

CHAPTER VIII. FROM 1975 TO 1986

During 1975 Immanuel celebrated its 125th anniversary. That Year of Jubilee was proclaimed in a resolution adopted in January. Among the highlights of the year were confirmation class reunions. The first, on May 18, saw the church packed with confirmands from 1920 to 1959 in the morning service. In the afternoon, community service was the theme with Mayor Will Tuttle addressing the audience.

125 Years of Service Recognized

The service included the reading of a resolution by the Illinois House of Representatives recognizing Immanuel's 125 years of service, read by Mrs. George Sangmeister, wife of the representative from Mokena, who had proposed it to the House. Historical displays lined the walls of the classrooms.



On July 29, 1975, the outdoor worship center was dedicated in a special service. On August 10 a second confirmation class reunion from 1960 to 1975 was held in the outdoor center.

On October 12, 1975, Immanuel congregation assembled at the site of the original church back in 1850 and now the cemetery of Immanuel. A new granite marker was unveiled on this, the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the congregation. The congregation then proceeded past the 1916 church building which was sold to the community and used first as a library and later as the Mokena Civic Center. From the 1916 church the congregation came to the present building for the completion of the celebration.

The culmination of the 125th anniversary year came on the weekend of November 8-9. On Saturday evening the festivities began with a banquet in the dining room at Lincoln-Way High School, filled to capacity with members and friends of Immanuel. Following dinner there was a sound-slide presentation by congregation President Robert O. Geuther depicting 125 years of Immanuel's history.

Dr. Hoffmann is Guest Speaker

This was followed by a brief talk by Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann, Lutheran Hour speaker. Dr. Hoffmann held the audience spellbound with laugh-provoking humor and serious remarks on the real work of the church.

Another highlight of the evening was a musical stage production "Cool in the Furnace." Produced and directed by members of Immanuel, it involved song, dance, and acting by the youth of Immanuel from first grade to high school. The production played to a packed audience at Lincoln-Way High School Auditorium.

On Sunday morning Dr. Hoffmann was the preacher at the morning services and greeted the hundreds of parishioners who had come to hear his stirring messages.

By this time Mokena, as well as many other communities southwest of Chicago, was beginning to feel the effects of the completion of new interstate highways. The resulting population increases also affected the growth of the congregation. In the 125th anniversary year the membership stood at 620 baptized members and 420 communicant members.

Immanuel Has Growing Pains

The growing needs of the congregation prompted the congregation to make two important decisions in the fall of 1974: one, to add a Director of Christian Education to the staff; two, to again elect a "Building For The Future" Committee to plan for a parish hall addition to our building. More room was needed for Sunday School, education, fellowship, worship, and recreation. Here Immanuel was only nine and a half years in its new building and there was already a need for more space.

Another Building For The Future Committee was formed. It looked at both short term and long range needs of the congregation. In time the committee would furnish both a master plan for the expansion of Immanuel and the addition of a Parish Hall.

Director of Christian Education Inducted

Charles Lawrence arrived on August 1, 1975, to begin his work as the Director of Christian Education at Immanuel. His work would include the youth of the congregation, educational responsibilities, and other parish work. He was inducted into office on September 14, 1975.

In the spring of 1977 the mortgage on the present building was paid. Pastor Albers led the congregation in the burning of the mortgage, with the trustees and the president of the congregation assisting, on May 15, 1977.

Plans for Heritage Hall

As months rolled by, the Building For The Future Committee began presenting drawings to the congregation. Great work was done in finding the needs and designing the building. Ronald Backhus, a member of Immanuel, volunteered his services as architect and began the task of putting together the drawings and specifications.

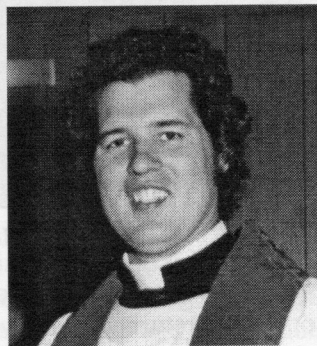
Meanwhile, Charles Lawrence decided to return to school in Ohio. The congregation had an open house for him and his wife, Gloria, in August, 1977, to wish them well. During her years here at Immanuel, Gloria had started the Preschool that is still in operation under the direction of Lois Mayer.

The congregation then received Kathleen (Delventhal) McCoy as a Deaconess Intern. She was inducted on September 11, 1977. She served the congregation for one year. The congregation then called deaconess Nancy Houser. She accepted the call and arrived at Immanuel in the fall of 1978 and was inducted on September 10, 1978.

The year 1980 again brought changes to Immanuel. In the spring of the year Pastor Albers announced that he was going to retire after the summer. On August 24, 1980, Immanuel honored his retirement with a special service which included the Rev. Edmund H. Happel, President of the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Albers Leaves, Hanson Comes

During the previous month, July, Immanuel extended a call to the Rev. Daryl M. Hanson of St. Peter Ev. Lutheran Church, Joliet, Illinois. Pastor Hanson accepted the call and began his pastoral duties on September 1, 1980. Pastor Albers officially retired from Immanuel on August 31, 1980; therefore, Immanuel did not go even one day with a vacancy in the Pastoral Office.



On September 21, 1980, Pastor Hanson was installed as Pastor of Immanuel. During the following months the congregation turned its eyes again to the building of Heritage Hall.

Rev. D. M. Hanson
1980-1986

Four years had passed since the congregation had approved the plans for Heritage Hall. The Building Committee had wrestled with delay after delay.

It was frustrating to put out plans and specifications only to have contractors choose not to bid. Skyrocketing interest rates further darkened the clouds. But things began looking up in 1981. Contractors again seemed anxious to bid; interest rates had moderated. So in a congregational voters' meeting on May 17, 1981, a resolution was approved to begin construction of Heritage Hall.

Bids were opened on June 1, 1981, and, much to the delight of the Building Committee, the bids came in lower than expected. Also, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund had made a commitment to make the mortgage loan at a highly favorable interest rate, considerably lower than the going commercial rate.



