rebecca Bare

The focus of the Evangelism committee in 1993 was in two major areas. First, to promote fellowship among our own members and encourage church involvement. Secondly, to continue to reach out to the unchurched in the area. Three events were facilitated—a rollerskating party in January, a brunch after church followed by games for all ages, (E.B.G.B. Day—Everybody for Board Games and Brunch), and a picnic later in the summer.

The committee also sent regular mailings to the families on the prospect list that they developed through the previous year's telephone survey. Follow up calls to these families were made and about a dozen still wished to hear from us.

They also set up three sub-committees: a welcoming committee, a media committee that would contact the mass media to advertise upcoming events; and a video committee to tape church and school events to be edited into a single tape to show to prospective members of what we are all about.

Scenes from E.B.G.B. Day





At right, the last Night at School in the crowded fellowship hall.



The children sing at confirmation.



For the picnic on the last day of school, Pastor Kloehn grilled 200 of his famous hamburgers which were then soaked in a beer broth before serving. The students enjoyed their last time on this part of the playground.



Playground space would be lost, but the activity center would far more benefit everyone. Trees were cleared with the help of both young and old alike.



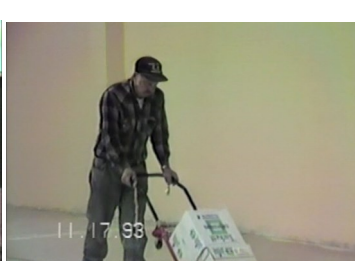
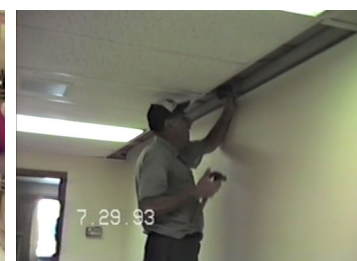
Groundbreaking Service for the New Addition

On June 6, 1993, ground was broke for the new addition to our school. About 130 people were in attendance. After the service, cake and ice cream were served as people were invited to look around the building and view the plans.



Construction began in June and continued throughout the summer. St. Matthew's would be the general contractor. Excavating, concrete foundations, masonry work, plumbing, electrical work, and heating and ventilating for the new structure was done by subcontractors. Much of the work was done by Christians working together. That included the roofing, painting and staining; remodeling to move the office, storage room and kitchen; repairing and replacing siding as needed, and installing the concrete face blocks on the north side of the building to match the addition.







Work continued the rest of the year and into the spring.
The new classroom was ready to move into in April.

Proceeds from our annual rummage sale went towards the building fund. It was one of many fund raisers held this year.

In spite of the busyness of that summer, activities went on as usual, including Vacation Bible School.



Church Picnic

There was a huge turnout for the church picnic in 1993. The VBS children sang in the morning service, and Ralph Proksch played his accordion. Lunch was served, and afterwards there were organized games and fun for all ages. Cheering and laughter could be heard from every corner of the church grounds. A balloon toss wound up the game time, and ice cream was served, which put the topping on the day. The church that prays and plays together, stays together.

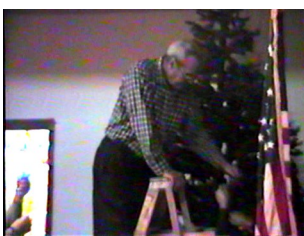




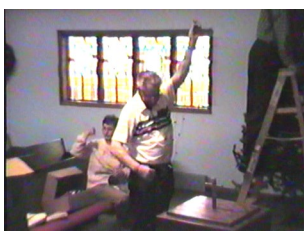
The kindergarten class collected pennies and took them to the bank to be counted. \$62.24 was presented to the building fund. They also made shirts—"Building With Jesus". St. Peter's held a spaghetti supper fund raiser with so many fun activities for young and old. Other fund raisers included the sale of St. Matthew's apparel, a pizza sale, and a read-a-thon.



On December 17, 1993, the first real home basketball games were played in the new activity center. School colors were orange and brown.



