

**A HISTORY OF ST PAUL
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Matteson, Illinois
On the 125th Anniversary of the Congregation
Celebration Worship, October 24, 1993**

The history of St. Paul's congregation began with our mother church, St. John Lutheran congregation of Country Club Hills (Coopers Grove). The following pastors, who were not members of the Missouri synod, served St. Paul's congregation: Kies, Flott, Mayer and Richter.

In *The Story of St. John's* written by Richard F. Nordbrock, a history book of St. John Lutheran Church, the following was found in the minutes of the church:

“On April 3, 1866, a request was presented by several members of St. John's Congregation to build a school in the Sieden Prairie area. A committee was appointed to study the matter. In a special meeting two weeks later, it was decided to help these members to build a 24' x 32' x 12' schoolhouse on four acres of land to be bought from Mr. Kluender for \$1.50 per acre.

On May 11, 1867 eight (8) members of St. John's congregation of the Sieden Prairie school area requested their release from the congregation to join the St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sieden Prairie. This church had false pastors up to this time, but was willing to call an orthodox Lutheran pastor.

There were many misgivings about this request, but eventually it was granted to Albert Bloome, Wilhelm Schmaedeke, Johann Richter, Heinrich Kluender and Friedrich Siekmann. As it turned out, the congregation was successful in obtaining a true Lutheran pastor and called Pastor Harmening.”

Mr. Nordbrock noted that, “In the early years of Lutheranism in America, orthodox Lutheran pastors were scarce. Congregations often took who they could get. Doctrine was not always the question. However, as more pastors were prepared by our newly organized Missouri Synod (1847), and more pastors came from Germany, the picture began to change.” Mr. Nordbrock also noted that the name, “Sieden Prairie” refers to the low and swampy conditions of the land—Low or Swampy Prairie.

Rev. Hans Christian Harmening was the first Missouri synod pastor to serve St. Paul's of Sieden Prairie. Pastor Harmening was installed on November 24, 1867, and served St. Paul's until Oct. 1869, when he followed a call to Dissen, Missouri.

Rev. John Christian Friedrich Hartmann, was installed at St. Paul's on February 6, 1870. Pastor Hartmann served St. Paul's until the fall of 1873 when he accepted a call to St. Paul's Congregation in Woodworth, Illinois.

Then on December 3, 1873 the Rev. Elias Hieber of Westville, Indiana was called to the pastorate. Pastor Hieber has the distinction of serving the longest of any pastor thus far at St. Paul's. For 53 years, less one week, he served the congregation as pastor and teacher. Pastor Hieber also served a sister congregation, four miles west from St. Paul's for 42 years. That congregation, known as Immanuel on the Hill, was moved to Mokena in 1915, and is now known as the Evangelical Lutheran, Immanuel congregation of Mokena, Illinois.

In 1875 a school-house was built for a cost of \$600.00. This was the Parochial School, and it was located just west of the Pastor's house, on the south side of Vollmer Road. Here the children of the congregation were instructed in the Christian faith. Parochial school was conducted four days a week in the morning only. In the afternoon the children went to the public school across the street, on the north side of Vollmer. German reading and writing were taught, also arithmetic and of course religious instruction. Memory work was also involved such as reciting hymns and memorizing the Catechism. In the public school, the children learned more grammar, but now in English. Classes in the public school were held in the afternoon and all day Friday. The result was lots of homework. Memorizing the hymns and Catechism verses for the morning session was the most time consuming job.

Church services prior to 1875 were held at the Henry Schmaedeke farm and later in the old parsonage building. After that, the services were conducted in the school until 1883.

It was in 1883 that the white, country-style church which we still use today, complete with steeple & bell, was built for a cost of \$3,500. The church was lighted by kerosene lamps hanging on the walls, and heated by two coal stoves located near the middle of the church. Sunday morning services were conducted beginning at 10 A.M. and lasted one hour. Each group of people sat at a separate location. The school children sat in the first row for purposes of a question and answer period (and they were not allowed to dangle their feet!). The young men sat in the balcony and the older men sat on the right rear of seats. Young adult girls sat in the center of the left pews, and older women sat in the rear seats on the left side. There were only two evening services during the year, one for the children on the 24th of December and on New Year's Eve, December 31st.

Two Christmas trees were decorated for the holiday season and real candles were used, being lit only for the two evening services. The children were most anxious for the Christmas Eve service to end because they would receive a bag filled with candy, an orange, an apple, figs and a story book. The first organ in the church was located up front on the west side, and it was powered by a crank which was turned by one of the young boys of the church.

The name Sieden Prairie is descriptive of the area. There were no trees, therefore the name "prairie." "Sieden" means low, marshy land. Drain tiles were

added to the land later to facilitate drainage. Because of the condition of the land around the church, a raised walkway made of wooden planks ran from the front door of the church out to Vollmer Road. This made it possible for the men to drive their horse-drawn buggies up to the edge of the walkway and drop off their families, who could then walk right into the church.