Heritage Hall Ground Breaking

Ground breaking took place in a special service on June 21, 1981. Pastor Albers returned to be with the congregation on this joyous day. He gave the address preceding the ground breaking ceremony.

On January 10, 1982, the congregation honored Robert O. Geuther with an open house. The occasion was his completion of 32 years of consecutive service as an officer of the congregation, 30 of those years as president.

Heritage Hall Dedicated in 1983

Construction of Heritage Hall was completed late in the winter of 1983. Dedication took place on March 6, 1983. The preacher was the Rev. John E. Meyer, executive vice president of Lutheran Church Extension Fund, whose low-interest loan had made possible proceeding with construction in 1981.

Present at the dedication was Representative to Congress George O'Brien, who gave a brief talk and presented the congregation with a United States flag, which had flown over the Capitol Building. Liturgist was former Pastor Albers. The celebrant was Immanuel's Pastor Hanson.

On July 31, 1983, Deaconess Nancy Houser was released from her call to Immanuel. She had accepted a call to Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran Church of Sun City, Arizona.

The Fourth of July parade down Mokena's Front Street in 1984 was enlivened by a float sponsored by the Sunday School. It portrayed Immanuel's many years of caring and sharing by bringing up remembrances of times past. The old reed organ which had seen service in the 1916 church and some old pews were the setting for people in turn-of-the-century costumes singing hymns (some in German) to the accompaniment of the organ. The float apparently struck the hearts of the parade judges, who deemed it best of show and awarded it the first place trophy.

135 Years of Caring and Sharing

Immanuel celebrated her 135th anniversary in 1985. The theme for the year was "Caring and Sharing for 135 Years." A special fund-raising campaign, "135 in '85", was undertaken to finance much-needed repair and renovation work on church property. The observation took place on November 3, 1985, with special church services. In the morning services, former Pastor Albers preached the sermon with Immanuel's Pastor Hanson as the liturgist. After the services the congregation moved to Heritage Hall for fellowship and a pot-luck lunch.

Following the meal a color-slide presentation of Immanuel's 135-year history was given by member Robert O. Geuther, archivist of the congregation. Displays depicting the history lined the walls of the hall.

During 1986 Immanuel observed the twentieth anniversary of the dedication of the church on LaPorte Road. The anniversary year had begun, quite coincidentally, with the introduction of the new hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*, on the first Sunday in January. The use of the previous red hymnal, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, was discontinued. Copies were made available to all members who wanted them for sentimental reasons and the rest were to be offered to mission congregations in need of hymnals.

During January, Church Growth Process continued its work at Immanuel. This process, sponsored by the Northern Illinois District and conducted by Church Growth Center, was designed to give Immanuel a good look at herself, to develop evangelistic priorities, to help members discover their spiritual gifts, and develop a number of other steps to strengthen the congregation.

Immanuel Supports PMS

Immanuel continued its support of the Personalized Missionary Support Program. Contributions to this program provide funds to help support a specific missionary. The missionary Immanuel helped to support was Rev. John Mueller, serving in Nigeria, Africa.

In May the Board of Evangelism sponsored a Health Fair to which all members of Immanuel as well as the general public were invited. Hundreds of people came, heard, and saw presentations on disease and accident prevention, fire protection, first aid methods, substance abuse and a list of other subjects pertaining to health.

A high spot in the Senior Youth activities was the "Fast for the Hungary" project. To fund it, the youth recruited sponsors from the congregation to pledge a certain amount of money per hour for the duration of the fast. As a result of the 30-hour fast \$218 was raised and donated to Lutheran Child and Family Services for distribution to poverty stricken families through its emer-

gency food distribution program. This was enough ammunition to help fight hunger in 125 households for over four weeks.

The old sign in Immanuel's front yard was replaced with a new lighted sign with movable letters.

Immanuel's Preschool continued its Christian witness to the community with an enrollment of 113 children receiving their first formal education in a Christian environment.

The records of Immanuel (baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials) had been written in a "Kirchenbuch" from the beginnings in 1850 through 1923 in old German script, long since discontinued. By dint of many hours spent in poring over the old records, much faded by time and often almost indecipherable, Robert O. Geuther, with invaluable help from Pastor E. H. Albers, former pastor of Immanuel, completed the translation.

Pastor Hanson Accepts Call

Other memorable events during the year were a super-size garage sale, the annual fall festival, the publication of a pictorial directory, development of a new member packet of information about Immanuel, revitalization of the Planning Board and other activities too numerous to mention.

In October, Pastor Hanson announced that he had accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran Church in Guymon, Oklahoma, and in a special congregational meeting asked for approval to accept the call. It was granted and Pastor Hanson preached his farewell sermon on November 2. In the afternoon there was an open house in Heritage Hall. Hundreds of people from the community and the congregation came to say farewell and wish the Hansons Godspeed in their new home.

CHAPTER IX. 1987 to 1989

As 1987 dawned, Immanuel entered a year of pastoral vacancy. This kept the Board of Elders humming as they confirmed the appointment of Rev. Erwin Baumgartner as vacancy pastor and saw to it that all services were "conducted in a good order and in a worshipful atmosphere." To do this the Board of Elders worked with different pastors appointed by Rev. Baumgartner. High on their priority list was serving as a nominating committee to select candidates to be submitted to the congregation. In cooperation with District President Theodore L. Laesch and Circuit Counsellor Robert F. Myers, they published a list of candidates in October. The first call meeting of the congregation was held November 29. On the same day Immanuel observed Bible Sunday, sponsored by the American Bible Society.

The Board of Trustees had an unusually busy year with refurbishing of the parsonage high on its priority list. Mostly with volunteer help new carpeting and drapes were installed, the kitchen and bathroom were redone, all walls painted, just to mention a few of the items in the complete overhaul job.

1987 a Busy Year

The Board of Finance continued its struggle with the financial needs of the congregation. They sponsored Mission Sunday on October 18, 1987 beginning with worship services in the morning conducted by Rev. David Krueger, recently returned from ministerial work in China. A pot-luck dinner at noon was followed by a presentation including slides of Pastor Krueger's work in China. They made a stewardship presentation on December 7, 1987.