Excitement of the celebration of our Savior's birth filled the air. Festive music played as many people decorated our sanctuary. Others caroled to our senior members before going out into the community to share in song the story of Christ's birth.





Ladies' Aid



Bible Study

The Evangelism committee was busy at work within our church and throughout the community. Once again, they organized a roller skating party, and also a soup and sandwich supper before the evening Lenten services. They also purchased an outdoor sign board, and held "Christmas for Kids". Parents dropped off their children and went Christmas shopping while the children were entertained at church and participated in fun activities.



Sunday School



First Easter breakfast in the activity center.

Friends of Luther, an organization dedicated to the support of Christian secondary education at Luther High School, began in 1994. Their goals are to strengthen the relationship between Luther and the congregations of the high school association.



Yard clean up day in 1994



The older children sing in a service.



May 15, 1994

Back: Luke Noffke, Pastor R. W. Kloehn
Front: Sara Leisso, Brandon VonRuden, Matthew Morey



The new hymnal, Christian Worship was introduced.

At left, the first Night at School in the activity center on May 6, 1994. The children put on the musical "How the West was Really Won".

Dedication of the New Addition

A dedication service for the new addition was held on September 18, 1994 at 1:30 pm. 260 people filled the activity center and praises to God for this great blessing resonated throughout. A choir of both children and adults sang "The First Song of Isaiah" and was directed by Terri Krueger, our first and second grade teacher. A Prayer of Dedication was sung by the adult choir, directed by Paul Schwartz of St. Peter's. Pastor Kloehn was the liturgist and Pastor Lyle Schalow delivered the sermon.



Special guests in attendance were Pastor Kionka and his wife. Pastor Kionka served our congregation from 1950-1956. Several people spoke after the service. Mr. Huebner's prophetic words have come true. He said in the future, some of us would be gathered here for some event with children that have not even been born yet. Indeed, we already have second generation families in attendance. God continues to provide Christian education today just as he has in the past.



Back: Joseph Woodhouse, Pastor R. W. Kloehn, Holly Shepard
Front: Jonathan Bare, Billy Kromke, Leah Beiflich





Pioneers



The Pioneer groups grew and were very active in the mid 1990's. Boy Pioneers started up once again in 1993 after a few years without a leader. Their meetings were held at St. Peter's under the leadership of Gary Klemstein. St. Peter's invited our boys just as we invited their girls to join our Girl Pioneer group at St. Matthew's.



Above: Pine Car Derby

The Girl Pioneers had a total of 30 girls participating in 1993. They were split into four groups: The Sunbeams, two groups of Travelers, and Trailblazers.



At the National Camp at Whitcomb in 1994, St. Matthew's had the most girls represented in the nation from one congregation!

At the National Convention in La Crosse in the same year, once again, Stoddard had the most girls there to represent their caravan nationally.



Spring Campout at the Sparta bike trail.



Volunteer work at church.



Money was raised for camp and outings through their Apple Bake and Christmas craft sale.



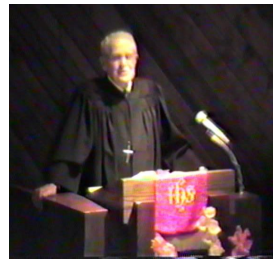
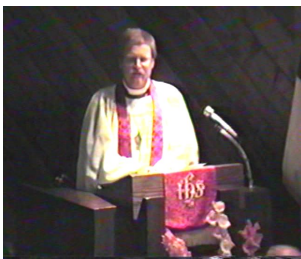
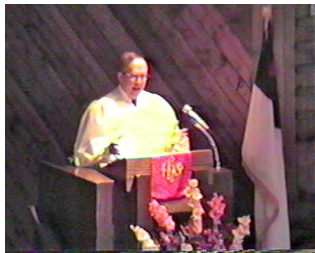
Charms were earned by the girls for the various requirements that they met.





125th Anniversary

St. Matthew's celebrated its 125th anniversary on September 10, 1995. Synod president Pastor Karl Gurgel was the guest speaker for the morning service. 276 people were in attendance. Dinner was served at 11 am, and the afternoon service began at 1:30. Guest speakers were past member, Pastor Marc De Garmo, and a former pastor of ours, Pastor Norbert Gieschen. 226 people were present.