On the east side of the Pastor's house was a horse barn where the men would hitch their horses and talk "farming" until the church service began. Southwest of the Pastor's house was a barn for his horses and cows. The Pastor had a few acres of land which the men of the church would harvest for him and his family.

During a raging storm in the night of January 21, 1917, the old parsonage was completely destroyed by fire. Pastor Hieber's large library and the church records were also turned into ashes. Little is known about that original parsonage except that it did not have a basement because of the lowland area. The Voter's met on January 31, 1917, and August Schmeckpeper was elected to the new building Committee for the parsonage, along with Henry Blume, Dietrich Harms, Dietrich Steinborn and Julius Hoyer as assistants. While a new house was being constructed the Hieber family lived in the parochial schoolhouse. In the same year, the present parsonage was built at a cost of \$3,000.

Funeral services for the members of the congregation began along side the casket out at the cemetery, and from there the congregation moved to the church. The reason being that while the church today has a set of double doors on the outside and in the entryway, the original building only had double doors on the outside, and two single doors going into the sanctuary from either side of the entryway. Therefore it was impossible to get the casket into the church. After a funeral the men would wear a black arm band and the women wore veils.

The church bell high up in the steeple was a very important signal for the people of the church. It was used for more than just an announcement that Sunday services were about to begin. For instance, on Saturday evening at 6:00 P.M. the bell was rung by the janitor to remind everyone in the neighborhood of worship the next day. On Sunday morning the bell was rung about one hour before church started.

When there was a death in the congregation, at the first noon hour after the death occurred, the bell was rung once for each year that the deceased had lived. When all in the neighborhood would hear the bell, they would begin inquiring among each other as to who had died. This was their way of getting funeral information out to the farmers. On New Years Eve, at midnight, the bells were rung to ring in the New Year.

The minutes from 1917 tell us that Communion was celebrated four (4) times a year, with Communion announcements on the Friday before Communion Sunday. In those days, members would come to the Pastor's office, which was in the parsonage and register with the Pastor for Communion. Voters Meetings were every three (3) months. And the sermon was to close with a song.

In 1919 the Pastor's salary was raised from \$500 a year to \$600.

After a lifetime of serving St. Paul's, Pastor Hieber retired from the ministry in 1926. He died on October 19, 1931, 86 years old, and was buried in our cemetery on October 22nd. Pastor Heiber's first wife Eleonore (nee Gerstemayer, married in 1871) died giving birth to their 14th child on August 3, 1887, at age 41. Pastor Heiber married a second time, this time to Fredericka Rauschert on September 10, 1888 and they had eight more children. What a large family: 22 children! A son, Emil, served as Pastor of Immanuel Congregation, Sauk Trail and Cicero Avenue, Richton Park, Illinois (earlier known as "Skunk's Grove") from June 6, 1920 to October 7, 1951.

In 1927, St. Paul's Congregation became a member of the Northern Illinois District of the Missouri synod as a voting member. The congregation's first delegate to the Convention was Mr. Henry Blume.

On May 19, 1930, the heavenly Father called home the beloved wife of Pastor Treskow (Ida, nee Gongoll) after a lingering illness of two years. Mrs. Treskow was buried on May 21, 1930 in Concordia Cemetery, Forest Park, IL. For the next two years the youngest daughter of the Pastor, Renata, took over the house-hold duties in the parsonage. And when she was married to Oscar Becker of Matteson on May 28, 1932, the youngest son, Raymond, filled her place part of the time. Finally, he was replaced in May 1935 by the oldest daughter of the Pastor, Irene (Mrs. Albert Urbach).

On June 18, 1933, God granted St. Paul's the joy of celebrating her 65th anniversary as a congregation, and the 50th anniversary of the Church building. A 9:30 A.M. worship service was held with Pastor F. Schwandt (Chicago) as the preacher. At a 2:30 P.M. worship service Pastor O.E. Brauer preached.

Things were changing for this German congregation. A sign of that change came when the first regular English service was conducted on Sunday, January 27, 1935. It was decided to conduct services in the English language once a month, on the last Sunday of each month.

Most rural churches has their own cemeteries for their loved ones and St. Paul's was no exception. A Cemetery Committee was formed on March 22, 1936, to draft rules and regulations for our cemetery. The following members made up that committee: Henry Blume, Henry Steinborn, and Theodore Kampe. These rules and regulations were adopted on July 2nd of the same year.

One of the first remodeling jobs in the Church came in 1937. The window behind the altar was covered over, the pulpit was lowered, and the organ was moved from the front of the Church to the balcony. The old metal wall decorations in the church building were removed and celotex was put in their place at the cost of \$655.

In February 1937 the Ladies Aid was organized with eight charter members. This organization did much toward beautifying our church building and continues to serve us to this day. The charter members were Mrs. Albert Urbach, Mrs. William Kampe, Mrs. Edward Kampe, Mrs. Lorenz Bode, Mrs.