The Board of Evangelism continued its program of developing prospects for Christ in our area, finding candidates for our adult membership class, welcoming new members and integrating them into the life of the church through use of the new member packet.

The Board of Evangelism sponsored the reception of five new members in a worship service on October 25, 1987, followed by an open house with refreshments after the service. One highlight of the year was Evangelism Sun-

day on September 20, 1987 during which evangelism was stressed in both services. Following the first service Rev. Lyle Muller, District Executive for Evangelism and Missions, conducted a Witness Workshop which continued into mid-afternoon, interrupted by a noon luncheon.

At the November 8, 1987 congregational meeting membership was increased to four or more elected members instead of a single elected board chairman.

At the same meeting the congregation authorized the formation and election of a new Board of Facilities Use. This board's principal duties will be responsibility for use of all the congregation's facilities, control of the facilities calendar, and approval of all applications for use of the facilities.

Congregation is Mapped

The Board of Evangelism completed "mapping" of the congregation. This involved locating the homes of members on three area maps and identifying each home with a numbered pin. This project was undertaken in order to make it easy for a pastor, members of the Boards of Elders, Evangelism, Christian Education, and others to quickly find where members live.

The Board of Youth and Singles Ministry continued its work of planning activities such as retreats, fund-raising drives, ice cream socials, and participation in worship services.

The Board of Christian Education reported a flourishing Sunday School with Rally Day on October 4, 1987 as one of the high spots. The Preschool opened its school year with 112 pupils and six teachers.

Apart from their involvement on church boards and committees-half of the membership is female-the women of the congregation were involved in special activities. The Ladies Aid and Ruth Society collaborated on functions such as the Mother-Daughter Banquet in May, the Rummage Sale in September, the

Fall Festival in November, the Lutheran Womens Missionary League. The Ruth Society hosted the Lutheran Altar Guild Federation South Zone conference on October 24, 1987,

Another activity for the congregation was a Dad's and Lad's Dinner on October 24, 1987.

A new activity for Immanuel's members began in February with the formation of The Watchers. This group, after a six-week study of *Close the Back Door: Dealing with Inactive Members* is using knowledge gained in the course in making calls on recently inactive members of the congregation.

Services Continue Without Interruption During Vacancy

Immanuel continued its program of two services every Sunday (with the second service in the Outdoor Worship Area during summer months) and services for special times and events. These include evening Advent and Lenten services, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services, Easter, including a six o'clock sunrise service, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve. On Examination Sunday 13 young people were examined in the worship services and confirmed a week later on Palm Sunday.

Once more members of Immanuel participated in the Good Friday Cross Walk sponsored by the Mokena-Marley Clergy Association. In 1987 five churches participated. The first service of the afternoon was at Immanuel, the last was at St. Mary's Catholic Church.

On November 1 the congregation commemorated the C. F. W. Walther Centennial. Walther, the first president of Synod, died May 27, 1887. He was also the first president of Concordia Theological Seminary and the first president of the Synodical Conference, a cooperative organization of various Lutheran bodies.

Cemetery is "Read"

During the summer of 1987 Immanuel's cemetery at the intersection of 88th Avenue and St. Francis Road was "read". This involved deciphering the wording on every marker and headstone, many of which date back to the early 1860's and are so weather worn as to be almost illegible. Some of the markers were under six inches of soil and had to be dug up and "read". The record is now part of the congregation's historical files.

Luella Yunker, Immanuel's organist for 25 years, retired December 31. An open house was held in her honor February 7, 1988 at which she was presented with a gift of a travel certificate.



Organist Luella Yunker

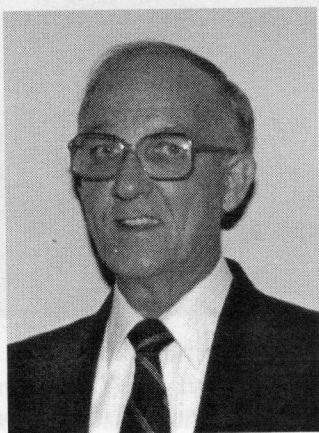
During 1988 the pastoral vacancy was to continue for most of the year. The life of the congregation continued pretty much the same as in the previous year. The Board of Elders found itself deeply involved in the call process and in assisting interim pastor, Reverend Erwin Baumgartner, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Frankfort, Illinois, in keeping services at Immanuel going. During the vacancy period 17 pastors conducted worship services at Immanuel.

The other boards continued their activities. On Examination Sunday 15 young people gave witness to their faith in worship services and were confirmed and received into communicant membership a week later on Palm Sunday. On Good Friday Immanuel, again, participated in the cross walk. On Easter Sunday there was a sunrise service at 6:00 A.M. followed by Easter breakfast and the 10:30 service.

There were the usual group activities-Mother and Daughter Banquet, Mens and Boys Banquet, outdoor services during July and August, Sunday School rally, and resumption of Preschool.

Notable in the year's activities was resumption of Vacation Bible School after a year's interruption. Hard and dedicated work by the Board of Christian Education and the Sunday School staff resulted in 87 children and 36 teachers and helpers at VBS on June 20 for a week of learning the Good News of Jesus and his love for children.

Pastor Kleidon Called, Accepts, Installed



Rev. Dr. N. Kleidon
1988-1995

One of the highlights of the year had to be on July 17. That was the day when the congregation, led by the Holy Spirit, extended a call to the Reverend Doctor Norbert Kleidon of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Palatine, Illinois to be Immanuel's pastor. His acceptance of the call on August 11, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, brought joy and prayers of thanksgiving to Immanuel's family. This was climaxed on October 30, in the 3:00 service of installation for Pastor Kleidon. We quote from the installation service: "We are gathered here with great excitement. Why? Because the Lord has done wondrous things among us and we ought to praise him for it" and "What an exciting and joyous event this is! Truly we thank God for this moment in our lives!" After the installation a reception and dinner in honor of Pastor Kleidon and his family were held in Heritage Hall.

All Services Recorded for Shut-Ins

That October 30 date marked the birth of another significant event in Immanuel's history. This was the inauguration of a tape ministry on a regular basis which is called 'Share the Good News'. This ministry consists of recording all worship services: Sunday morning, Advent, Lent, Christmas, Easter, and all special services.