The chrismos, along with modern ornaments, adorned our Christmas tree, now artificial.

In our anniversary year, we had 392 baptized members and 301 communicant members. 76 children were enrolled in our school.

The Bart & Ruth Kannenburg Memorial Bible Fund was established in 1997 to gift a special study Bible at confirmation, and to provide additional funds for non-budgeted needs at school.



Back: Brett Nollke, Pastor R. W. Kloehn, Brian Wrobel
Front: Rachel Leisso, Kathryn Bare, Tiana VonRuden



Back: Sarah Woodhouse, Pastor R. W. Kloehn, Isaac Zickert
Front: Andrew Bare, Joshua Lusk

April 20, 1997

Mr. Huebner, our principal accepted a call to Fort Atkinson in late spring of 1997. We only had opportunity to send out one call from the field, and it was declined. Pastor Kloehn assumed principal duties for the '97-'98 school year. Mrs. Deb Wittig taught grades 6-8.

In 1997, we had 350 baptized members and 284 communicant members.

57 students were enrolled in our school.

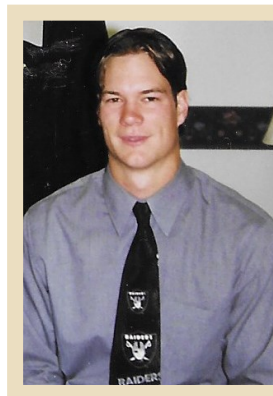


In 1997 we had a new opportunity to share the story of Christ's birth with thousands of people. Along with other area churches, we were a part of the live nativity at Riverside Park in La Crosse.



April 19, 1998

Back: Adam Malin, Pastor R. W. Kloehn, Bonnie Gabrielson
Front: Jennifer Fischer, Jacob Beitlich, Emily Stokes, Rebekah Shepard



Mr. Nathan Heyn was assigned as our new principal and upper grade teacher beginning with the '98-'99 school year.



Changes were introduced in 1999. The Lord's Supper was now offered twice a month instead of just once at the end of the month. Services had been held at 9:30 am on Sundays and 7:00 pm on Monday evenings. The Sunday morning time was switched to 9:00 am to allow time for Bible study. The most controversial change concerned the Christmas eve children's program. It was a goal to have the children of our school united in one service. That meant that the very long tradition of having the children's service in the evening on Christmas eve was broken. The children's service in 1999 was at 1:00 pm on the Sunday before Christmas at St. Matthew's and another at 1:00 pm on Christmas eve at St. Peter's. After that year, it returned to its traditional time on Christmas eve. Once held at 8 pm to allow farmers to finish milking their cows, in later years it was moved to 7 pm. Candlelight services that were once held at 11 pm, were moved up to 9 pm.

After serving here for nearly 17 years, Pastor Kloehn accepted a call and we bid him farewell in December of 1998. The Lord quickly filled our vacancy by sending us Pastor James Krueger in January of 1999.



Member Memory

Linda Burkum and I were the first two women ushers. We had some friends come to visit the Sunday I was ushering and they were so shocked to see a woman ushering in church. - Mary Abraham



May 2, 1999

Back: Heather Kumlin, Levi Noffke, Pastor R. W. Kloehn, Katherine Wrobel, Carly Lusk
Front: Mark Krause, Douglas Miller Jr., Ashley Duwe, Heather Horstman

The 2000's

A new millennium was upon us and any fears of the Y2K bug were squashed. People thought computers would crash at the stroke of midnight but it never happened. The population of Stoddard reached 815.



Bible study and a children's message



The Oscar Wehling Memorial Fund was established in 2000. The interest is divided among St. Matthew's students attending Luther High or any college in our synod.

The Young People's Society was active once again. Under the leadership of Joel and Rachel Hahm and Nathan Heyn, meetings were held at both St. Matthew's and St. Peter's. An average of 15 people attended. When the Hahms moved, the new Chaseburg leaders were Chris and Denise Lepke.



