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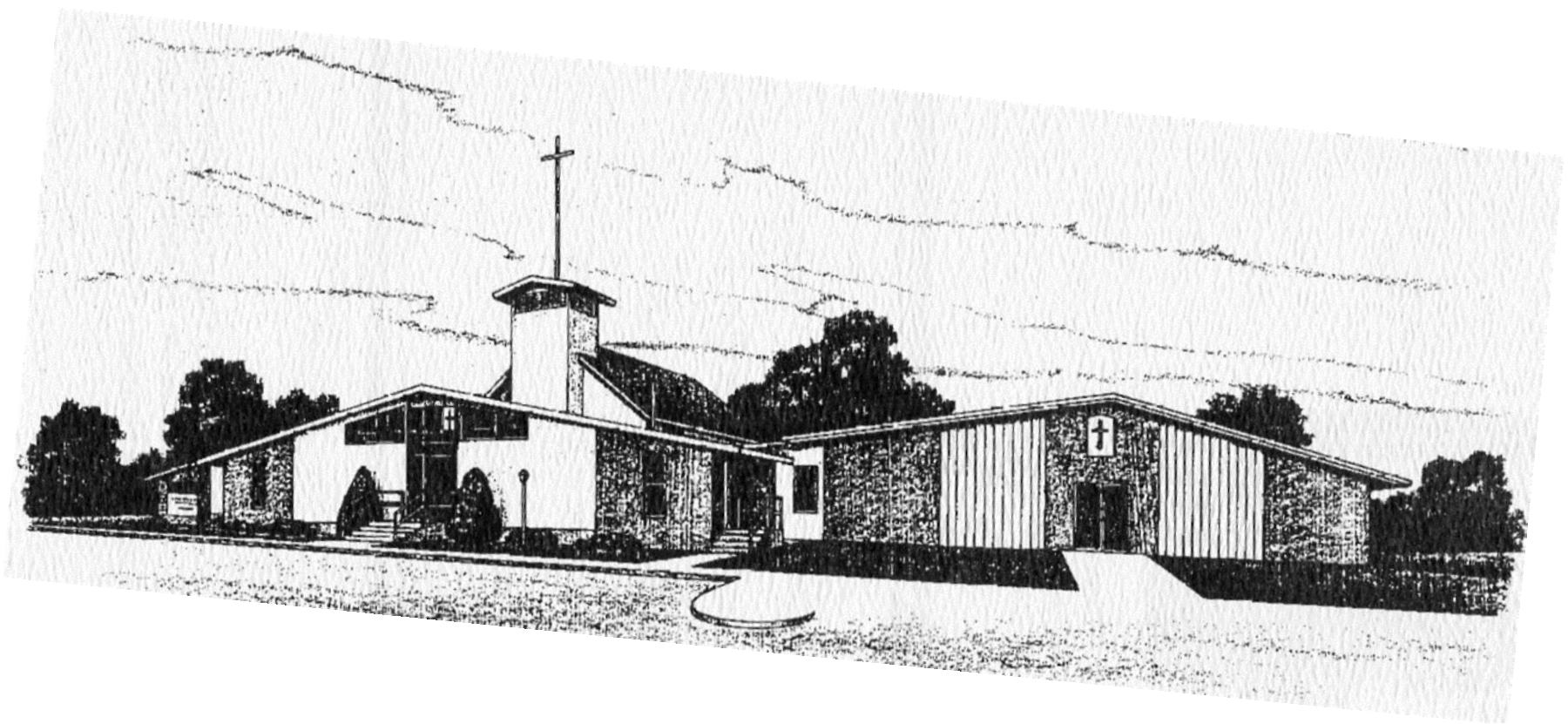
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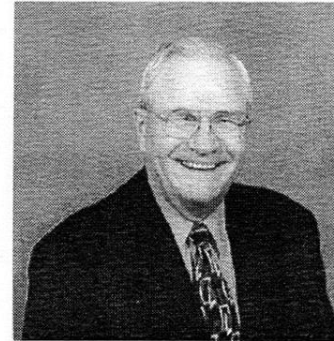
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*Steve Wangerin,
President
Copy-Editor*



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Vice-President
125th Chairman
Editor*

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*I high-lighted a few
lines that had to do with
3 ladies church history*

History of First St. John Lutheran Church

First St. John at Germantown

Only three years before First St. John Lutheran Church was organized in 1874, the plains of Germantown and of most of Smith County were open, unsettled prairie where Indians, buffaloe, deer, antelope, wild turkeys, and other wild life roamed. It was ten years after Kansas became a state, in 1861, when the first settlers arrived on Middle Cedar Creek. The first group of Homesteaders, Herman H. Grauerholz and his wife, Henry Meierhoff, Charlie and Louie Biermann, and Herman Hilbrink, arrived in March, 1871. They were followed by the Fred Wagner and Michael Emme families in June, 1871. The August Rietzke family homesteaded in the fall of 1871, but did not move on their claim until 1873. This was the same year in which Dr. Brewster Higley homesteaded on the Beaver Creek northwest of Athol. His enchanting song, "Home on the Range," is now the official state song of Kansas. His homestead and original cabin are now the property of member, Ellen Rust.

Other settlers followed in 1872 and by the fall of that year all the creek claims were homesteaded. August Wangerin was the first to file a prairie farm claim. He did so in the fall of 1872. The creek claims were most desirable because of the available timber for building dugouts and of clear, running water. A homestead cost a little better than ten cents an acre; \$16.25 for a quarter section.

Hunting wildlife for meat was a common occupation. It, also, had its hazards. In the fall of 1871, Henry Meierhoff while hunting in waist-deep snow, caught a buffalo calf near the "Four Corners" (a crossroads that was where the highway bridge is now near the Kensington park) and tried to take it home alive. The calf bellowed and the mother and other buffaloe came upon him. Henry quickly killed the calf with his hunting knife and climbed a cottonwood tree where the buffaloe kept him treed until after nightfall before he could descend and take his meat supply home. While it was standing, the tree was known as the "Meierhoff Tree"

Indians in those early days were regular visitors at the homesteads. The government provided them with blankets and other durable. For food they depended on wildlife for meat and upon the settlers for other food items. They were friendly and wouldn't hurt anyone, but it was a good policy to let them have what they wanted. When turned down, they could ride down a corn patch with their ponies. If given food, then would on occasion return the favor by giving information where a recently killed buffalo was to be found from which they had taken only a quarter of meat. In season, they would

fill their blankets with roasting ears. A favorite dish was a dishpan full of watermelon and bread mixed together which they ate with their hands. Groups of wigwams were a common but fast disappearing sight as the land was nearly all homesteaded by 1880. The biggest influx of settlers was between 1874 and 1880.

The early settlers plowed their land with walking plows with wooden moldboards and iron shares, drawn by oxen, horses, or mules. For their mail and supplies the real early settlers had to go to Cawker City, or Hastings, Nebraska. After the railroad came to Kirwin in 1880, Germantown merchants got their freight from there. The Army delivered mail from Kirwin via Germantown to Bloomington, Nebraska, by stagecoach. A later mail service was from Smith Center to Norton by buckboard via Germantown.

Germantown probably started to develop in 1872 or 1873. It was laid out in lots. It had the main post office in the area until 1888 from which other post offices in the area picked up their patron's mail. Individual stores with post offices sprang up quickly over the settled area, about every five or six miles. The post office was in the Fred Wagner home. Fred Wagner also provided sort of a lodging and livery service to travelers. He was, also, the first county commissioner from the west side of the county. There was a general store, Ketchum and Woods, operated by the Wood brothers, George and Charlie. They, also, sold lumber and a line of farm machinery. There was a Kalbfleisch store, which burned down. Later, a notions store occupied the location, operated by a Mrs. Cawder. There was a blacksmith - maybe two - operated by Al Biers and Fred Wagner. Germantown's business career came to an end when the Rock Island railroad came



probably in 1872 or 1873. Until the church was built around 1880, services were conducted in the sod schoolhouse of district 8, right east of the Wagner house. Anna Wagner, daughter of Fred Wagner, was the first child born in Swan township, Dec. 15, 1871, and was baptized by Herman Grauerholz, probably in the days before pastors were available. The early pastors were "Reiseprediger" or circuit riders. The services at first were probably few and far between.

through the county in the year 1888. Soon after the railroad was built Kensington got its start and before long, Germantown's businesses and the post office transferred to Kensington. The railroad was built as far as Smith Center by New Year's Day, 1888, when the first train arrived there.