Copies of the original recording are reproduced on high speed duplicating equipment and are ready for distribution minutes after the recording is made. Tape copies are then delivered to shut-ins, sick, and to families who have requested them while on vacation or unable to attend church. Most of the tapes are delivered personally by members of the congregation or mailed to out-of-towners.

During the first two years of the tape ministry, 132 services were recorded and 536 copies of tapes were made and delivered. The originals are kept in a permanent historical file.

Elders Organize 'Calling Groups'

Another innovation in early 1989 was the grouping of the congregation into calling groups. Each family in a calling group is the responsibility of an Elder who periodically keeps in touch with that family.

An outgrowth of this was Cottage Meetings. The Elders invited the families in their calling group to attend one of two meetings scheduled by church. Initial meetings were held at church and gave each family an opportunity to meet Pastor Kleidon and to give him a chance to meet and speak with each family in an informal setting.

1989 Begins on a Busy Note

Highlights of the early months of 1989 were observances of Valparaiso Sunday on February 12, Lutheran Hour Sunday on February 19, and the congregation's first 'Friendship Sunday' on February 26. This special Sunday encouraged all members--Sunday School children, youth, and adults--to invite friends and neighbors to special services and a fellowship get-together after each of the two services.

Confirmation on Palm Sunday, March 19, was followed the next Sunday with the traditional 6:00 a.m. Easter sunrise service. Breakfast served by the Youth Group, bridges the gap between the service and Sunday School and Bible Study at 9:15. The second Easter service was held at 10:30 a.m.

On April 30 the congregation resumed a recently instituted activity, the formal reception of new members. New and existing members enjoyed refreshments and fellowship after each service.

Voters Authorize Bylaw Changes

As the new church year began in September, 1989, plans for improving efficiency in church obligations were high on the Church Council's priority list. One obstacle to more orderly planning was that while the church year began in September, the terms of officers and members of boards began in January. To get the two to coincide, the Church Council recommended a special voters meeting to consider bylaw changes. This meeting held on October 8, 1989, approved three recommendations: 1) that a second voters meeting be held in May of each year, 2) that at this meeting, officers and board members would be elected for two year terms, and 3) that a special committee be formed to review the entire constitution and Bylaws and recommend further changes that would need to be made.

As a result, at the Annual Meeting on November 12, 1989, no election was held, the election having been authorized for May the following year. However, the budget and financial reporting would continue to be on a calendar year basis.

With election of officers and board members in May for terms beginning in June, the summer months would be used for a transition period to give boards time to set goals for the coming church year.

Lutheran Unity Village

At the same voters meeting the congregation reaffirmed its membership in the Association of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod Congregations of the Greater Chicagoland South and Southwest region. This association is the sponsor of Lutheran Unity Village known as LUV. LUV is a lifecare retirement community located on 37 acres on the southeast outskirts of Lockport, Illinois. Lifecare means that once accepted into membership, people are assured of care

in health and sickness for as long as they live. At the time of writing, breaking of ground to begin construction awaits only signing up the minimum number of members required for the initial phase.

Pastor Conducts Marriage Seminar

An innovation for Immanuel was a two-day Marriage Enrichment Seminar conducted by Pastor Kleidon on April 20 and 22 called "Mr. and Mrs. - Marriage Renewal and Marriage Refreshment Seminar." The basic premise of the seminar was that most marriages could be better. Sixteen couples attended these informative and highly interesting sessions.

The Ruth Society sponsored the annual Mother and Daughter Banquet on May 19. It was very well attended. Featured entertainment was Wee Little People, a pair of small folks who sang, danced and emphasized audience participation.

Vacation Bible School Well Attended

One hundred nine students enrolled and 37 teachers and helpers combined to make the 1989 Vacation Bible School a real success. Theme of the school was 'Come, Meet My Jesus.' Daily contributions totaled \$262, which went to Lutheran World Relief, earmarked for India.

With Fall Come Several Changes

After a survey by the Elders showed that over half of Immanuel's members favored individual cups. A change in Communion practice begun in September, 1989. Both the common chalice and individual cups are now offered in every Communion Service. Members no longer need to make special requests for individual cups.

The Annual Fall Festival on November 11 featured booths with fancy goods, fall and Christmas decorations, crafts, white elephant items, and the "Country Store." The big day was topped off with a roast beef dinner.

Friendship Sunday Repeated

Sunday, February 25, 1990, Immanuel celebrated its second Friendship Sunday. The theme was "Focus on Friendship." As a result of members, young and old, inviting relatives, neighbors, friends or acquaintances to this special service, attendance for the two services that Sunday was 248, somewhat above the average for the year to date.

Nursery Room Revived

Early in the year a new Crying Room Nursery was installed in the overflow room at the east end of the Narthex. With a see-through window and a loudspeaker, anyone with a crying child can go to the room, close the door, and continue to participate in the service. The room continues to be used as a Sunday School classroom between services.

Old Story-New Presentation

The 1990 Lenten services were chancel dramas called "We, the Jury." The audience was summoned as the jury at the trial of Jesus. Each week lay members of Immanuel were on the witness stand: Peter, Mary Magdalene, Judas, Nicodemus, and Caiaphas. It was a very effective way to tell the story of the passion of Jesus.

Used Bible Campaign

During February, our members of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League began collecting used Bibles to ship to Concordia Tract Mission to be sent overseas to those who request God's Word. As a result of the drive, 237 used Bibles and New Testaments were packed up and shipped to share the Good News of Jesus with others less fortunate.

New Sign at Church Entrance

To meet a perceived need for a highly visible sign with the capability for quick and easy changes of information, the Board of Evangelism installed an

additional sign board at the entrance to the parking lot on LaPorte Road. The sign, part of the Board's goal of providing more visibility to Immanuel's activities, is two-sided, with oversize letters for maximum visibility, to attract readership for the increasingly heavy traffic on LaPorte. Ease in changing the message was demonstrated during Holy Week when there were four different messages during that one week.