A Child Care Committee was set up to recommend new playground equipment. It also saw to the needs of parents who needed before and after school care. St. Matthew's Kids Crossing was established in 2000 and began on August 28 of that year. It was also a mission arm in the community for possible prospects. This surround care ran from 6 am—6 pm and served 10 children during its only year. Numbers decreased because of 3 families' job situations and the need was not as great. Mrs. Sill ran an after school surround care for a time for 5-6 children.

The new equipment was set up in September. The driveway was moved to provide space for the new playground.



Celebrating our 130th Anniversary

January 30, 2000



April 16, 2000



Pastor Krueger
Christopher Krause, Miriam Leisso, Trisha Miller



Additional lighting that matched our current lights was added in 2000. They were donated from Holy Scripture Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana by Pastor Glom. Bill and Karen Jeffers brought them to our church.



After our principal, Mr. Heyn accepted a call to Las Vegas, Nevada, we welcomed Jon Engelbrecht in 2001 as our principal and upper grade teacher.

April 8, 2001



Pastor Krueger
Ashley Malin & Alex Green

Stoddard Turns 100!

In celebration of Stoddard's 100th anniversary of being incorporated in 2003, the village sponsored a special parade in June, with many other fun activities throughout the weekend.



May 5, 2002



Back row: Anna Zickert, Pastor Krueger
Front row: Zachary Rach, Travis Fischer



Sunday School, 2004

May 4, 2003



Back row: Zachary Kumlin, Pastor Krueger, Nicole Jambois
Front row: Katy Helgeson, Zachary Bolon

Air conditioning was installed in the church sanctuary in 2002. No more would people have to fan themselves with their bulletins on those hot summer days. No more would a neighborhood cat wander in through an open side door during a sermon and meander down the center aisle before casually walking back out.

In 2004, we were blessed to have been able to pay off the activity center addition mortgage.

May 22, 2005



Back row: Tyler Hanson, Pastor Krueger, Kyle Pavela
Front row: Kate Mundsack, Kali Mutschelknaus, Megan Helgeson

April 2004



Back row: Amanda Duwe, Pastor Krueger, Hannah Wrobel
Front row: Hannah Krueger, Danya Dravis, Gregory Jambois

We had 38 students in grades 1-8 in our school in 2004. The number may seem small, but over 70% of the eligible children of St. Matthew's attended. That was over the synod average.

Likewise in 2005, 27 out of the possible 34 St. Matthew's children were enrolled in our Day School. That means we had 79% of our children in our school. There was a total of 47 children enrolled that year, the remainder coming from St. Peter's or non-members.



The Young People's Society (Youth Group) was now under the leadership of Perry and Lisa Kilmer. Events included a hay ride, pizza party & bake sale, a day on the river, bowling party, and swimming. On average, 15-20 youth attended each event. They also helped out in the first Thanksgiving Eve dinner.





We celebrated the 25th anniversary of St. Matthew's School on April 10, 2005. Pastor Herb Prah was our guest preacher. Many past and present students gathered for pictures. Also present were former principals Mr. David Enter and Mr. Scott Huebner.



May 21, 2006



Back row: Cody Krueger, Pastor Krueger, Anna Spears
Megan Lepke, Shawna Boldon

Thanksgiving Eve Dinner



Stoddard clothing center, pantry serve those in need



Paper work—Karen Mundsack, site manager at the Stoddard food pantry, works at the pantry. (Contributed photo)

Stoddard-area Community Food Pantry

The Stoddard-area Community Food Pantry has been providing food for families and individuals since Thanksgiving 2005. The pantry which is located at 300 West St. in Stoddard (back of St. Matthew's Church) has served 375 people.

Individuals, churches, businesses and organizations within and beyond the Stoddard community have joined together to provide the food and operating funds used to stock the shelves. The food pantry seeks to serve the hungry on the west side of Vernon County, throughout the De Soto Area School District, the Stoddard region and any emergency need that comes to the attention of Karen Mundsack, site manager.

Volunteers staff the Pantry 3 to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays. Entry to the pantry is behind St. Matthew's Church. Watch for the signs.