Just when services were started, also, is not known,

Herewith information gleaned from baptism records, etc:
Anna Wangerin was baptized October 15, 1875, by a Pastor Jung, probably at Salina. In 1876, Pastor Wilhelm Heiser baptized Charles Rietzke. He came from Cawker City. In 1880, G. Toenjes baptized Wilhemine Rietzke. Pastor F. W. John performed baptisms in 1881 and '82 and was stationed at Kirwin. Pastor J. W. Lehr baptized Gus Meierhoft in 1885. Pastor E. Klawitter, whose headquarters probably were Minden, Nebraska, served here approximately 1886-1889.

J. George Haeffner, 1890-1896, was the first resident pastor. He organized and served Trinity at Stuttgart. Besides, he served at Naponee, Nebraska, Womer, Kill Creek and Hawkeye in Osborne County, and somewhere in Rooks County. During his pastorate he baptized 97 and confirmed 55 individuals. At first, he lived three miles north of the church until the first parsonage was built, probably in 1895. Fred Wagner, Ed Jordan, and C. Krohlow served on the parsonage building committee. His starting salary was \$120.00 a year which was later raised to \$150.00 a year. During his time, the Christian Day school was started. The pastors taught these schools. Subjects were religion, reading, writing and arithmetic. Pews with writing backs were purchased for this purpose.

Starting in his time and for a long time after, the fiscal year of the congregation started with August 1 and ended July 31. The Annual meeting was usually held in August. At the annual meeting, each one was expected to make a subscription for salary. After these figures were in, then the salary for the next year was determined. Everyone was to bring the pastor a lading of hay and corn. The salary contributions were to be given to the secretary, who recorded the amounts, and then gave the proceeds to the treasurer who was to keep a record of income and expenses and to *give* a receipt to the secretary for any amounts turned over to the treasurer.

It was in 1894, that First St. John joined the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as its parent body. It was incorporated under the laws of the state of Kansas on June 17, 1880, under the name of First German Evangelical St. Johannes (St. John) Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

The next pastor was George Arkebauer, 1896-1900. He served Trinity, Stuttgart, and First St. John, Germantown, as a parish, teaching school at both places. While conducting school, he lived in with the members during the school term. He also had preaching services at Womer, Naponee, and Reamsville. For quite a while, Stuttgart and Germantown was a parish.

Arkebauer's successor was Pastor W. Berndt, February 1898-April 1905. During his time the church and parsonage were repaired and painted. At this time, Germantown petitioned Stuttgart to get their own pastor but evidently this did not materialize.

Pastor A. W. Cordes followed, August 1905-1907. In 1907, a delegation from First St. John was sent to Stuttgart to arrange for services at Germantown every two weeks instead of every three weeks. On September 27, 1908, First St. John decided to call their own pastor at a salary of \$400.00 a year, plus free dwelling and feed for livestock. Pastor



F. Reninga was the next pastor, May 2, 1909 - October, 1912. In 1910, Trinity at Stuttgart again asked First St. John to call a pastor together with them, but the request was denied on the premise that such an arrangement would hurt the now budding First St. John congregation. Thus terminated the parish relationship with Trinity of Stuttgart.

The next pastor, K. T. Domsch, 1912-1919, with his one-horse cart served Germantown, and Zion of Athol, the beginning of the Zion-First St. John Parish which lasted until May 19, 1959, when Zion by unanimous decision decided to form one congregation with First St. John. This of course brings us to:

Zion at Athol

Zion's first services were held in the Hopkins Schoolhouse by Pastor John Gemaehlich from Kensington (Iowa Synod), 1902-1908. Services were, also, at times conducted in the homes of Rozena Bohm, John Schmidt, Herman and Henry Tuxhorn, **Herman Caspers**, Henry and Gus Meierhoff, and Frank Virus. Other early preachers were: Alfred Finkbeiner, Kensington, 1909-1910, and F. H. Reninga, Germantown, 1911-1912.

During Pastor Domsch's time, Zion organized as a congregation on November 2, 1913. The first elders, who also served as the church building committee was: John Schmidt, Frank Virus, and Jacob - Giese. The first church building, built for a cost of \$1816.89, was erected on two acres of land donated by Rozena Bohm. The church was dedicated April 14, 1914. Members of First St. John donated the bell.

In the fall of 1914, Zion started a Christian Day School that continued for several years with an average of 12-14 pupils. The first teacher was Maria Domsch at a salary of \$14 a year. Other teachers were E. Spruth, Helen Harbine, and Walter Fehner. During Domsch's time, Zion had one service a month in the morning and the rest in the afternoon. His organ was used in the church services.

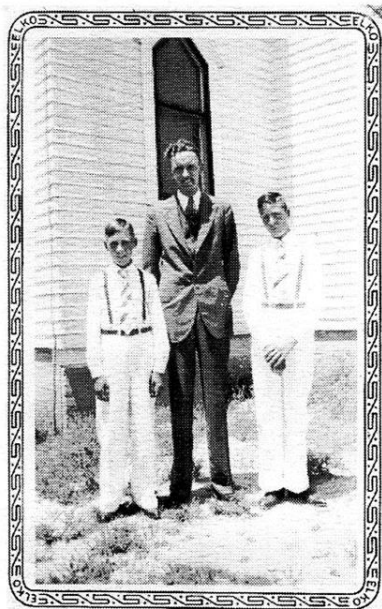
In 1917, Albert Brunow was delegate to the Synodical Convention in Milwaukee. In May, 1919, Pastor Domsch was asked to write to the Kansas District president Junegel, to provide the parish with a pastor that could work in both the English and German languages. In October, 1919, Pastor Domsch was granted a peaceful release to Missouri. From 1919-1921, Zion was served by Pastor G. Mueller from the St. John Lutheran Church (ALC) of South Athol.

The next resident pastor was Edwin H. Kreutz, 1921-Sept., 1923. It was during his time, Zion joined the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in 1922. During the following vacancy, Seminary student, E.G. Spruth, served Zion as Christian Day School teacher from Fall, 1923 to Fall, 1924, and under Kurt E. Juengel, preached at Zion and First St. John. Zion Guild and First St. John Ladies' Aid supported his son, Edwin Spruth, who was a Missionary in New Guinea.

The next resident pastor was J. W. Stelling, 1925 - Sept., 1928. It was during his time, that First St. John built a new church, 40x26x14 ft. high. The building committee was Pastor Stelling, Otto Levin, Charles Rietzke, Otto Wachs, Franz Wangerin, Louie Emme. The Builder was Henry Seemann. It was dedicated June 20, 1926. This is the church that was moved into Kensington and remodeled and enlarged in 1959.

His successor was H. H. Fleckenstein, April 9, 1929 - June, 1935. He was here in the "Dirty Thirties". Everyone remembers the Lenten Service of March 15, 1935, when the pastor had to keep wiping the dust from the Bible during the sermon. Some stayed at the church till 2:00 AM before venturing home. Some of those who started home after the service had to abandon their cars because the dust ruined the car motor. Wind blew so strong that it lifted rugs from the floor. The next day, dust was cleaned out of houses with scoops and fences and ditches were drifted over with dust. In 1933, oats sold for a low of 12c a bushel, corn for 14c a bushel, and eggs for 7c a doz. During his pastorate, Fleckenstein was given permission to travel for a year and during this time, Walter Fehner, a seminary student taught school at Zion and preached at Zion and First Lutheran. Edwin Kreutz was vacancy pastor after Fleckenstein left.