Couples Club Fun

Fourteen couples attended a potluck dinner on March 18, reviving an activity that had been dormant for a number of years. It was an evening of good food, fellowship, fun and games, a harbinger of more such good times to come.

Passover Seder Meal on Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday in 1990 was observed in Heritage Hall with a celebration of a Christian Passover Seder meal. It was a demonstration of the Passover using small portions of the various foods and drink used in the Jewish Passover. Because the Passover is rich in symbolism, it helped in a better understanding of Holy Communion and made it richer in meaning for our members. The meal concluded with the actual celebration of Holy Communion. The meal was made available by the Ruth Society.

A Mokena Tradition-Walk of the Cross

On the next day, Good Friday, April 13, the annual Good Friday Walk of the Cross began at 1:00 p.m. Some 300 people assembled at Saint Mary's Catholic Church for a short service. From there, the walk, continued with stops for two brief services at St. John's United Church of Christ, one by St. John's and one by the Marley Community Church; then to the United Methodist Church; and culminating at Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church where Pastor Kleidon concluded the Walk. Cool, wet weather failed to dampen the earnestness of the walkers, young and old, who made the two mile walk. The walk is sponsored and organized by the Mokena-Marley Clergy Association.

Ladies Aid Society Activity

After 71 years of loyal and dedicated service to the church, the Ladies Aid Society voted to disband on April 12, 1990. Declining membership was given as the reason. Through the many years of its existence, the Society had pioneered such activities as participation in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Mother-Daughter banquets, Fall Festival, cancer kits, fund-raisers for various church needs such as carpeting for Narthex and Sanctuary, public address sound system, audio-visual equipment, church furniture, and a host of other items. Each year the Society made substantial contributions to Lutheran charitable causes. For every year of its existence, the Ladies Aid Society acknowledged its activities as the handiwork of the Lord without whom nothing could have been accomplished.

Three Services on Easter

On April 15, Easter Sunday, there were three Resurrection Festival Services. The first, the Sunrise Service, began at 6:00 a.m. (actually before the sun was up). The second and third services were at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. Attendance was 455. Easter breakfast, prepared and served by the Youth and Confirmation Classes of Immanuel, followed the first and second services.

Constitution and Bylaw Revisions Made

The special committee appointed to review the Constitution and By-laws had been busy at countless meetings and was ready to report its recommendations to the voters on April 25, 1990. At that meeting, the new document was unanimously adopted after full discussion and several changes.

Among the major changes from the previous Constitution and By-laws were these: the name of the Church Council was changed to Parish Planning Council in order to make the Council a truly planning group instead of an operating group. The title Director of a board was adopted in place of the previous Chairman. Directors will be directly responsible to the

voters instead of to the Council. There will be three Voters Meetings a year, in February, May and November.

To better reflect its responsibilities, the name of the Board of Finance was changed to the Board of Stewardship. A new board, the Board of Fellowship, was added.

The duties and job descriptions of each board are clearly detailed in the Bylaws.

Other Changes Made

All officers and board members are elected for a two-year term at the May Voters Meeting in the even numbered years. As stated, each board will have a director instead of a chairman. The directors are elected by the voters and not by their board. The President, Vice President, Secretary, and Directors of each board may be re-elected only once.

Termination of membership is also clearly delineated. Set guidelines have been established to remove delinquent members from Immanuel's membership. If a member has not communed in three months, an Elder shall contact the member. If this member has not communed in six months, a visit from the Elder and Pastor is in order. Nine months without communion shall warrant stronger admonition. After twelve months, the members' name shall be transferred to the Mission File and turned over to the Board of Evangelism and removed from active membership at Immanuel.

The first Voters Meeting under the new Bylaws was held May 30, 1990, at which officers, directors of boards, and board members were elected. They were installed on June 3. The new Parish Planning Council had its first meeting June 5.

Mother and Daughter Banquet

On the evening of May 18, 166 attended the annual Mother and Daughter Banquet. They were treated to a sumptuous turkey dinner. Following the dinner, the audience was kept in a happy mood by Dave Mayer, the Magical Entertainer. It was a great turnout and a great evening.

Outdoor Worship Center Clean-up

Sponsored by the Couples Club, the annual Worship Center Clean-up was done on June 2, anticipating the start of outdoor worship services on June 24. Although cloudy skies and dampness in the air may have kept some folks at home, those who turned out went at the work with willing hearts and hard-working hands to get the job done.

New Organist Installed

Beth Ridderhoff officially became the full time organist at Immanuel the first Sunday in June. Beth came to us with an impressive background in music. She has a B.A. in Music from DePauw University. Her degree was in piano performance. She has studied organ for two years and is on speaking terms (musically, that is) with Johann Sebastian Bach and other great artists of the organ.

Christian Videos Made Available

Fifteen best-selling children's videos from Family Films, the audio-visual unit of Concordia Publishing House, are now available on display in the church narthex. Films are available at no charge for viewing up to one week in members' homes. Adults like them, too!

Sunday School Contributes to Earthquake Relief

During the year the Sunday School children had been bringing their pennies to church to put them into an "Earthquake Relief" bottle. When the

pennies were counted in late May, the total came to \$136 which was contributed to Messiah Lutheran Church in Santa Cruz, California, which was close to the center of the 1989 quake.

1990 VBS Breaks All Records

By the end of the week of June 18, 150 children were enrolled in Vacation Bible School. Twenty-six people--directors, registrars, teachers, and teacher aids kept things humming with activities centered around the theme "Island in the Son--Living in the Warmth of God's Love." When the books for the 1990 VBS were balanced, \$267 was available as a contribution to the Bible League--Mission Project, Bibles in the Russian language for children in Russia.

Outdoor Services Resume

June 24 found worshippers at the second service in our outdoor worship center. Here, under God's great oaks and on God's green grass, it was easy and inspiring to meditate on God's great goodness. Services continued through September 2. Despite a rather cool and damp summer, there were only two rainouts when services had to be moved indoors.

New Road Marker Realized

The old road markers directing motorists to Immanuel, installed some 25 years prior, were the worse for wear or had disappeared altogether. One of the goals of the Board of Evangelism was realized when new road markers were installed during July at locations that met legal requirements. The new markers, which feature the new logo of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, announce the location of and mileage to Immanuel's church on LaPorte Road.