The Stoddard Area Community Food Pantry began in 2005. In that same year, we held our first Thanksgiving Eve Dinner. Church members prepared and served the meal, free of charge. Any free will donations went to the food pantry. 350 dinners were served in 2006.

April 22, 2007



Pastor Krueger
Jay Woodhouse & Darian Strasser



Mr. Jon Beagle became our principal in 2006 when Mr. Engelbrecht accepted a call.

May 18, 2008



Back row: Zachary Hanson, Kyle Benson, Pastor Krueger, Christopher Krueger, Christopher Beagle
Front row: Kyle Chapman, Brandon Miller, Chelsie Boldon



Torrential rain began to fall on the evening of August 18, 2007 and continued throughout the night. As much as 15 inches fell, causing major flooding throughout the Stoddard & Chaseburg area. Less than 2 miles north of Stoddard, a mudslide caused a house to slide onto Hwy 35. The road leading to La Crosse was closed for a week while repairs were done to the highway and the railroad. Pastor Krueger preached a special sermon from the book of Psalms the following Sunday. What some considered a 1000 year flood occurred again in June of 2008 and again in 2018 and 2019. Much flooding occurred, especially in the Chaseburg and Coon Valley area. The first day of school in 2018 was cancelled due to the flooding. A week later, more flooding occurred, causing two more school cancellations in the 2018-2019 school year.





Mr. Chris Avila became our principal in 2008. In that year, 62 children were enrolled at St. Matthew's School.



Pastor Krueger
Kevin Walls & Zachary Kilmer

We had bid Pastor Krueger farewell in September of 2009 when he accepted a call to Medford, WI. Pastor G. Philip Arnold was ordained into public ministry and installed as the pastor of St. Matthew on October 18, 2009.

Looking for more ways to connect with the community and to show love for people's bodily needs as well as their spiritual ones, we began hosting Red Cross Blood Drives at our church in 2009.

The population of Stoddard in 2010 was 774.



Back row: Travis Kilmer, Pastor Arnold, Bethany Beitlich
Front row: Miriam Beagle, Jessica Walls, Noah Boldon



Many technological advancements occurred during Pastor Arnold's time with us in the early 2010's. Starting in 2010, audio recordings of the services were made and put on CD's for shut-in members or anyone who wanted to listen to them.

In 2013, a Digital Outreach team was organized. This group created a website and a Facebook page to enable us to reach out to the world with God's Word. Visitors could listen to the audio sermons on the webpage and check out information about our church. The Facebook page featured daily devotions, photos and information on church happenings, along with announcements of upcoming events.

In 2014, we had our own YouTube channel. Videos of the services were recorded each week and the sermon was published for anyone wishing to watch. It was also shared to our Facebook page.

By 2015, the video recordings of the services were aired on a local cable TV station.

May 15, 2011



Back row: Luke Kilmer, Pastor Arnold, RaeAnn Protsman Front row: Ashley Miller

May 6, 2012



Nick Manske, Pastor Arnold, Alexis Uebelher, Nicole Kilmer

Some improvements to our building that were made in 2012 were residing the church and repainting the gym. Wiring was also done for a new projector.

One may wonder how there could possibly be so many items donated for the rummage sale each year. God richly blesses people and has also blessed this fund raiser for the school. Originally held in the pastor's garage and the storage garage, beginning in 2016, it has taken place in tents or in the school activity center. Occurring midweek before Labor Day, it was met with all kinds of weather—hot, cold, rainy, and in one year, a bad wind storm in which one of our members graciously washed many of the linens that were soaked from the rain.

Rummage Sale



May 5, 2013



L to R: Dylan Protsman, Tanner Hanson, Pastor Arnold, Samuel Krause, Chase Wedwick, Sierra Schobert, Madison Rannow

May 18, 2014



Back row: Drew Dravis, Pastor Arnold, Lauren Stuebs
Front row: Allison Beagle, Alexis Stellick, Leah Goralski

There were many opportunities to grow in God's Word. Pastor Arnold offered the regular Bible study after the Sunday services, a Digging Deeper Bible class that met on Sunday evenings which featured an in-depth study on selected books of the Bible, an Online Bible Reading Group which participants read through the entire Bible in a year and were invited to ask questions online, and also Video Bible studies offered by the WELS Adult Discipleship.