Theodore Kampe, Mrs. Fred Kampe, Mrs. Emil Kampe, Mrs. Henry Kampe. To date, only one of these charter members, Mrs. Lillie Kampe is still with us.

In 1939, Mrs. Nellie ZumMallen donated the sum of \$200 to the cemetery board. With this money a gravel road was laid to the cemetery, and two candelabrum were installed on the altar in memory of the donor. The balance, approximately \$80 was designated for the upkeep of the graves. Electricity was first installed in the Church and parsonage, and the old kerosene lamps in the church were replaced by the present light fixtures. These lights were donated by the Ladies Aid Society. An electric motor was installed on the organ pump to power the organ rather than crank power.

To add to the beauty of the Church, in April 1942, the congregation passed a resolution to buy new stained-glass windows. The windows were purchased from the Columbia Stained-Glass Company of Milwaukee at a cost of \$865.

In order to enhance the praise of the worship, a treble choir was organized in January 1943. Mrs. Albert Urbach was chosen as director and eight ladies belonged to the choir. They were: Miss Mildred Kampe, Miss Mildred Steinborn, Bernice Kampe, Luella Hoger, Dorothy Schumacher, Helen Stege, Lucile Seeman, and Lucille Kampe.

St. Paul's gave thanks to God and celebrated her 75th Anniversary as a congregation and 60th Anniversary of the church building on June 20, 1943. Two special services were held to commemorate this occasion. Pastor E.F.J. Richter was the preacher for the 10:00 A.M. German worship service. The Rev. Ernest T. Lams, the President of the Northern Illinois District, was the preacher at the 2:30 P.M. worship service which was in English.

During the first 75 years about 300 persons were baptized; 300 confirmed; 100 couples were united in marriage; 100 persons buried; and about 19,575 received Holy Communion. In 1943, St. Paul's listed 185 Souls, and 133 Communicant Members. Five young men of congregation were serving in the armed forces of our country: Pvt. Elmer Steinborn, Sgt. Orville A. Harms, Pvt. A. Niemeyer, Cpl. Arthur Kampe and Pvt. H.G. Hoger.

At the time St. Paul's had a unique arrangement with the public school in regard to the training of her children in the Christian religion. Four days a week, from Monday to Thursday, the children of the congregation from the third to the seventh or eighth grades were instructed in Bible History and Catechism at the German School Building. This instruction was from 8:45 to 10:30 A.M., and then they were sent across the street to public school for the secular branches.

Pastor Treskow noted that,

"God had blessed us with a fine public school teacher, Mr. Wesley

Hollstein, who has been teaching here for nineteen years. He

(i.e.

his students) won the township spelling contest for the past eight

years, and has worked with your present pastor in perfect harmony.”

On April 27, 1944, the congregation celebrated Pastor Treskow's 50th anniversary in the ministry, with a special worship service and reception.

In 1945, it was decided that the Elders would sit in the back bench of the Church, and that a toilet and running water would be installed in the parsonage.

More changes came in 1946 when on June 30th it was decided that the minutes of the voter's meetings were to be written in English. The Lutheran Hymnal (copyright 1941) was purchased in that same year. The records tell us that in that year the school electric bill was \$6, and \$15 for the Church.

Pastor Treskow retired on August 22, 1948. His successor, the Rev. John W. Petersen of Creighton, Nebraska was installed on August 29th of that same year. Since formal education was becoming more and more important, St. Paul's responded by organizing a Sunday School for the Christian instruction of her children. It was on October 24, 1948 (the same day as our 125th celebration worship in 1993!) that St. Paul's Sunday School began with 24 children and 6 teachers. The 6 charter teachers were: Luella Blume, Lydia Stege, Elsie Kampe, Lillian Kampe, Sylvia Schmeadeke and Laura Twietmeyer. Classes were first held in the old school house, south of Vollmer Road, and west of the parsonage. To this day, Sylvia Schmaedeke still serves as our Sunday School Superintendent.

The present envelope collection system was begun in 1950. During the same year, on September 11th, a new organ was purchased at a cost of \$2,345. The Lutheran Women's Missionary League was organized also in 1950. This group, in addition to regular quarterly contributions, also supported an adopted missionary in Hong Kong. The LWML is a vital ministry of the Lutheran Church and continues to serve this congregation faithfully.

In 1954 the heating system of the Church was converted from the old coal, hand-fired stoves to the forced air heating system still used today. The congregation numbered 130 communicant members. By the time World War II ended, and we were heading into the 1950's, things just continued to change at St. Paul's. Pastor Petersen wrote:

“For many years the members of St. Paul's congregation have desperately felt the need of additional quarters to conduct Sunday School more efficiently, for various Society meetings, and a place for fellowship. At any special celebration in the past, the congregation prevailed upon the kindness and hospitality of a sister congregation; a number of times also found ourselves using a Hall of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in one of the neighboring towns. If it had not been for the continual rumor heard from various quarters, which was also stated in the newspapers from time to time, no doubt St. Paul's congregation would have had a Parish Hall some years ago. The continual rumor was that the Government

had this immediate neighborhood in view for an Air Field, some nine square miles, and the congregational property was in the very midst of the field.