Confirmation Resume in September

When September 12 rolled around, the first Confirmation Classes began. There were 34 enrolled: 18 in the seventh grade class taught by Jerry W. Vrshek, Director of the Board of Elders, and 16 in the eighth grade class taught by Pastor Kleidon. Classes met every Wednesday from 4:15 to 5:30 p.m. except for those days when there is no public school.

Sunday School High Enrollment

When Sunday, September 10, arrived, it found 130 children enrolled in Sunday School. By October 7 the figure had grown to 143. With 14 teachers and teacher aids, the Sunday School was off to a record-breaking year.

The big kickoff for the new school year came on September 23 when the Sunday School, the Board of Christian Education, and the Board of Fellowship collaborated on a combined Sunday School Rally Day and all church picnic. It all started with Sunday services in the sanctuary. After the first service, at which Sunday School teachers present were recognized, the activities moved to Heritage Hall during the Sunday School/Bible Class hour beginning at 10:15 a.m. Here a spiritual presentation by Mr. Jim Austin held the audience spellbound. Jim was from Youth Ministry International and his magical experience had the children literally rolling in the aisles (and some adults, too).

At 10:30 a.m. activities moved up to the sanctuary. Here Jim Austin gave the children's address during the Rally Day Service. His enthusiastic message was followed by two songs by the children, an inspiring experience.

Because of the low temperature outdoors, about 54, the potluck dinner was held inside Heritage Hall. But as soon as the tables were cleared, fun and games outdoors began in earnest. And Immanuel had its greatest Sunday School and Church picnic in years.

Telemarketing-A First for Immanuel

Under the sponsorship of the Board of Evangelism, the last two weeks of September found 31 members of Immanuel making a telephone canvass of the entire community served by our congregation. It was part of our congregation's "YEAR OF OUTREACH" program to identify the unchurched in our area and pointed toward our special 140th Anniversary Service on November 4. For eight evenings, Monday through Thursday, six callers picked up phones at church to make 2,975 calls, to complete 1,901 calls, and to fill out 256 response cards for people who wanted more information about Immanuel and the 140th Anniversary Celebration. Additional information was provided in three separate mailings sent out at ten day intervals, followed by telephone calls to all who had responded.

Worship/Music Committee Organized

The main purpose of the Worship and Music Committee is to plan music and worship ideas for Sunday and special services. One of the goals of the Committee is to have some special music at each worship service: Choir, duets, trios, quartets, solos, or the Sunday School children singing, and also to have instrumental music on special occasions such as Easter and Reformation Day. The goal is to have spirit-filled worship services that, while giving praise to God, also uplift the worshippers. An important function of this Committee is to plan and coordinate music between the various groups in the congregation. The Committee attempts to plan for events several months in advance.

The Committee is made up of the Organist, Choir Directors, Sunday School Superintendent, Elder Coordinator in charge of Music and Worship, member of Youth and Singles Board, Youth Representative, and the Pastor. The Committee plans to meet monthly.

Immanuel Senior Choir

Membership in the Senior Choir is at an all-time high of 20 members. The choir rehearses on Thursday evenings, except during Advent and Lent when it rehearses on Wednesdays before the worship service.

The Choir's schedule is to sing on the second and fourth Sundays at both services. The Choir is led by two volunteer directors who take turns directing and accompanying on the piano.

Statistics Updated

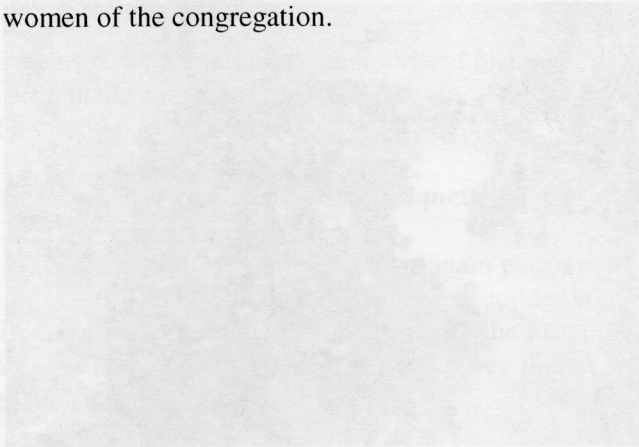
The Annual Report for 1989 included these numbers: 768 baptized souls, 555 communicant members and a Sunday School enrollment of 155 as of November 11. As the years roll by, it is pretty common knowledge that members, too, roll on--some to new locations many miles away, some to other churches, others write church out of their lives altogether. Still others just drop out of sight with whereabouts unknown. To cope with this problem is one of the prime objectives of the Elders' Calling Groups--to identify weaker or weakening members, and do everything possible to close the back door.

Official acts for the period November 11, 1989 to November 4, 1990 included 16 baptisms, nine marriages, two funerals, 11 confirmations, six transfers out, 52 removals from membership, 15 received by affirmation or re-affirmation of faith, and 29 transfers in.

During the past years the local branch of the AAL has provided financial support for a wide variety of projects. These included funds for purchase of tools used in helping senior citizens clear snow and do yard work; crosses for confirmands; refreshments for Advent, Lent and Sunday services;

Helping Hands matching funds for Sunday School cabinet; file for Choir music; supplies for Vacation Bible School; road markers; audio cassette players for the tape ministry; matching funds for the celebration banquet on November 4, Immanuel's 140th birthday.

The first Father and Son get-together in a number of years was held October 24, 1990. Over sixty men and boys enjoyed a sumptuous banquet served by women of the congregation.



CHAPTER X. 140th Anniversary Celebrations

Culmination of Immanuel's YEAR OF OUTREACH came on Sunday, November 4, the 140th birthday of the congregation. The theme was "140 Years of Caring and Sharing in the Mokena area."



140th Anniversary Celebration

Festivities began with Sunday School and Bible Classes at 9:15 a.m., followed at 10:30 with a Service of Praise in Heritage Hall. Although the day was cold and wet, following a week of balmy Indian Summer, the hall was filled to near capacity. Over 300 people, including those who had responded favorably to the telemarketing program in September, heard Pastor Kleidon's message based on Acts 2:42-47 emphasizing the importance of fellowship in the life of the church. Special musical selections included a trio and the Senior Choir. Congregational singing was accompanied by piano and brass.

Displays Show Immanuel's History

Following the service there were tours of the building to view numerous displays. The walls of the narthex and some of the rooms were covered with posters depicting how the various boards and groups of Immanuel contribute to

the congregation's caring and sharing theme. Photographs of confirmation classes going back to 1921 were on display. Historical displays went back to 1850, beginning with photographs of the first church and several of the founders. Tools and artifacts of the 1800's proved highly interesting. Of special interest was a stained glass sign which had graced the entrance to Immanuel's 1916 church. The sign, in German, reads: "Ev. Luth. Immanuel's Kirche U. A. C." The 'U. A. C.' stands for Unveraendete Augsburgs Confession, 'Unaltered Augsburg Confession' in English.

In the sanctuary a continuous audio-visual history of Immanuel back to 1850 was presented, prepared and narrated by Robert O. Geuther, great-grandson of one of the founders, Johann Georg Geuther.

Celebration Banquet

At 12:10 p.m. Heritage Hall was once again packed to capacity for the celebration banquet. Tables had been set up and decorated in the time between the end of the worship service and the beginning of the meal, an almost incredible performance. The diners were treated to a turkey dinner with all the trimmings served by a catering firm.

Kevin Smith the president of Immanuel, then introduced the Master of Ceremonies, Michael Everett, member of Immanuel and former mayor of Mokena. Mr. Everett in turn introduced the guests at the head table. Among the guests who made remarks or presentations were: George E. Sangmeister, Member of Congress; Larry Wennlund, State Representative; Ronald J. Grotovsky, President, Village of Mokena; Rev. Edgar H. Albers, Pastor of Immanuel 1967-1980; Dr. Raymond J. Garritano, Superintendent, Mokena Public Schools; Rev. Dr. Norbert Kleidon, Pastor of Immanuel; and Bruce Ebert, President, Mokena Public School Board.

Communications which had been received by mail or delivered in person were read. Messages came from the White House, the Congressional Record, the Governor's office, the Mokena Public Schools, and the Village of Mokena.

Variety of Offerings Entertain Crowd

Entertainment began with the bell choir from St. John's United Church of Christ, Mokena, who had participated in Immanuel's 125th anniversary observance. The Mokena Junior High Drama Club followed with two dramatic solos and one dramatic duet. A dramatic skit "Through the Gate", authored by Jodi Stelk, member of Immanuel, was presented by the youth of Immanuel.

The Senior Choir concluded the afternoon program with three numbers. The third was Fred Waring's arrangement of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," a stirring performance which was given a standing ovation.

"The Other Song Book" is purchased

Elder's request to purchase a new supplemental songbook titled, The Other Songbook by Dave Anderson was approved. The money for the purchased was previously approved. Once received the Sunday School children are enthused and eager to sing from it.

Growing pains are once again felt at Immanuel. A special committee is formed to review the possibility of a sanctuary expansion. During the month of April, 1991 the Lord blessed Immanuel with growth – fourteen new member were added to our church membership. Another plus – during the first sixteen weeks of 1991 the average church attendance was 248!

New Sunday School Tried

An Inter-generational Sunday School begins meeting at 9:15am on Sundays. Classes are made up of all ages from grades one through adults.

Confirmation day on May 5, 1991 welcomes 14 youth into God's family at Immanuel.

Pentecost, celebrated on May 19th, is the "birthday" of the church. 3000 people were converted to Jesus on the first Pentecost. The disciples were em-

powered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel and moved those who heard it to believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Voter's meeting discusses expansion

The highlight of the Voter's meeting was a presentation of the steering committee:

1. Need to increase the size of the sanctuary
2. Increase the parking lot
3. Possible calling of another staff member
4. Need more space for education.

A motion was made and seconded to form a "Building for the Future" committee. Voter's agreed to seal and stripe the parking lot. Also accepted was a memorial gift to erect a pole building on the picnic grounds.

Fourth of July Float

VBS takes place on June 17th through June 21st. They create a float for Mokena's "Stars and Stripes Forever" parade on the Fourth of July. The float's theme was "Sonward, Ho!". Thanks to AAL for the donation of "millions" of balloons to toss.



Fourth July Float

"Pay Debt Quickly" started

The first goal for 1992 was to pay off \$130,000 of the Heritage Hall debt. If 260 people write checks for \$500 under the PDQ "Pay Debt Quickly" program it can be done. Generous gifts reduced the LCEF debt to about \$90,000.

Immanuel's Youth present the musical "Make a Joyful Noise" in Heritage Hall. The choir sang special music with the youth performing speaking parts. Family Game/Card Night resumed.

Confirmation in May brings sixteen young people into membership at Immanuel's

Preschool Continues to Grow

Preschool ended with 174 children attending during a very successful school year.

Voter's approve sanctuary expansion

During the Voter's meeting approval was given to proceed with the sanctuary expansion. Interviews of architects begins in August with Healy, Synder, Bender, and Associates retained to design the new sanctuary. The congregation is encouraged to submit their suggestions to the committee.

1993 kicks off with Handel's Messiah

Handel's Messiah is performed by Immanuel and Marley Community choirs on January 10, 1993. A wonderful way to present the talent of our members.

The Building for the Future committee has been meeting with the architect for 6 months. Details of the committee meetings with representatives of all organizations at Immanuel are presented. Preliminary diagrams are seen with drawings to be available at the Voter's meeting.

Rise and Build kickoff on April 22, 1993. Dr. Charles Mueller of Trinity, Roselle, IL is the speaker.

Immanuel Quilters

IQ (Immanuel's Quilters) enter their second year. They complete 86 quilts. Six blankets and two comforters also were sent to Lutheran World Relief.

A building status report was presented in April. Commitments from 167 out of 280 households were made to "Rise and Build" campaign which amounts to \$323,878. We have learned that it can be fun and exciting when people work together towards the same goal, executing a project plan based on the Word of God, keeping our Lord and His ministry #1 on our priority list.

On May 2, 1993 14 young people were confirmed at a special 10:30am service. AAL presented a token to each and a reception in their honor was held following the service.

Junior Youth Group held a retreat at Kingston, IL with 21 7th and 8th graders attending. Chaperones included Pastor Kleidon, Debbie and Kurt Klode, and Karen and Jerry Vrshek. We are grateful to these adults for making this event possible. The Youth Group also wrote a skit titled, "They Gave Excuses" during a Walcamp stay.

Sanctuary bids go out

On September 30, 1993, bids for the new sanctuary were let out to ten general contractors. Early the following year, bids for new construction were received from six construction companies, considerably over estimates. New bids will be received later.

During the March Voters meeting, approval was given for the construction of a new sanctuary. The bid of \$939,000 from Pasch & Sons Company of Lockport, IL was accepted. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$1,200,000.

Ground breaking on 5th Church

Ground breaking ceremonies took place on Easter Sunday, April 3, 1994 at 9:15am with an estimated target date for completion of November 1994. Worship moves to Heritage Hall in June. The traditional method of ground breaking was used, namely a plow with a rope pulled by members of the congregation.

Pastor Kliendon guides the plow to break ground on the 5th Church



Sanctuary Progress

Progress is slow on the outset of building the new sanctuary. Steel beams were not ready; masonry contractor were hard to find. An auction to

benefit Rise and Build Fund takes place July 30th.

The pipe organ is dismantled, cleaned and prepared for reinstallation under the watchful eye of Scott and Sandy Peterson. Many people help with this large project. New pews are ordered and altar furnishings designed and ordered.

Palm Sunday was celebrated with 13 youth participating in the Rite of Confirmation.

Vrshek's are honored

AAL presents a check to the Youth Group in honor of Karen and Jerry Vrshek for their outstanding service to Immanuel over the years. Praise to the Lord for their dedication to Immanuel.

Pastor Kleidon Retires

A call committee is formed to look for a new pastor as Pastor Kleidon announces his retirement. Names of pastoral candidates are submitted to District offices on November 8, 1994 and a special call meeting is held on January 8, 1995.

A cornerstone ceremony is held on December 3, 1994 during the 8:00am service.

First Service in the new Sanctuary

On December 18, 1994 Sunday morning services are conducted in Heritage Hall. The choir sing "Sing Happy Birthday to Our King". At the conclusion of the services, all processed up to the new sanctuary for a brief dedication service. Christmas Eve at 6:00pm is the first worship service in the new sanctuary.

CHAPTER XI. New Sanctuary and New Pastor

The dedication service for the new sanctuary is held on February 5, 1995 at 3:00pm with the Rev. Theo Laesch, President of Northern Illinois District, as guest pastor.



5th Church – Built in 1994

Kleidon Departs

February 26, 1995 was a sad/happy occasion at Immanuel. A farewell dinner for the Kleidons was held who are moving to Colorado.

Fifteen young people were confirmed in the new sanctuary on May 7th.

Robert Geuther is called home

Immanuel lost the expertise of Robert O. Geuther who devoted much time and effort in recording the history of "his" church over the past five or more decades. He enjoyed keeping track of statistics, preparing slide presentations, teaching Sunday School, being President of the congregation, visiting newcomers, and just helping out wherever needed. The Lord called Robert home on May 10, 1995 and he was given a Christian burial in Immanuel's cemetery. Robert was a great grandson of one of Immanuel's founders.

Constien Arrives

Immanuel is delighted to have the Rev. David Constien's acceptance of our call to be Pastor of Immanuel. His installation is held on June 11, 1995.

A new wrought iron Advent stand appears in the sanctuary. Immanuel's own Harry Yunker used his time and talent to design and weld the stand.

The Geuther Library is dedicated to the memory of Robert O. Geuther on March 10, 1996.

Friendship Sunday was celebrated on April 28th.

The Rite of Confirmation took place on May 5, 1996 with 18 youth affirming their faith.



Rev. David Constien
1995 – present

Immanuel Quilters sent 166 quilts to Lutheran World Relief in 1996. The goal for the next year is to top that amount.

Twelve youth were confirmed on May 4, 1997.

Exciting VBS Program

98 enthusiastic children come to VBS July 14th-17th to experience "The J-E-S-U-S Express". It was an exciting, interesting ride for all.

Scheduled meetings for Immanuel during 1998: Ladies LMWL Bible Study Group meets twice a month, Men's Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday, Ruth Society meets the first Thursday of each month, Sr. Youth Group meets monthly on the first Sunday, Jr. Youth Group meeting the first Wednesday of each month.

Confirmation takes place on May 3rd bringing 21 into communicant membership.

Immanuel quilters made and sent 140 quilts and 27 sewing kits to Lutheran World Relief.

SOLID Sunday is celebrated

SOLID (Serving Our Lord at Immanuel Dutifully) Sunday is celebrated February 14th. It was an opportunity to reaffirm faith and to plan for Immanuel's future.

Sixteen youth are confirmed on May 2, 1999.

New church Secretary

Immanuel welcomes a new church secretary, LaVonne Metzger.

Fall Festival Success

Fall Festival continues to be a BIG success -- \$4,100 profit. This is during 1999, a year in which the Ruth Society also celebrated 60 years of service to our Lord. A celebration dinner was held at a local restaurant.



1999 Ruth Society Officers
Florence Record, Luella Yunker,
Eleanor Golden, Christine Constien

God with Us at Immanuel

We conclude this edition of the history of Immanuel with the words with which Pastor Bueltmann concluded the 1960 edition of the history:

"Thus, by the grace and blessing of God, Immanuel has continued these many years. God has been with us even as our name Immanuel implies. In spite of various obstacles which were strewn in her path from time to time, Immanuel has, with the help of God, progressed steadily spiritually as well as materially. Immanuel rejoices and thanks God with all her heart that, through Word proclaimed and Sacrament administered, she has been privileged to bring many souls to their Savior. But even as Immanuel rejoices at her success, she declares with the psalmist: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

"God with us at Immanuel — yesterday, today and forevermore."

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