In 2015, St. Matthew's School had 34 students.

March 29, 2015



Back row: Cynda Protsman, Pastor Arnold, Matthew Kilmer
Front row: Faith Struemke, Berkley Harle

Mother's Groups

The **Mom's Connection** began in May of 2015. It started as a playgroup where moms and caretakers of young children got together to inspire and lift each other up in Christ. They met at local parks once a week and ended with a picnic lunch. Other activities included serving monthly for fellowship hour after church, monthly Mom's Night Out, and evening book studies during the fall. Service projects have included redecorating the pre-K room in 2016, redecorating the Family Lounge in 2017, and renovating the Stoddard Area Food Pantry in the summer of 2020. **Mornings with Mommy** began in 2019 and meet twice a month during the school year at the church for crafts, early learning, and fellowship.



TRUNK OR TREAT

Trunk or Treat also began in 2015 as a way to reach out to the community. Treats were handed out from trunks decorated in a particular theme. They included Storybooks, TV shows, Video games, Disney movies, and Board games. Pumpkin bowling was played along with many other games with prizes. Refreshments were served to add up to a howling good time!



Ladies' Aid Picnic 2015

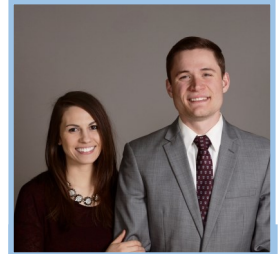


In the summer of 2015, Pastor Arnold received two divine calls on the same weekend. He accepted the call to Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Menominee Falls/Germantown, WI. We bid him farewell on August 16. Pastor Silas Schmitzer accepted our call and was welcomed and installed on October 25, 2015.

May 16, 2016



Pastor Schmitzer
Elizabeth Stuebs, Ashley Manske,
Kinley Schobert



Mr. James Otto was assigned as our principal and upper grade teacher in 2016 when Mr. Avila accepted a call. His wife Jackie became our pre-school teacher.

April 30, 2017



Back row: Blake Harle, Pastor Schmitzer, Sam Kilmer
Ellie Greeno, Connor Beagle

At right, a children's message at Easter, 2016



Pastor Liggett, who retired to this area, carries the St. Matthew's banner in the Stoddard Memorial Day parade in 2016, along with his wife Rosie. Candy and invitations to our summer events such as VBS and Sports Camp, are distributed by members.



Sports Camp began in 2017. That first year, 30 children were in attendance, 17 of whom did not attend our school.





Out of thankfulness for their grandchildren, the Shepherd family have long provided palm branches on Palm Sunday for the altar and also for everyone present to take to their homes.



Pastor Schmitzer wore many different hats as he dressed up for the various VBS themes throughout the past few years. The VBS children sang for the outdoor service in 2016.



New playground equipment for the little ones was installed in the summer of 2018.

Outdoor worship services have recently been held at the Stoddard Park. St. Peter's members were invited to join us for dinner and competition in a friendly game of softball. There were games for the kids, and even a bounce house!



May 20, 2018

Joshua Stuebs, Pastor Schmitzer, Haukin Protsman



May 26, 2019



Back row: Noah Struemke, Pastor Schmitzer, Hailey Sill
Front row: Josiah Uebelher, Owen Schobert

The Sunday School with the gift bags they made for our shut-in members.



On October 13, 2019 the first livestreamed church service was aired on our Facebook page and YouTube channel.



The Stoddard Area Food Pantry continued to be a blessing to the community. When it temporarily closed during the pandemic and because of road construction in 2020, it got a face lift and moved to another room in the church basement.



Traditions continue...