Finally it was stated that the Government had planned to buy in the Joliet-Lockport area. However, since the Korean War came to a close, the buying of a strip of ground for and Air Field appears to be a thing of the past, and the congregation resolved either to raise the Church and place a basement under it, or annex a Parish Hall to the Church.”

There was quite a bit of discussion about whether to build a parish hall or to put a basement under the Church. Finally it was decided to go with the parish hall, and in 1954 it was built. A Dedication service was held on January 23, 1955.

Pastor Harold Wunderlich of Beecher delivered the sermon for this occasion. The cost of the Parish Hall was \$15,000 with an additional \$3,100 for the heating plant. The Ladies Aid Society spent \$800 for kitchen equipment.

During the 1950's the congregation gathered and sold eggs to raise money for the orphan home. At the same time the ladies made aprons for Oak Forest Hospital. Because the historical background was still important to this congregation, German services continued every other Sunday when Pastor Petersen first came as Pastor. Gradually they were changed to once a month and eventually dropped.

The Men's club was organized in 1957 with the following members: John Petersen Jr. (aka: "John Lee"), Allen Bode, Christ Hentsch, George Sedorook, Erwin Schmaedeke, Herbert Schmaedeke, Melburn Kampe, Elmer Steinborn, Raymond Siekman, William Feigel, Delmar Kampe and Henry Schmeckpeper. This group has done much to furnish and remodel the Church, parsonage and other buildings.

In 1958, a new floor was put in the Church, and again the pulpit was lowered. In 1959, the congregation decided to discontinue Lenten Services in German.

The first Pancake Supper was held on February 20, 1960. The idea came from Erwin Schmaedeke who was invited to attend a pancake supper at the Methodist Church in Frankfort. To this day, we still use the original recipe from the Church in Frankfort. The Men's Club started this annual event, which was first a small gathering hosted in the Parish Hall, but has blossomed to become one of St. Paul's greatest traditions, still held today.

In 1961, the voters approved the removal of the three benches in the northeast corner of the Church. Vacation Bible School was organized in 1961. This popular two-week period has been beneficial to the children, teachers, and parents not only of the congregation, but of many children in the surrounding neighborhood.

In 1962, Pastor Petersen first asked to retire, and one year later finally received permission and a peaceful release from St. Paul's to do so. It was also in this year that the Church got their new flag, this one with 50 stars.

In January of 1963, Pastor Petersen first began printing a bulletin for each Sunday. This bulletin had a cover with a picture of the Church drawn by Pastor Petersen's son, John Lee. On April 28, 1963, a "Pastor Appreciation Day" was held commemorating Pastor Petersen's 35 years in the ministry. Four months later, Pastor Petersen retired, conducting his last service at St. Paul's on the fourth Sunday in August, 1963.

Rev. Kenneth Gigstad, a graduate of Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois was installed on September 8, 1963, by Circuit Counselor, Rev. Wilbur W. Zielke.

In 1964 the congregation voted to change the present Communion policy of four times a year, to once a month and on special occasions.

So that our history would live on to encourage future generations, a Committee was formed in 1964 to translate the church minutes into English. This Committee consisted of: Henry Steinborn, Herman Niemeyer, Herman Stege, and Elmer Steinborn. After the translation was completed, they were typed by Elaine Steinborn. Having learned from the loss of the Church records in the parsonage fire back in 1917, on March 1967 a copy of the minutes was placed in a safe deposit box at Bremen Bank.

After serving the congregation for 3 ½ years, Pastor Gigstad accepted a call to Stony Point, New York. On Sunday, Feb. 19, 1967, Pastor Gigstad preached his last sermon at St. Paul's. During the following four month vacancy, Pastor E. Baumgartner from Good Shepherd in Frankfort, and Pastor A. Bueltmann of Immanuel, Mokena, served the congregation.

On June 4, 1967, Pastor Edgar R. Pflug, formerly of St. Stephens Lutheran Church, Chicago, was installed as Pastor of St. Paul's.

On June 2, 1968, the congregation celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the congregation, with the first of three services, a Reunion Service.

The preacher was former retired Pastor, Rev. John W. Petersen. Miss Kathy Kampe was the organist, Mr. Albert H. Peters of Zion Lutheran Church, Matteson, was the choirmaster, and the St. Paul's Ladies Choir sang. Immediately after the service a buffet supper was served in the Parish Hall by the members of the Ladies Aid Society.

The second 100th anniversary service was on June 9, 1968, the Service for our Organizations—Trinity Sunday. Rev. Dr. Erdmann Frank, Pastor at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Joliet, was the preacher. Again, a buffet supper followed, served by the Ladies Aid Society of St. Paul's.

Finally, a third Centennial Service of Thanksgiving and Praise, was held on June 30, 1968. Rev. Edmund H. Happel, President of the Northern Illinois District, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, was the preacher, and again, a hot meal was served following the service, by the Ladies Aid Society

The changes just kept coming. Pastor Pflug wrote in the 100th Anniversary Service:

“We are not much larger than when we started. Until recent years, ours has been a rather stable community, not given to change or growth. Yet, we have a reason to thank God for the past and to look with renewed hope to the future. It seems likely that St. Paul’s may soon experience opportunities such as she has never dreamed of in her long history. Those who study population trends predict that the building boom, which has already been felt in neighboring communities, will also reach out to Sieden Prairie. Now what does all this have to do with St. Paul’s? The handwriting is on the wall. If we would be true to our trust and our Lord Jesus; if we would show our gratitude for the first hundred years of His grace, then we shall begin now to gird ourselves for the possibilities of tomorrow. Expansion will be inevitable. As good stewards of our rich heritage, we shall lay plans even now, how we may best give a strong witness to the faith that is in us when the field becomes ripe for the harvest.”

Pastor Pflug retired in June, 1970. On Sept. 27th he preached his farewell sermon, and a special service and dinner were held in his honor.

At the January Voters Meeting in 1971, the Voters established a new position in the congregation, that of Treasurer. Our first Treasurer was Marvin Stege.

In May, 1971, Pastor Allen Rudow, formerly of Immanuel Lutheran, Dundee, became permanent vacancy Pastor and moved into the parsonage with his family. It wasn’t long before St. Paul’s then called Pastor Rudow as Pastor and he accepted their call. Pastor Rudow was installed on September 5, 1971, by Pastor Albers, Circuit Counselor, Immanuel, Mokena.

Knowing that we might need more land for future expansion, it was decided at the January 7, 1972 Quarterly Voters Meeting to purchase three acres of land from Mr. Larry Marsh of Frankfort. This land was next to the five acres owned by the Church south of Vollmer Road and west of the parsonage. It was purchased at a cost of \$22,500.

Because the community around the Church was changing, the first contemporary folk communion service was held on June 18, 1973. These services were first scheduled for the third Sundays of the summer months. In another move that signaled the changing of the times, it was decided at the April Voter’s meeting to stop ringing the Church bell on Saturday evenings at 6:00 P.M

The Elders were charged by the Voters to look into enlarging the Parish Hall doors for more seating room and any other ideas they thought would help the over crowding problem in the Church. At the August 26, 1973 special

meeting, the Voters agreed to make the opening wider between Church and the parish hall for more seating capacity.

In the summer of 1974, the public school to the west of the Church was used for Vacation Bible School and Sunday School classes. The contemporary services began to catch on, so that for the month of June the worship schedule was changed to Family worship at 8:45, SS 9:15, regular worship 10:30.

A Building Committee was formed in April 1974, to begin plans for a new social hall. Members of that committee were: Henry Bohlman, Wilbur Schmaedeke, Erwin Schmaedeke, Norman Kampe, Mel Kampe, Elmer Steinborn, Esther Harms and Don Blume (Chairman). Another of St. Paul's very active groups, the Sewing Circle was organized in that same year. Loretta Rudow was instrumental in starting the group. The first projects were for Lutheran World Relief quilts.

In June 1975, the Building committee hoped to acquire five acres from the Forest Preserve, to build a new social hall on the north side of Vollmer Road. This request was not granted, and the land we had purchased 4 years earlier on the south side of Vollmer Road became a golden purchase for our future. So that St. Paul's could better serve the Lord and her community, the Boards of Communication & Outreach, Education & Fellowship, Finance and Trustees were added in July.

A significant administrative change came at the fall 1975 Voter's Meeting. It was there, that a new church constitution was passed by the Voters, instituting a Board of Directors (Church Council) type governing body. It was then that women were also granted a vote in the affairs of the congregation.

During the summer of 1976 new folding doors were installed in the Parish Hall and it was remodeled with new paneling. Telephones were installed in the Parish Hall for the first time. On Sunday, August 22, Pastor Rudow and the Building Committee gave their presentation to get final approval to proceed with the building of a new social hall. Everyone present agreed that they would help in some capacity to erect this new building.

Ground breaking for the Fellowship Hall took place September 12, 1976. Pastor Rudow wrote:

“St. Paul's congregation humbly makes a beginning of tomorrow with the construction of Phase I, a parish hall, the first step in a three part program of building needed facilities for our ministry to each other and to...the...community, now beginning to grow up around the areas where we have been worshiping for more than 100 years. Today, we mark the beginning of construction of the first building on the new site. Guide us Lord so that we build for ministry and service with thanksgiving for your blessings.”

With those words the congregation began to worship for the groundbreaking of this new social hall. As each leader of the various boards of the congregation, and representatives from the Synod, and the community turned over a piece of ground, the congregation affirmed, *“Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, blessed forever.”*

At least 80 men and women helped finish the construction of the new social hall. Some of the women provided the food and all pitched in on the labor which included roofing & shingling, putting down the tile, painting, plumbing and much more. The Contractor poured the concrete and put up the roof supports, and then the members of St. Paul’s did the rest. With all the work invested by the congregation, the total cost for the hall was \$120,000. Don Blume had oversight over the entire construction project and did the carpentry work. George Sedorook did the electrical work. Elmer Steinborn worked almost every day on a variety of projects. Youth Group Members even helped by babysitting and doing other jobs.

Speaking of the Youth Group, it was formed in 1976 with Mark Rudow heading the program. Dean Cappel, Manfred & Marilyn Fremder were the first counselors. In order to support the Building Fund, our first Country Fair was held in the fall of 1976 to benefit the Building fund. Along with Pancake Supper, the Country Fair is still held today, and remains one of St. Paul’s great traditions. It was also in 1975 that St. Paul’s Church was annexed into the Matteson Community from Tinley Park.

At the April 20, 1977 Board of Directors Meeting, it was decided that our new social hall building would be called the “Fellowship Hall.” The Fellowship Hall was now ready for final inspection and completion for Dedication Day. On May 22, 1977, St. Paul’s dedicated her newly built Fellowship Hall. 252 days earlier the members of St. Paul’s were standing in what was then a hayfield on the south side of Vollmer Road. With hope, prayer, and a firm belief that God would bless their efforts, St. Paul’s began this project. On this day they celebrated God’s faithfulness and the hard work and effort of our own people to give us more room for ministry to this area.

That evening a Vespers service was held for the Christian community of Matteson, Frankfort, Tinley Park, Orland Park, Country Club Hills and Park Forest. Participants included the Choir of Hope Lutheran Church, Park Forest. Pastors Rudow, Myers (Zion, Matteson), Redelsheimer (?), Groth (Immanuel, Richton Park) and Witt (Hope, Park Forest).

The Fellowship Hall was the first of a three-part, long range building program which was intended to eventually include a classroom wing and a new worship facility for the congregation. The Fellowship Hall gave St. Paul’s added space for Sunday School classes, setting for 350 people for fellowship meals, and an area for larger special worship services. At the same time the building lends itself to use as a gymnasium with provisions made for volleyball,

basketball, dartball, and a variety of other activities. The large well equipped kitchen gives both the Ladies Aid and Men's Club more space for serving dinners, and especially for the Pancake Supper and Country Fair.

In 1978 the present organ in our Church building was dedicated. This organ is a Rodgers two-manual Jamestown 725 organ, and is a fully solid-state electronic instrument. Installation, voicing, and tonal finishing were completed under the direction of Mr. Robert Halleman of the Rodgers Organ Studio of Elmhurst, Illinois.

In January of 1979, Pastor Rudow accepted a call to Campus Ministry at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. A farewell service and dinner, sponsored by the congregation was held on April 22, in honor of Pastor Rudow and his family.

In a move that will prove very helpful for further expansion, St. Paul's approved the installation of storm and sanitary sewers on an easement through our property. Included in this project was a water retention pond adjoining our property to the west and on the south side of Vollmer Road.

Change in the way St. Paul's worshipped came in 1979, when a committee was established to study the use of The Lutheran Book of Worship. It was recommended that we begin using this new hymnal as a supplement to our present material.

In March of 1980 (Pancake Supper Day), Rev. William Clements accepted the call of the congregation to become Pastor. Pastor Clements was installed on May 1.

Just two years short of the 100th Anniversary of the church building, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church was plaqued by the Matteson Historical Society as an historical landmark on August 2, 1981. The old "Sieden Prairie" school just west of the Church was also plaqued. In that same year St. Paul's Couples Club was formed to encourage deeper spiritual and social contracts among our families.

A new Church Growth Committee reported to the Board of Directors February 11, 1982 meeting. This committee consisted of Manfred Fremder (Chairman), Charlene Dzugas, Gary Tucker, Dale Johnson, Paul Teppen, and Ruth Hartwick. The goals of this committee were to investigate growth projections of the community, look at where the various ministries of St. Paul's should be going, and make recommendation to the Boards concerning the resources and assets we now have. Another aim of this committee was to establish some kind of multi-year plan to take steps to make sure we are in a position to fully meet the ministries and needs of the congregation and community.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the church building, in 1983 the members of St. Paul's did a complete restoration of the sanctuary. Wayne Rhode was the Chairman of this restoration which cost approximately \$10,000. In traditional St. Paul's style, all the labor was supplied by the members. The

entire interior of the church was stripped down to the rafters. The two chimneys which used to serve the original coal burning stoves were removed. The ladies of the Congregation (affectionately dubbed the St. Paul's Strippers), stripped and refinished the pews.

A bit of history was uncovered as the wall board was torn out of the church. Above the arch at the entrance to the chancel, a placard was found bearing the words, "Selig sind die Gottes Wortoren und bewahren." In English it reads the same as the arch of our Mother Church, St. John Lutheran church, Country Club Hills, "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." These are the words of Jesus from Luke 11:28. The older members remembered the placard, and could only surmise that it was covered over during either WW I, or WW II.

In April of 1983, the Church Growth Committee recommended to the Board of Directors that a building committee be formed to look into the construction of an Education Facility. On June 12, 1983, the congregation celebrated the 100th Anniversary with a special worship service of Jubilee, followed by a dinner in honor of the occasion. Former Pastor, Rev. Allen Rudow preached for the service that day. At that time the total membership of the congregation was 250 Communicants and 405 Baptized Members.

On May 9, 1985 plans were approved to construct a 12-classroom addition to the west of the Fellowship Hall. Therefore, on August 25, 1985, St. Paul's burned the mortgage on the Fellowship Hall and broke ground for a new Education building. As Pastor Clements traced the sign of the cross on the ground he prayed:

"May this be a place where your glory dwells and where Your way is revealed in Your precious world. May Your gracious blessing descend like the dew from heaven upon this place and upon all who gather here for Christian education."

As with the groundbreaking for the Fellowship Hall, the leaders of each of the boards and organizations of the congregation, and representatives of the Circuit, Village and Architects, turned over shovel full's of dirt to recognize the occasion. Again, don Blume would be the Site Coordinator. Members of the Building Committee were: Manfred Fremder (Chairman), Bill Salvage, Doug Hagestad, Wilbur Schmaedeke, Yvonne Blume, Butch Reinke, Howard Tatgenhorst and Mallory Kelly.

It was that same year, 1985, that St. Paul's began their personalized support of Rev. John Mueller. This was a new program in our Missouri synod, and St. Paul's is still involved with the program called Together In Mission (TIM).

At present we are supporting Rev. Paul Bruns, Nigeria. In the winter of 1985, Pastor Clements announced that he would accept a call to Puyallup,

Washington, and would be leaving by the end of the year. Pastor Clements' last service was on December 31, 1985.

At the Congregational Call Meeting, August 14, 1986, St. Paul's called rev. Matthew Troester, who was serving the vacancy since April, to be Pastor of St. Paul's. Pastor Troester accepted the call and on October 12, 1986 was installed as Pastor of the Church. By the spring of 1987, on May 17, St. Paul's dedicated phase two of her future expansion project: The Education building at a cost of \$450,000. Pastor Troester wrote:

"St. Paul's humbly takes another step in Gods' plan for His Church to witness, teach and nurture His people in this area. On this day we dedicate the second phase of our building plans, knowing full well that if God does not bless our work, we labor in vain.

Communities, people and needs may change, but God and His Word and His Savior will never change. Human beings will always need to hear the message of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. People will always need hope and peace in a time and world that seems to offer very little real and lasting hope or peace. May God Who establishes His Church, and promises that even the very gates of hell will not overtake Her, guide us as we move on."

At the April 9, 1987 Church Council Meeting it was reported that what had been anticipated as a \$300,000 loan for the education Building would now be a loan of \$141,000 loan! The building was two-thirds paid for and it wasn't even dedicated yet! Praise the Lord! Then in the October Council Meeting our Treasurer, Howard Tatgenhorst, announced that the loan would be only \$80,000. At the December Council meeting, it was \$70,000. In the end the building was actually paid off by the congregation before a loan was ever taken out. How wonderfully God had worked!

1987 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Ladies Aid, which they celebrated with a party on February 11. Another change in the worship of St. Paul's occurred on September 20 when we first used new individual communion cups.

In January of 1990, the Voters of St. Paul's accepted a recommendation to begin a Scholarship Fund for persons from St. Paul's, who are studying for a church worker career. In January of 1991, a supplemental Scholarship Fund was set up with special monies set aside and members encouraged to add to that if they wish. Interest from this account would go to students in church careers. At the February 8, 1990 church Council Meeting the Council decided that it was time to form a Planning committee to discuss the following issue:

- _ Find out when Vollmer Road might be widened.

- _ Repair of the water & sewage system in the Church.
- _ Options on the parsonage if Vollmer were widened.
- _ How close we are to building a new Church.
- _ Tim Grossmann was elected Chairman of this committee.

On June 17, 1990, St. Paul's ordained one of our former members, Manfred Fremder. Former Pastor, Rev. William Clements was present to be the preacher, and Pastor Troester served as the one to ordain the new Pastor Fremder. Area clergy were also present for the occasion, which included fellowship time afterwards in the Fellowship Hall.

The June 20, 1991 Voters Meeting, at the recommendation of the Planning committee, it was decided that we put together a building Committee and give them permission to hire an architect, and answer some questions about a new Church. An organizational meeting for the Building Committee was held on July 25, 1991, at which time Tom Hartwick was elected chairman.

At the Feb. 13, 1992 meeting, Tom Hartwick reported to the church council that we had hired the firm of Stromslund & DeYoung of Joliet, IL as our architect. At a special Congregational Meeting on January 10, 1993, held in the Fellowship Hall, after a Pot-Luck dinner, the Building Committee, and Mr. Stromslund presented the proposal for the building of a new sanctuary. The congregation voted to build.

On the 27th of June, 1993, St. Paul's held the first of two 125th Anniversary Services in conjunction with the church picnic. Services were held outdoors, just north and east of The Fellowship Hall. About midway through the service, Stacey Johnson called everyone's attention to the rainbow that had formed directly over the worship area! Following the service was a pot-luck picnic, games, and a talent show.

On this day, the 24th of October, 1993, we celebrate 125 years with all God's people here at St. Paul's.

An so here we stand, on the threshold of one hundred twenty five years of history, balanced in time and space, having gone through a myriad of changes, with no doubt many more to come, trying to peer into the future, trusting in God's promises. By God's grace in the spring, one thousand nine hundred ninety four years (1994) after the birth of Jesus Christ, we will break ground on the new sanctuary. May God be with us, keep us true to His mission for us, and bless all that we do in His name. To God be all Glory!

In May of 1994 we broke ground for the new church. It was a beautiful day and we worshiped in the old church and then came across the street to where the new build would soon be constructed. We all stood around an outline of where the building would stand, the Senior Choir sang and we broke ground. A Pastor representing our Circuit, a Matteson Village Trustee (Mike Perry), the Architect, Don Blume, General Contractor, Tom Hartwick, Building Comm Chairman, and

various members representing the boards and ministries of St. Paul's turned over a ceremonial shovel of dirt. The shovel we used was the same shovel that was used for the ground breaking of the previous two buildings.

On October 27, 1996 we met first in the old church building and thanked God for many years of worship there. Then we carried the eternal flame across the street to the new church and dedicated that building to God's glory. This new church was not only a new worship space, but also offices, meeting room and a spacious narthex/entry area. Members gave memorials to pay for all the stained glass windows, except for the stained glass cross with an ascending Jesus at the front of the church. The organ was also paid for by a Memorial gift from Doug Hagestad's Aunt Helen. All the chancel furniture, altar, pulpit, lectern, flower stands, altar table, and baptism font were made by George and Linda Howe. Members painted and wall papered by our members.

Within a year we formed a Church Growth Committee to help give us direction now that our building project was completed. We hired Rev. Charles Groth, Sr. To be our consultant and walk us through the process. One of the goals which came out of the process was the need for more staff. On August 2, 1998 we installed the first of three Deaconess Interns, Margaret (Peg) Anderson, who would serve St. Paul's part time and Oak Forest Hospital also. Peg would be followed by Donna Vogt (now Loza) in 1999 and Angie Wiley (now Armstrong) in 2000.

It was that year, 2000, that we formed a Call Committee for the purpose of calling a Director of Christian Education (DCE), to work in the areas of youth, education and family ministry. On Feb. 11, 2001 we installed Eric Larson, from Topeka, Kansas, as our first DCE. Eric had just graduated from Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska and this was his first call into the ministry. We went on our first Mission Trip to Jamaica in the Summer of 2004. Eight members, Pastor Troester and Eric Larson flew down to Kingston, Jamaica and taught Vacation Bible School in Portmore, Jamaica.

On September 7, 2003 we opened the doors of our new Pre School. Mrs. Robin Resek was our first Director/Teacher, along with Teacher Aides: Michelle Duff and JoAnne Rohlf. Assisting in the Pre School office as secretary was Laura Cellini. Since that time we have had three other Directors, Laura Spader, Barb Koval and currently Vickie Windham.

In 2008 Lyla Tatgenhorst retired from being our church secretary. Lyla had served us for over 30 years beginning first with Pastor Rudow, the Pastor Clements and finally, Pastor Troester. On Sunday, ???, 2008 we said thanks to God and to Lyla for faithful service, and to prove that God had a sense of humor,

the coffee did not perk properly that morning (Lyla had made coffee for Sunday mornings for all those years!). Eventually, the office would be staffed by Laura Cellini, Betty Brower and Darlene Tabla.

This history is written with profound respect and awe for those who in the past have given of themselves for the work of God's kingdom. Like driving a car, every once in a while we must look into the rear view mirror to see where we've come from. But we must also look through that front windshield to the road ahead. We dare not gaze too long in that rearview mirror, lest we run into an accident ahead of us. Thank God for past blessings and grace. He gives us hope and courage for the future. God has been good to us, and we have much to celebrate. What a glorious future we have by His grace.

Our history was compiled from all the records left to St. Paul's, and with great appreciation for all those who shared with me their recollections and artifacts from St. Paul's. I am honored to be the one to put this part of our history down in print for this special occasion.

Rev. Matthew D. Troester

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