The next pastor, Herman Seyfert, Sept. 1935 - May, 1939, was called temporarily and given a permanent call after three months. After graduation, he had to wait a while for a call because of the so-called overproduction of ministers in the thirties. He bought his first car, a Model T Ford, for \$15 and his total salary was \$35 a month.



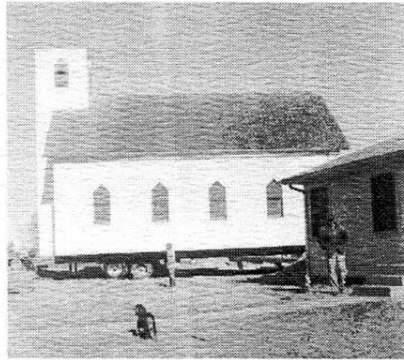
Pastor Seyfert, Rex & Ray Wachs

The next two pastors were Henry Knoke, Sept. 10, 1939 - Oct. 17, 1941, and A. Wittrock, May 10, 1942 - Sept., 1915. After Wittrock left, Pastor E. E. Berner of Stuttgart and Phillipsburg was vacancy pastor and became their called pastor; upon the advice of the Kansas District officials, Zion and First St. John formed a three-way parish with Stuttgart. This advice was accepted upon the proviso that Trinity of Stuttgart join First Lutheran of Phillipsburg, which Trinity did in 1948. First St. John sold its parsonage in 1947. In May, 1949, First St. John observed the 75th Anniversary of its founding. After Pastor Berner left, Seefeldt was vacancy pastor. Pastor Andrew Maken came in 1952 and served the threefold parish until 1954. Both Berner and Maken lived at Phillipsburg. During the 16 month vacancy that followed, Pastor Walter H. Seefeldt of Norton again was the vacancy pastor here. During this time, First Lutheran of Phillipsburg decided to call a pastor on their own and Zion and First St. John decided to call one together. Towards this

end, lots were bought in Kensington to build a parsonage, which was completed in 1956. William Levin and Albert Tuxhorn served on the building committee and the members did the building themselves. Henry Suchsland and Ivan Levin served on the building fund committee.

In April, 1956, Royden Frese was installed. On November, First St. John decided to move their church to the lots north of the parsonage in Kensington and invited Zion of Athol to join them in the move. In the fall of 1957, Zion and First St. John participated in the Northwest Kansas-Southwest Nebraska Area Preaching-Teaching-Reaching Mission. Pastor Rudolph Geble of Larned, Kansas, was our speaker. This proved to be of vast spiritual benefit to our membership.

After preliminary planning meetings, starting August 11, 1958, final plans drawn by the architect, Howard Harrenstein of Ames, Iowa, were adopted on Sept 10, 1953. The building committee in charge was: Arnold Levin, chairman, Roy Wangerin, and Fred Wachs. Jake Harrenstein of the Harrenstein Construction Company was engaged to construct the church. On Nov. 5, 1958, ground was broken for the new church and the Levin Bros. "Cat" went to work digging the basement. On Christmas Day, 1958,



the last service was held in the church in the country. On Dec.31, 1958, the church was moved into Kensington and set down on its present foundation on Jan. 1, 1959.

Members of both Zion and First St John, put much of themselves into this building in both time and treasure. Even the steeple cross and Chancel furniture are home-produced.

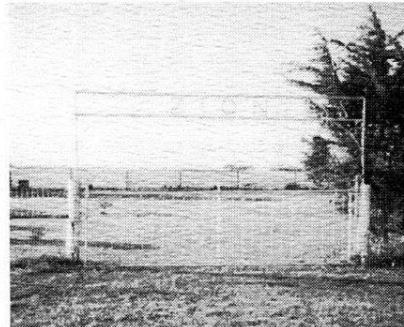
We are grateful to one and all for the services and labors performed.

One of our great joys on Dedication and Anniversary Day was the fact that on May 19, 1959, Zion accepted the invitation of First St John to become one congregation with them and join them in worshiping in the new church. Thus we will all continue to worship together as we have done since the last Sunday of December, 1958, in the Zion Church, during the time of construction of our new church. The congregation will continue under the name of First St. John Lutheran.



In June, Leland Wangerin was the representative of our Circuit 11 of the Kansas District to the General Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, assembled in San Francisco, California, June 17-27, 1959.

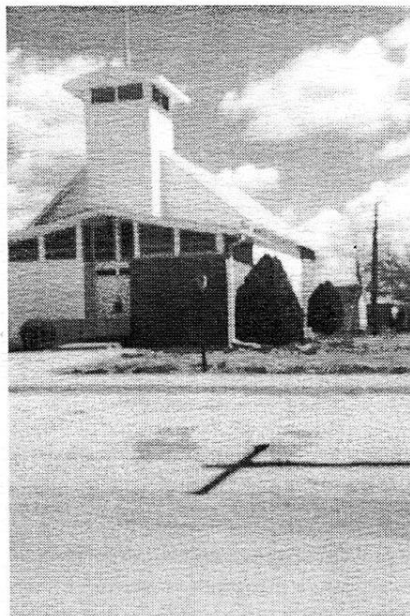
The original location of First St. John was four miles north and one mile west of Kensington. The original site of Zion was 5 miles straight north of Athol marked by the cemetery at that location. Rozena Bohm provided the land for the building of the Zion church with the condition that it would return to her or her heirs if there was no church there for 7 years, therefore 7 years after Zion joined with First St. John, ownership of the land went to Harry Bohm, who then deeded it to Pleasant township, so it is being maintained by the taxpayers of Pleasant township.



Everyone buried or owning plots in the cemetery are either charter members of Zion, their descendants, or former members.

WE TRULY BECOME ONE

July 16, 1959 is a day never to be forgotten in the history of First St. John. On that day members and contractors were working feverishly, putting the final touches on the new church, a fire was discovered in the southeast corner of the building. Valiant efforts

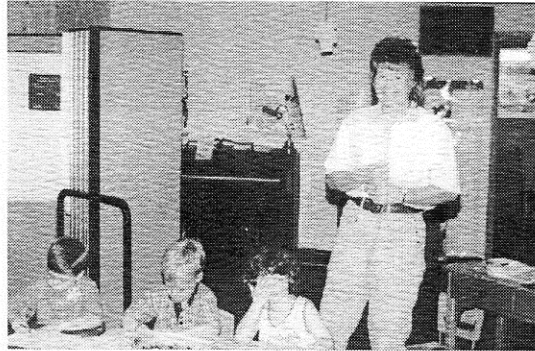


by the Kensington Fire Department and members held the fire damage to the roof and water damage to the interior. At first there was a great feeling of depression and sadness but the members began immediately cleaning up and working on the building. On August 23, 1959, only 35 days later than the original date, the new church was dedicated. The presence of the power of God available to his believers was evident in that instead of the fire being a disaster it was a blessing. The donated work to rebuild left enough money from insurance proceeds to purchase new pews (currently being used) and best of all the old congregations of Germantown and Zion now were now one.

In August of 1961 Pastor Frese accepted a call to be a missionary in Arkansas. During the 1961 vacancy the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (Guild) and the Ladies Aid were combined into the First St. John's Ladies Guild. Rev. H. Dennis Hill served the congregation, his first assignment, from 1962-1965. During the 1965-66 vacancy, First St. John and First Lutheran (Phillipsburg), on the advice of the Kansas District, entered into a dual parish agreement. The Synodical Board of Assignment with the consent of Rev. Gerald Preuss answered our dual parish call. Rev. Preuss and his family lived in Kensington until 1978, leaving to accept a call to start a new congregation (St. Andrew's) in Wichita. Rev Frank Rothfuss next served our dual parish from 1972-1978, living in Phillipsburg.

The second century for First St. John began with facing its long time relationship with our American Lutheran Brethren being in conflict with a majority in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. First St. John stayed its course and as a result we today can hold our heads high for accepting the blessings of our Lord and dealing fairly with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

During the 1978 vacancy, after much prayerful discussion, First St. John and First Lutheran amiably dissolved the dual parish agreement and each called its own pastor to fulfill their individual and collective ministries. Rev. Jerry Peck was installed as pastor in 1978 and served until 1985. This was an exciting time for the congregation because Tiny Tot time was started which became our current Pre-School, now serving 52 children, four days a week, with Stacy Cole as teacher. Tiny Tot Time was a program for children ages 3-5 in our community to experience basic learning and social skills. This program was such a success, it was felt that a permanent preschool was needed.



The Preschool would provides children in our congregation and community an opportunity for learning basic social and developmental skills as well as a basis for their future Christian education. The original Board of Control was Pastor Jerry Peck, Kim Yoxall, Jayne Scott, and Joann Flint. After much preparation and planning, a grant was received from the Kansas District and the First St.

John Lutheran Preschool opened in January, 1984 with 40 eager students. The instructor was Annalee Kuhlmann and Karen Panter was her assistant. Other instructors-assistants over the years have been, Joann Flint, Susan Ratliff, Carol Westerman, and Susan Buckley.

The Preschool continues to be self-supporting and non-profit under the Board of Education. Current members are: Kim Yoxall, President; Debra Levin, Treasurer; Becky Levin, Secretary; and Kim Rietzke.

In July 1979, the congregation voted, in cooperation with the Kansas District, to sponsor a Vietnam refugee program. Several families were assisted by this plan in Kensington. El Dean Holthus attended the 1979 LC-MS Synodical convention in St Louis, Mo. On October 10, 1979 five families from the former Pleasant Green Lutheran church joined First St. John; they were: Harvey Rathert, Errol Rathert, Albert Rathert, Roy Ferguson and Erna Ferguson. All were former members of First St. John or had family members that were current members. In 1980 an addition was added to the front of the church providing a pastor's office, a



Harvey Rathert & Pastor Peck



Selma, Verda & Albert Rathert

conference room, handicap accessible restroom and an assembly room. In 1981 a scholarship program was developed to assist members and former members with their expenses as they prepare for full time church work. Tim Wangerin was a beneficiary of the plan and currently Allen Holthus is receiving assistance. In 1982 the current hymnal was adopted. In June 1985 Rev Peck accepted a Kansas District call to become a Missionary at Large in Gardner, KS.

June 21, 1985 will go down in history as a day that First St. John received a special blessing from our Lord, on that day Rob Bogart presented a name to the congregation and a call was issued to Rev. Dave Hutson, who was installed on August 25, 1985. Pastor Hutson has served our congregation and the Kensington community longer than any of our former pastors. His tenure and leadership are providing a period of material and spiritual growth equal to or greater than any time in our 125 years.





In 1990 a decision was made to move the parsonage across the street from the church, finish the basement, add a garage and modernize the entire house. As the years progressed, the congregation aged, and activities increased it became evident we needed larger worship and ground level activity areas. 1996-1998 saw a time that the worship area was enlarged, existing pews angled, altar area remodeled and

our pride and joy the parish hall, which was dedicated on February 8, 1998. It provides service to both members and community. Over the years, our material improvements have been possible through our members who have been blessed by the Lord and have shared their blessing in the form of gifts to the congregation. Loans to the Church Extension Fund have allowed the congregation to borrow money and complete the projects as planned. We are currently debt free due to generous contributions of all our members but a special thanks is due to Alan



and Jan Levin, Tuscon, Az. and to the late Harvey Rathert. Many things have happened since 1985 that are probably more God pleasing than our building programs. Our Christian education continues with Pre-School, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Adult Christian education includes Lucado Bible Studies, Crossways, adult Bible class, Prairie Haven worship services, Prairie Haven Bible study led by Ivan Fiene. We have special programs to recognize wedding anniversaries, parent-child activities, Guild picnics, Fall children's activities, summer lakeside services and an annual planning event to set nearby and future goals.



*Ivan Fiene, Larry Joe Wachs,
and Pastor Peck.*



Pastor Joel Heisterman, First Lutheran - Phillipsburg

The newest and most exciting activity involving our members and our long time friends from First Lutheran and others is the **Christmas Barn Service during the week preceeding the holiday**. The service is held in a real barn just west of town and includes live animals. Worshippers sit on straw bales and a great time is had by all. A soup supper is also included as a part of the evening.

Our members also serve the community as Emergency Medical Technicians, volunteer fire fighters, Lions Club, American Legion, Auxiliary members, and many more activities. The only congregational service organization that has remained intact through the years has been the Ladies Guild and their parent group, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. These ladies meet faithfully on the First Wednesday of each month for Bible study and fellowship, they also quilt every Wednesday of the month. Their Mite boxes have provided mission support for the LWML and the monetary fruits of their quilting have provided assistance over the years not only to the congregation but also individually to the pastors. Our youth, the future of the congregation, are involved in Bible study, field trips not only for enjoyment but also to serve the needy in the communities they visit. They provide special music for our services, assist with reading and ushering. The activities are open to all and therefore are an evangelism outreach.

As we complete 125 years in this place we have survived because of what the Lord has done for us, hence, our theme **BUILT ON CHRIST, BLESSED BY THE FATHER, BOUND BY THE SPIRIT.**



Pastor Dave
FIRST SAINT JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
125 YEARS OF GRACE

*“BUILT ON CHRIST,
BLESSED BY THE FATHER,
BOUND BY THE SPIRIT”*

A 125th Anniversary of a Congregation is a celebration of not only its past history, but of its present and future mission and ministry as well.

A 125th Anniversary by its nature raises questions and problems of remembrance and historical significance. At this point in the history of our church, we still have members who remember first hand the life and stories of the early “Founding Fathers” and charter members of the two churches that make up the history of First Saint John. In the next 25-50 years the church will very likely see the loss of such people. The only remembrance of their history of faith will be a collection of stories, some written, and some told by family members. Therefore, it seems especially important that we as a church do what we can on this 125th Anniversary to insure that the full history of First Saint John is preserved.

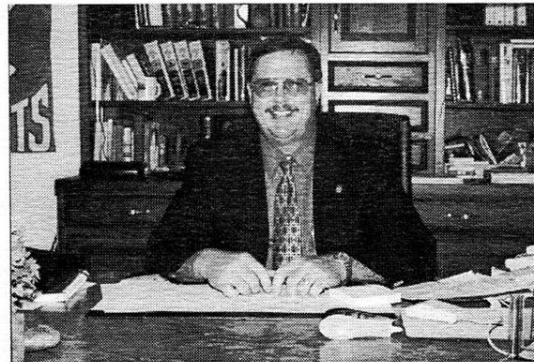
We, as members of the church today, exist and grow on the foundations of the church that such “Pioneer Saints” planted for us. All living members today have inherited the mission and ministry of First Saint John or (Zion Lutheran Church, Athol & First St. John, Germantown). For us, a church was already built, membership already present, and Pastors already called. We have continued to grow and develop firmly rooted and based on the faithfulness and efforts of those who went before us. We owe them a lot and dare not forget their sacrifices for us and for the Lord.

The spirit of First Saint John Lutheran Church today is in many ways similar to that same pioneer spirit. We do not approach mission and ministry today with an attitude that says, "Let's just do what we can to survive or 'get by' as a church and community. The early church founders built with the hope and faith that God would bless their efforts and make their church and labor for the Lord fruitful, producing for many generations to come. The members of First Saint John continue the legacy of faithfulness that celebrates the strengths and merits of the past yet always searches for new and effective ways to promote the work of the Kingdom of God and the power of the Gospel. It is a joy to be a part of such a history.

I read through the centennial book and was amazed that so many former pastors of First Saint John only stayed here for a few years. The longest term of any pastor was only 6 years. Several of the former pastors that I have known look back at their ministry in Kensington and wish that they had stayed. They left First Saint John for a new call and found that what they had left behind was very precious to them.

From my own perspective, I have never known a greater place to call "home". A home is more than location and a church more than a building. It is a gathering of people who are to you, family and friends. My thanks to so many of you who have made me and mine, a part of your family. A church "BUILT ON CHRIST, BLESSED BY THE FATHER, BOUND BY THE SPIRIT". This family of faith will continue to be a blessing to our people and community from now until the day that Christ comes again and we are all called to the glory of the faithful.

Pastor Dave Hutson



Our Church



Ted & Ruth Levin

We want to congratulate First Saint John on their 125th Anniversary. When Eldean Holthus, got up and said "if we wanted anything in the anniversary book we had better get started." Trying to bring back some memories of events or things about First Saint John - my mind seems to rattle around wondering where to start or what to say.

My parents lived four and one half miles west of Germantown church Henry Suchsland lived another three quarter west. If the roads were bad two Sundays together, the Henry Suchsland family would come by with team and wagon and we



would all go to church. There were no rock or gravel roads back then and Hi way 36 wasn't that great either, very little gravel if you could find it. I can't remember not going to church for over two weeks, unless we were ill.

Also remember going to Bible School. Arnold and I rode our pony double the four and half miles everyday, except when Henry Suchsland's 3 girls (Mildred, Verna, and Margaret) came by, then one of us would ride with them. They had a pony hitched to a two-wheel cart. Those seemed like long days and Bible school seemed to last all summer.

I remember the good old, fashioned Mission Festival at Charley Rietzke's grove. We had lots of fun. What celebrations those were.

Remember too, the Friday evening Lenten Service when the dust storm rolled in. The dust sifted in everywhere. Remember Pastor Flechenstein taking out his

handkerchief wiping the dust from the pulpit, and the bible and from his forehead. After church on the way home, Henry Suchsland's car stopped. They rode with us the rest of the way home, also stayed all night. The dust sifted through everywhere and settled on everything. The dust was really hard to clean too. Arnold, my brother asked me if I remember the lighting rods on our house and garage with a red glow from static electric. I don't remember that part. The grasshoppers were really bad over other years when they ate everything green and even the bark on trees. Lots of farmers culled a lot of their cattle, because there wasn't anything for them to eat except prickly pears and Russian thistles. There were also a lot of jackrabbits. We liked to hunt them and I got to be a pretty good shot.

As long as I can remember, my mother (Anna) and Minnie Brunow were the two organists until the church was moved to its present site in Kensington. Since 1961 Ruth (my wife) and Alice Rietzke rotated playing the organ and later Ruth & Kim Baumann, until the present time. This means one of my family members has been an organist going on 80 years. I'm thankful to them for their dedication to our church and our God.

Many other events I remember: At a voters meeting we voted to move our church from the country to Kensington. At the same time we voted to merge with the Zion church from North of Athol. Later the voters met to call a pastor for Saint John alone before we were always a dual parish. We appreciated the time and talents of our pastors and members of First Saint John. I'm thankful to them for their dedication to our church and God. We remember many blessings.

Ruth and I, are thankful we belong to the family of First Saint John. May the Lord be with you all and give you his peace.



Zion Memories

Albert Tuxhorn, son of charter member Herman Tuxhorn, remembers that his sister, Rena (Tuxhorn) Simmonds, was the first confirmand at Zion and his sister, Ida Tuxhorn and W.W. Smith were the first to be married at Zion. His aunt (Charlotte Ujenry) Tuxhorn) Funeral services were the first to be held at Zion.

Albert remembers that one of the usher's duties was to greet people that came to church with a handshake. The usher used a clineken bodel a small bag connected to a 6 or 7 ft. stick to gather up the collection.

Kerosene lamps fastened to the top of each window were used for lighting. A wood stove was used for heating.

Both Albert and Elva (Caspers) Fiene remembered that the ladies sat at the right side and the men sat on the left side of the church during services.

Both Albert and Ellen (Caspers) Rust remembers Rev. Domsch coming by a two wheel horse-drawn buggy to take them to a Christian Day School. Rev. Domsch could only speak German, so classes were taught in German.

Laura (Caspers) Holthus, daughter of charter member Herman and Tena (Tuxhorn) Caspers remember that a cistern was the only source of water at Zion. when it was dry weather, water had to be hauled there to use.

Many of Zion's Christian Day schoolteachers boarded with members of the congregation.



Al & Barb Holthus

Elva (Caspers) Fiene remembers attending Christian Day School. The school was started in the fall of 1914. Teachers were Martin Domsch, Helen Harebine and Rev. E.G. Spruth, a Seminary student who was also pastor at Zion.

Confirmation classes were held on Saturday afternoons during the summer.

Zion's first Sunday school was begun in 1940. When Henry Knoke was pastor. We had three Sunday school classes and a Bible Class, meeting in three comers of the church and the Bible Class in the center. Rev. Knoke came to Zion one evening each week for Sunday school teacher's meetings.

Mission Festivals were held outside either in a pasture along the creek or the church put up a tent and dinner was served there. The men brought saw horses and boards for the tables and benches. L.W.M.L. meetings were held in the homes with potluck dinners.

Sharleen (Holthus) Allen remembers Mission Festivals with dinner being served in a tent beside the church. Drinking water was brought in cream cans. Coffee was made in big granite coffeepots on top of gas camp stoves.

Alma (Tuxhorn) Emme and Viola (Smith) Bohm were the organists, as the congregation grew smaller, it was hard to find organists. My junior and senior year in college would often find me the road from Hays traveling to Zion to play the organ.

Rev. Berner was my confirmation pastor. He was strict and expected you to know the answers. I was the only one in my confirmation class. One Sunday, a friend and I were sitting in the front of church, as children will do, not with our parents. We were not paying attention to the sermon. All of a sudden, it occurred to us, it was awfully quiet, looking up we saw Rev. Berner had stopped his sermon and was watching us, to get out attention. Needless to say, we sat with our parents for a long time after that.

One Saturday night it rained making the roads muddy on Sunday morning. We drove the jeep, picking up Claude & Elva Fiene on the way. I was then sent to the highway to meet a young vacancy pastor from Franklin, Nebr. He was told if he didn't care to have services for so few, that the congregation would understand. He said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them." So services we had. Funerals were a challenge at Zion, because there was only the center aisle, and to get the casket down to the front did not allow for much room. When vacancy pastors would serve Zion, we would often have services in the evening, closing with the hymn, "Abide with Me". This would be sung, as the setting sun would shine in the west windows. There was a feeling of peace and tranquillity in the little church called Zion on the hill in the country north of Athol.

The Zion Tuxhorn-Caspers lineage became interwoven with First St. John when they merged, Sharleen (Holthus) and Claude Allen's son James, is believed to be the first member to receive the Pro Deo at Patria Citation (God and Country Award), the highest award that a Boy Scout can receive in the Lutheran church. This was under the guidance of Rev. Franklin Rothfuss on February 8, 1976.

Allen Holthus remembers sharing organist duties with Janet Bohm when he was in the upper elementary years. That was when it was the foot pump organ. He said he was 5'4" and 90 lb. when he got his driver's permit, so you can imagine his size in the upper elementary grades.

Allen quotes "I also recalled being acolyte and having the wick go out after lighting only 4 candles. I left the other two unlit and sat down. I figured if you lost the original flame that was it and you were done. After the service Uncle Claude Fiene told me that it would be okay if I just light the wick again off of one of the other candles." I also remember worshipping with all of our coats on because the pilot light had been blown out on the furnace. It was relit but the church wouldn't be warm until the service was almost completed. I also remember my Sunday school room being in the very back pew on the East Side with Avis Scheuerman as teacher. I remember the church not having electricity, which necessitated the pump organ and the gas lanterns on the side.

I also recall gathering at Zion on Saturday morning with Pastor Frese, Elroy and Janet Bohm for confirmation instruction. I studied the examination questions in Franklin the night before since you had to know them all. If one of the other people missed the answer, you got the question so there was no pattern for learning every third one. Also the level grassy parking area around the church made a great football field on Sunday afternoons for Wendell Bohm, Jerry Brien, and I.

I think of the big tent being brought in for special events like a mission festival when it was necessary to serve a meal. I also think of the need to check for snakes before getting too comfortable in the "outdoor facilities" of the parish in those years. Scouting for snakes was a job usually given by Mom and the Aunts when they required the facility.



Rex Wachs

1. Sunday School with Albert Levin and Pearl Ratliff as teachers.
2. We had two weeks of Bible School after grade school was out in the spring. Usually, it was the third week in April.
3. Sunday afternoon service every other week, and one Sunday a month, German Service. The sermons were an hour long, or longer. In the summer time, the temperature would be around 100.
4. Taking collection with a pole with a bag on the end.
5. Communion four times a year.
6. Pastor serving two churches, so we had an early service in the morning, or in the afternoon every other Sunday, as he had to drive 8 to 9 miles in between.
7. Ladies aid every Wednesday afternoon.
8. The ladies would take turns cleaning the church
9. Most of the men would set on one side of the aisle, women sat on the other.



Memories of Germantown **From the "Brunow's"**

† *Homer & Goldie Brunow*

1. Women & children seated on 1 side of the church, men on the other side.
2. Men often left their pipes & cigars on the outside steps before going in the church, retrieved them immediately after services.
3. Bible school was every day during the summer for about 6 weeks.
4. Ladies Aid quilting an young married group had Bible Study - calling ourselves "Lutheran Leaders"

5. Mom (Minnie Brunow) devoted many years to playing the organ at service and ladies aid projects.

6. Goldie was nearly refused communion the 1st time we went after our marriage, because I belonged to A.L.C before, and hadn't discussed it with the Pastor before communion, we were asked to remain after church and the Pastor straightened us out on that subject!

7. We were among the first to set together at services (men & women together in the same side of the pews) we didn't ask if it was OK!

8. All day Mission Festivals.

† *Lawrence Brunow*

1. That he rode a horse to confirmation classes on Saturday.

2. Rev. Fleckenstein would rap them on their heads if they wouldn't sit still and would say 'SIT STILL -SIT STILL'

3. That the Wagners' Store was ¼ miles north of the church.

† *Pearl (Brunow) Townsend*

1. I remember that my Dad (and other men of the church) used to take Sen-Sen and let it melt in their mouth (I think that was to get rid of the cigar and/or pipe smoke taste/and smell in their mouth). I don't think I even liked the smell of Sen-Sen all that much either.

2. They used to have German services every third Sunday (I think) anyway, one Sunday they had German worship and several of us kids talked Mom into letting us stay outside and play as we couldn't understand the German anyhow. But we got quite noisy and the windows were open.

(We didn't have air conditioning) and Mom came outside and got us and marched us right down to the front pew (right in the middle of the sermon). Needless to say, we never got to stay outside during German services again.

3. One of my earliest memories was that the men sat on one side of the church and the women sat on the other and, usually, the women took the small children with them. As I got a little older, this changed and the men and women sat together (this was a change for the better).

4. We used to have Bible School (after public school closed). I think it was for several weeks, but it seemed like all summer at the time. We didn't have crafts like Bible school does now.

5. The women quilted on "Ladies Aid" day and they would let us little girls quilt. (kept us busy) and then I am sure they ripped out what we did - but they always took the time to show us and let us put in some stitches. Pearl and Alice still make quilts today).

† *Alice (Brunow) Rietzke*

1. We did not have separate Sunday school classrooms. Our younger classes (2) were held in the front pews, one on each side. The older children held theirs in the basement Adult class was in the back of the church.

2. We had Mission Festival in the fall with service in the morning, a pot luck dinner or sandwiches, salad & dessert, then another service in the afternoon. Sometime the children would get to stay outside during the afternoon service but when we got too loud, our parents would come get us and take us inside. (because we didn't have air conditioning the windows were open and you could hear the children playing outside.)

3. There was no running water, in fact we carried water from the Parsonage or Art Wagner's farm. We used tin cups for drinking. Later went to china dishes.

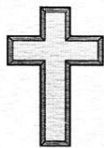
4. We didn't have a "collection plate" like today's. Back then it was a velvet (Large cup like) on the end of a long pole & they passed it by each person. It was called a "Klink-boodle".

5. The men usually sat on one side of the church and women on the other. Most of the time the children sat with their mothers.

6. We did have a "Walter League" group. It was fun to go to the Zone Rally meetings.

7. We had Saturday morning Confirmation classes through the school year. We also had Bible School in the summer for at least 2 weeks.

8. We didn't have electricity. The organ was the old pump style.

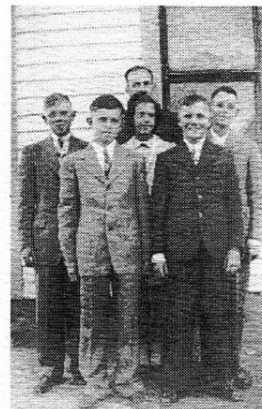


Memories **By El Dean Holthus**

It is so exciting for me to have a part in this special celebration and recall experiences so long in the past. Zion-Germantown-First St. John has been such a large part of my life and the lives of my family.

My memories as a small child include having to perform for the Christmas Eve program. I always felt deprived because we never had very many children (Duane Bohm, Wayne Wehe, Delores (Bohm) Lyon, LaVern Stutheit, and Kenneth Tuxhorn), so it was necessary for us to memorize several different parts. I also remember that the Pastor went behind the altar to put on this gown and I always wondered what was back there because my Grandfather Herman Caspers told me that under no circumstance could anyone approach the altar unless they were an Elder or the Pastor. I had occasion when I was in the church alone to peek back there and guess what I found; altar supplies and hangers, was I ever disappointed, because I thought after the risk I had taken something really special should have been there. I remember confirmation instruction on Saturdays and during the summer.

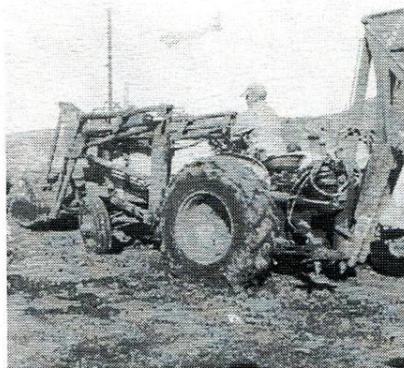
The summer of 1945 was special because we had instruction from 9am. to 2:30 PM. Pastor Wittrock had a call and wanted to finish our class, we took a lunch for noon. I still have my advanced bible history book that has the stains from plum juice that leaked from a jar in my lunch sack. We were required to have the catechism memorized from front to back. I will always remember Pastor Wittrock for two things. He drove a little 1937 Ford with a 65hp engine and he never learned the coordination between clutch and accelerator so when he started out that little engine was roaring before he released the clutch. The second thing is that in all my years of Christian and public education he was the only teacher that gave me a spanking which I deserved because I had been very unkind to a girl attending our summer school from Smith Center.



*Rev. Wittrock, Lavern Stutheit,
Wayne Wehe, Delores Bohm,
Eldean Holthus,
and Duane Bohm*

I must include in my Zion memories my Grand-Pa Caspers. I never realized the sacrifices he and Grand-ma made to make sure that Zion survived until 1959 when we were discussing merging with Germantown. As a young man I was all for it. Then he shared all he had done over the years and why he wanted it to stay there in Pleasant township. After a majority of the congregation voted to merge and close Zion it had to have broken his heart, as a charter member, to know it was going to be no more. Yet on the day scheduled to begin tearing down the Zion building he was the first on the site. Then I knew a little about Christian sacrifice.

I must include my mom in my memories, because she was the one that always said we would go to church, Sunday school and catechism. Of the many things memories involving my Mom, I will include only two; one is that on mission festival Sundays with an all day service she would dress me in an all white outfit and tell me not to get dirty, so I would look nice for the afternoon service. How is a young boy at a picnic and playing with other boys going to stay clean? The second memory involves a time that I think she wanted to just melt into the floor. I had a new pair of cowboy boots; she specifically



told me I could not wear those boots to church on a communion Sunday. I managed some way to get them on and into church without her knowledge, she let me know that I probably did not receive any blessing from the communion, because of my disobeying her.

One last Zion memory is that of the baptism of our oldest son Michael in 1954. The occasion was special because there were five generations present, all members of Zion. Alice Tuxhorn, Tena Caspers, Laura Holthus, El Dean Holthus and Michael Holthus. It is hard to believe that I have been a member of First St. John for 40 years. It has been a special experience for my family and me. I have never been sorry that I was a member and I pray that it will survive for many more years. I have been involved with many activities and families over the years, but I must mention one group that was always there when needed and that is the Levin's (Arnold, Ted, Ike, and their families). They have always had the equipment, connections, expertise and Christian attitude to assist in solving the problems of First Saint John and our fine facility we now enjoy. It would not have been possible without them.



Francis & Ada Gaines

My Great Grandparents, Michael & Louisa Emme and their family came from Wisconsin in 1872. Making the trip were his four sons, William, Julious, Herman, and August, my grandfather, also 2 daughters, Tina and Augusta & husband Fredrick Wagner.

They each homesteaded 80 acres and Fredrick Wagner could homestead 160 acres, because he had been a soldier in the civil war.

As the settlers moved in came a need for a center which Wagners started with a post office called Germantown.

They opened a school north of the corner, then had church services at the school in 1874; they built a church south of the Germantown corner on land Michael Emme had homesteaded. They built a new church in 1926, which my 3 brothers and sister and I were baptized & confirmed.

My father Louie Emme lived on the land August Emme homesteaded and moved to town in 1948 when we were married and we lived on the place and Francis farmed the five homesteads, which are still in the family today.

After they moved the church to Kensington in 1959, my dad said, "It felt funny to farm over the spot where he was married".



Delores (Bohm) Lyon

My grandmother Rosa Bohm gave the land Zion was built on. I remember one year we were going to have our Christmas program, my father, Fred Bohm, drove his pickup up by the window and ran a cord to the Christmas tree, so we could have our first electric lights on the tree. what a treat!

My Grandparents John & Etta Smith were charter members. My mother Viola (Smith) Bohm was baptized April 8, 1909 in the Frecky schoolhouse before the church was built. She was confirmed at Zion on May 20, 1923. She was one of the organists for several years.

W.W. Smith built the altar & podium at Zion and the podium is still being used in the Parish Hall at First Saint John.

I was baptized Dec. 3, 1933 by Pastor Fleckenstein and Confirmed Oct 14, 1945 by Pastor A. Wittrock. Mr. & Mrs. W.W. Smith were my sponsors.

Our daughter Teresa (Lyon) Arment was the last one to be baptized at Zion. (April 5, 1959).

The whole family was active members being Elders, Sunday school Teachers, Board Members and Ladies Aid members.

One incident I remember, Erwin and I lived in the Rock House and a skunk had gotten under our porch. On Sunday morning we walked into church and "All" eyes were on us.

A quote from Eldon -He said he and Erwin walked many times the four miles to Saturday morning Confirmation Class and also walked home again.



The Wangerins

Our grandfather and his wife, August and Ulrike Wangerin came to the United States from Germany as newly weds and homesteaded the first non-creek land in north-west Smith County. Having lived near Cawker City for a year or so, they arrived here in 1873/74. Their farm began two miles north of the St. John Lutheran church of Germantown of which August was a charter member. To move quickly along, we will skip to 1911, when our father, one of their sons, went to Nebraska, courted on his motorcycle and brought home, a pretty little bride of English ancestry. This is a short story of Estella A. Vasey, 21 year old wife of Franz August Wangerin, our parents.

They lived with the senior Wangerins in their large frame home for two years while their own two story frame home was being built across the road. German was the language spoken in that home. Estella did not speak nor understand the German language nor did she think her children should learn anything but the English language of the new America. She dutifully attended church at Germantown, where the sermons were in German and joined the Ladies Aid where all the ladies quilted and chatted in German. When asked if she thought the ladies said anything about her, she replied she thought they probably did but with her ready sense of humor, she tossed it off and diligently applied her sewing skills to the quilting, a pastime which she loved her entire life.

Franz, a member of St. John since birth, brought Estella into the church in 1912 and they remained members the rest of their lives and brought up all seven of their children, baptizing and confirming them in the Lutheran faith. Estella remained a member of the Ladies Aid and the Guild, the members of which grew to be her dearest

friends. Tillie Rietzke, Minnie Brunow, Katie Wachs, Maggie Emme and Hulda Gutzman were near her age.

Franz and Stella worked on their farm and raised the children and also cooked and cleaned for two live-in hired men. Her fried chicken and home made bread and apple and cherry pies from the two orchards, which enhanced the farmyard, were favorites. When the older children were quite young, Franz used to take her to Bloomington and put them on the train to Orleans, Neb. where she visited her parents and siblings. She was the 10th of 13 children in this jolly Scotch and English family who adoringly called her "Essie" and were so different from the austere, reserved lifestyle of the German community she married into.

The children grew, the farm prospered, then plunged into the depression of the 30s. Two of the children became teachers of Smith County rural schools, one son was forced to leave the farm for reasons of health, a daughter left to seek work in the city, and two sons joined the armed services

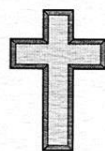
And were off to war, on opposite sides of the world. The two youngest spent the 40s on the farm until they, too, traveled to the cities to school and to other careers. All left with the blessings of Franz and Estella to do the best they could in the manner and faith in which they were brought up.

Family pictures show Estella on the horse pulled haybuck as she pitched in to help put up hay. Also, a photo with her feed buckets as she babied and cared for her flocks of turkeys which numbered as high as 1,000 at one time. She always had a large vegetable garden, preserving many quarts of fruit and vegetables for the families' use but always finding time and a spot for flowers with roses being her favorite. Her peonies and iris still grace the family plots at Germantown cemetery. When the boys left for the war, she did the milking and milked six cows to her youngest daughter's one. She also hitched up to the wagon and helped the youngest son to shuck corn and spent the whole day along side Franz and son in the field. This remarkable woman, wonderful wife, mother, and grandmother also instilled a great sense of humor and told lots of funny stories to her family that are forever a part of their English heritage, sometimes not expected from a family with the last name of Wangerin.

After World War II, both of the veteran sons returned to the farm. One built a new home on the old homestead of August Wangerin and the other lived in a small tenant home on the farm, and subsequently moved into the large home with Franz and Estella. Here, the grandparents enjoyed their new grandchildren. Estella rocked many of the babies while her daughter-in-law took over the household duties and the two women developed a devoted relationship reminding me of Naomi and Ruth in the Bible.

Franz and Estella celebrated fifty years of love and marriage in 1961; and in January, 1962, Franz succumbed to a stroke and died in Colorado Springs where his father had died after retiring from the farm in 1922.

In 1974, Estella moved to a son's house in Kensington to live alone for the first time in her life. She lived there four years enjoying her newfound independence and the frequent visits of her out of town children and also visiting them in the cities they now called home. She closed that home and returned to the loving care of her son and daughter-in-law in the farmhouse her husband built for her where she was cared for with love and devotion. She began to display symptoms of declining health and in 1979, she needed more assistance and entered the nursing home. She lived there past her 91st birthday and quietly joined her Lord and Savior on Christmas morning, 1980.



Our Grandmother, Rozena Hildebrandt Bohm

*Helen and Roy Ferguson and Family
Janet and Burdette Hermanns and Family
Arlene Ratliff and Family*

She came with her mother, Juliana, to Smith County in 1872 when she was two years old. They lived in a dugout for 16 years before they could afford a barn and a house. They built the barn first because the animals needed shelter from the winter storms.

We remember her telling that she didn't always make it to church on time because of chores or roads or something. But if she made it before the sermon started, then she was happy. The Zion Lutheran Church property was donated by Rozena Bohm.

CHALLENGES FOR TOMORROW AT FIRST SAINT JOHN

We have considered the life and times of First Saint John Lutheran Church, remembering its history, giving thanks for the faithful service of those who have gone before, and those who continue to serve today. Each generation has served faithfully with its' own strengths and abilities. The challenges of life and its needs shift with each generation and therefore the focus and avenues of ministry must also shift to meet the needs of the people.

Looking back at the characteristics of church members in the last 125 years builds quite a portrait of faithfulness. Members came primarily from large and stable families. Many of them stayed in the area and supported their church. The church was a major part of family and social life. Members could be characterized as intensely loyal, faithful, and dedicated to the work of the Lord and His church.

What has changed since then? EVERYTHING!

The times we live in now are characterized not just by change but by rapid change.

1. We continue to struggle with the break down of the family structure.
2. Mobility, the ease of transportation to any where in the world, has meant that few of our children remain in the area.
3. Very few if any multigenerational homes exist with relatively little interaction between generations.
4. We have a great many choices and opportunities of things to do socially. The church no longer provides primary social functions.
5. We have grown up in a very affluent society. Plenty of money and easy credit is available for all our needs. "Need something - use the card." This generation typically has a large debt load while the one preceding it paid cash.
6. Loyalty to organized religion is on a social decline. Churches are becoming more commercial and competing with one another for membership. People will seek out the church that best fits their needs, regardless of denomination,.
7. Technology and communication capabilities are advancing rapidly.

How will the church respond in the next 25 years? It will have to learn flexibility in practice but maintain the truth of the scriptures and doctrines of the church. Here might be 10 suggestions:

1. The church must focus on short term goals. Things change very fast. It is hard to dream long term.

2. The membership will be more interested in short programs lasting no more than 6-8 weeks. Follow it with something else.

3. Church programs must lift up, serve, and elevate the family. Don't divide men and women into separate groups. If you provide something for parents, provide a program for the children at the same time; - perhaps whole family together.

4. Even small churches will have to offer some programs. While they can build on the strength of fellowship and family that by nature is part of the small church, they will also have to offer programs that answer the needs of families and people in their area.

5. The church will have to be involved in constant evaluation of their ministry and the needs of their people. With so much change happening so fast, we cannot get behind.

6. We should listen to and serve better the college students from the church. Perhaps they can tell us what the church could offer them and others like them in our area.

7. First Saint John will need to continue to be a viable force in the community.

8. The church may need to shift how it does business toward the goal of reducing the number of meetings. People will come to a meeting if you can give them a good reason for being there, but they won't come to a meeting with an open agenda. They want to use what free time they have wisely and don't want to waste it on anything "fruitless".

9. The church may need to develop a new way to look at stewardship. Young families today may not have the resources to support the work of the church as our older members have. Many of them will not be able to afford retirement and will have little savings. What will we do to replace the "faithful givers" who have so graciously and generously supported special projects of the church?

10. The church must be always searching for new ways to do old things. It can never sit still. It must always be looking, searching, evaluating, and trying different approaches. First Saint John has done so in the past and will certainly continue in "2000+."

WHERE TO NOW (1999-2024)

By El Dean Holthus

You have just finished reading the highlights of the past 125 years, including personal family stories. Now let's look at First St. John's challenge for the next 25 years.

The main challenge facing our pioneer forefathers was to survive. Environment, weather, medical care and transportation were a few of the challenges encountered and conquered. Opportunities for organized worship were rare and subject to the schedule of the circuit riders, yet they persevered and established this congregation. The next challenge was World War I, with its local persecution of German speaking Christians, followed by the great depression, followed by the drought and dust storms of the 1930's, Again the early Christians continued to provide for their pastors and build and maintain churches and parsonages. Just as the community and country were recovering economically World War II was started and young men and women, in their prime, were called to serve their country. Several families lost loved ones and others suffered tremendous emotional and physical wounds. The people here on the home front kept the church alive as a social and as a religious center. Everyone should read Tom Brokaw's book, "The Greatest Generation", to appreciate where we are today. We have a microcosm of the people in the book here at First St. John's. All the financial security we enjoy today is due to their efforts and sacrifices and the Lord's blessing of those efforts.

As we face the future we must learn from the past and realize that no organization, especially a Christian congregation, can ever be static, it must move forward in the work of the Lord or it stagnates into a maintenance mode.

As a congregation we face the new century and the next 25 years in a very comfortable position with a great Pastor, physical facilities second to none and a very favorable financial position. What could go wrong? We could become complacent, indifferent to members needs, and lackadaisical in maintenance of our physical plant and most of all lose sight of our mission in this place; to tell the story of God's plan for his people here and the world. We must find the spirit of the pioneer, the loyalty and courage of the war veteran, and the understanding of Christian responsibility shared by all in the past 125 years or this will be a big empty building. If we remember, we are **BUILT ON CHRIST, BLESSED BY THE FATHER, BOUND BY THE SPIRIT**, God through his Holy Spirit will give us the will and the way to lead on for many more years.

First Saint John Lutheran Church

Loyalty To Christ and Country

<i>Claude Allen</i>	<i>Roy Wangerin</i>
<i>John Brien</i>	<i>Paul Wachs</i>
<i>Lawrence Brunow</i>	<i>John Wachs</i>
<i>Marvin Bronson</i>	<i>Ray Wachs</i>
<i>Phil Baumann</i>	<i>Calvin Wachs</i>
<i>Ralph Baumann</i>	<i>Rex Wachs</i>
<i>Homer Brunow</i>	<i>Fred Wachs</i>
<i>Alvin Caspers</i>	<i>Howard Grauerholz</i>
<i>Ivan Fiene</i>	<i>Irvin Levin</i>
<i>Vern Goakey</i>	<i>Henry Levin</i>
<i>Francis Gaines</i>	<i>Chester Fiene</i>
<i>Wayne Gutzman</i>	<i>Gordon Reneberg</i>
<i>Lawrence Grauerholz</i>	<i>Lanny Baumann</i>
<i>Harold Grauerholz</i>	<i>Steven Wangerin</i>
<i>Clayton Hooper</i>	<i>Alan Levin</i>
<i>Jay Jones</i>	<i>Jerry Brien</i>
<i>Theodore Levin</i>	<i>Robert Wangerin</i>
<i>Ivan Levin</i>	<i>Michael Holthus</i>
<i>Waverly Rice</i>	<i>Dale Lyon</i>
<i>Erwin Rietzke</i>	<i>Royce Levin</i>
<i>Leland Wangerin</i>	<i>El Dean Holthus</i>



During WW II, the medallion shown to the right and left was given by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod to servicemen after their entry into the service. On one side the inscription reads, "Loyalty to Christ and Country". Inscribed on the other side are the words, "In Case of Need Notify Lutheran Chaplain".



Greater love hath no man, that he lay down his life for another. John 15:13