42
23
38
21

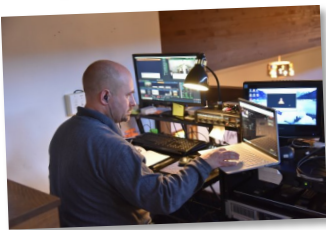


2 0 2 0



We began our 150th anniversary celebration on January 26, 2020. Cake and refreshments were served after the service. Pictures displayed throughout the fellowship hall brought back memories and prompted interesting conversations.

Because a major road construction through Stoddard was planned for the spring and summer of 2020, our main celebration was planned for October 11. What a blessing that turned out to be. In March, the corona virus, or COVID-19, had escalated into a pandemic. Only gatherings of less than 50 people were permitted in early March. Soon after, on March 25, the Wisconsin governor issued a "Safer at Home" order, allowing only "essential workers" to go to their jobs. On March 18, schools were closed, at first for only two weeks, but then for the rest of the school year. Teachers and students switched to on-line classes. We had a blood drive scheduled and the Red Cross urged us not to cancel it. Forty units of blood were collected—double the usual amount.



With the blessing of our recently implemented livestreaming of our services, we were able to continue our worship and reach out to people. No more than ten people were allowed in the building at one time from March to the end of May. Besides the pastor and organist, there were two people running the video, which then allowed for vocalists to lead the songs.



God richly blessed this ministry. Not all churches had this capability. Soon many other people were turning to our Facebook page and YouTube channel. We gained 82 followers for our Facebook page (for a total of 334) and 89 subscribers to our YouTube channel (for a total of 109). From March 25 to September we had 1,457 views which translates to 1,365.5 hours of video watched. Our most watched was Easter Sunday with 121 live views.



During those two months when we could not have in-person services, "drive-up" communion was offered, or just a couple people at a time could enter the sanctuary. Members could also drive up and drop their offerings off after the live service ended, until noon. Any meetings that needed to be held, such as a call meeting for a new principal were done on "Zoom", an online video conference service.



May 31 we were able to return to church. Things would be a little different, however. People could only sit in every other pew, and were to "social distance" themselves from others not in their family. Instead of the collection plate being passed around, people placed their offerings in the plate which was on a stand in the fellowship hall. Instead of gathering in the fellowship hall after the service, people were encouraged to take their conversations outside, just as in the olden days.



Students returned to school for the 2020-2021 school year on August 24. Along with crayons, pencils, and notebooks, part of the school supply list included masks. Under the governor's order, all people over 5 years of age were required to wear a mask.



June 7, 2020



Back row: Jerry Weber, Pastor Schmitzer, Chrysta Miller
Front row: Kately Schlicht, Juliana Di Iorio

Confirmation Day was delayed because of the restrictions on meeting in church. It was held on June 7. And just as in the olden days, the reception line for congratulating our new confirmands was held outside.



In order to gather together in Christian fellowship, we offered many opportunities to meet outdoors, including the Otto's farewell picnic, a few "Jamming on the Green" concerts, and a Cornhole tournament.



As of September, 2020, St. Matthew's had 236 communicant members and 292 baptized members. 39 students were enrolled in the school.



Pastor Schmitzer makes the hand dipped corn dogs.



Masks were required for everyone over age 5.

The winners of the Cornhole tournament.



After sending out many calls for a principal and upper grade teacher, our prayers were answered at the end of May when Mr. Joel Sonntag was assigned to us.





Many changes have occurred in the last 150 years. Some church buildings have been torn down and new ones built in their place, or are gone with only a small cemetery marking its place. The language that our forefathers spoke is different than what we speak today. Lifestyles, means of transportation, and occupations have all undergone huge transformations. 150 years ago most of our members were farmers. Now we have a handful, but no longer are any in the dairy industry.



Some things have stayed the same. We still have connections with both St. Peter's congregations, as they support a teacher at our school. St. John's congregation has opened again, and our pastor has filled in when needed. As evident in this history account, people have not changed. Our founders wanted to gather together to worship the one true God. People gave memorials when loved ones died, even back in the 1880's. They had picnics and parties, were outreach-minded by inviting the public to events. The importance of a Christian education for our children was evident throughout our history. And also, because of sin, there have been disagreements.

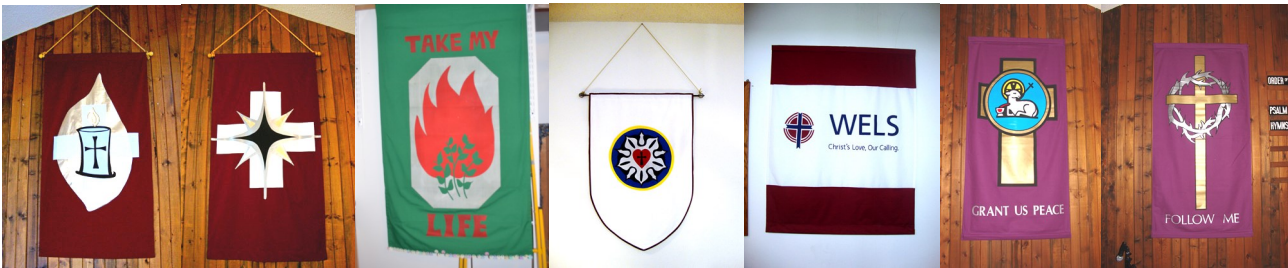
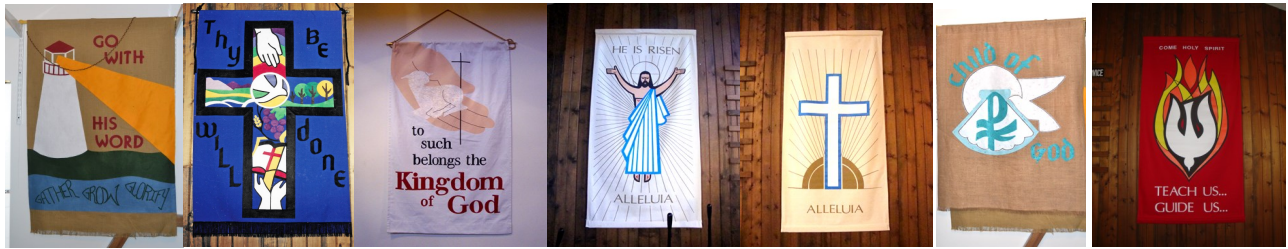


All people have sinned and need a Savior. We have that in Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God's love for his people remains the same. He has protected us through tornados, floods, droughts, depressions and recessions, wars, and pandemics. He is also with his people in times of prosperity.



To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.





Our Pastors



Kittel
1870

Hass
1870-1871

Baartz
1871-1874

Kuchmann
1874-1880

Oerding
1880-1891

Palecheck
1891-1923

Brachebusch
1923-1932

Bentrup
1932-1940

Schroeder
1940-1945

Engel
1946-1950

Kionka
1950-1956

Schaller
1956-1959

Gieschen
1960-1967

Berg
1967-1972

Liggett
1972-1981

Kloehn
1982-1998

Krueger
1999-2009

Arnold
2009-2015

Schmitzer
2015-present

Our Teachers



Ervin Humann
1933-1937

David Enter
1979-1986

Barbara Seidl
1979-1992

Mary (Brinkman)
Schalow 1980-1990,
1999-2016

Jerene Beitlich
1981-1996

Mary Sill
1982-2014

Peter Kuske
1986-1987

Scott Huebner
1987-1997

Lisa Carlson
1990-1994

Terri Krueger
1992-1999

Troy McCarger
1994-1996

Rachel
(Biesterfeld) Hahm
1996-1999

Sharlene Weibel
1996-1999

Deb Wittig
1997-1998

Nathan Heyn
1998-2001

Lisa Carmichael
1999-2017

Vicki Kunz
1999-2004

Jon Engelbrecht
2001-2006

Jon Beagle
2006-2008

Chris Avila
2008-2016

Rachel Arnold
2014-2015

James Otto
2016-2020

Jaclyn Otto
2016-2019

Sonja Oldre
2016-present

Katie Alderman
2017-present

Nicole Beckendorf
2019-present

Joel Sonntag
2020-present



THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS