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The Soul of a Church

David Cavallini
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Accepted by the Department of History
of Illinois Wesleyan University in
fulfillment of the requirements for
departmental honors

Richard D. Leonard
Project Advisor

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THE SOUL OF A CHURCH

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A thesis submitted for special honors
to the Department of History and Faculty
of Illinois Wesleyan University

April 1965

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To the Christians of Christ Lutheran Church

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Introduction: The Foreword to a History

God is in the facts of history as truly as he is
in the march of the seasons, the revolutions of the
planets, or the architecture of the worlds.--J. Lanahan¹

Why write history? Indeed, in a sense, history is not written at all; it is made. We are all historians, for the very deeds we do and the lives we lead are the stories of history. Everything that mankind has done (mankind meaning Abraham Lincoln, Julius Caesar, T. S. Eliot, John Smith, and Aunt Tillie)--everything that has occurred or has been thought from the beginning (Adam and Eve) to the very last passing moment is history. History becomes a happening,² a series of events--not just a few events--but all events in the lives of every human on earth. Actually, then, history is not so universal in scope as we sometimes think it is. In history classes, students receive the impression that history is something big, something vast. For example, any college catalogue will include these courses in history: the United States, the Ancient World, the Medieval World, the History of Christianity, the History of Asia, the History of Europe. The course titles are so broad, so general; they seem to encompass so very much. Yet, history is not so vast. History is small and minute; history is not really of the masses but of individuals--of you and me, of John Smith and Aunt Tillie.

¹Tryon Edwards, The New Dictionary of Thoughts (United States of America, Standard Book Company, 1957), p. 270.

²Wood Gray, Historian's Handbook 2nd edition, (Boston, Mass., Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 2.

We now come to a second aspect of history. Perhaps an illustration will better explain and clarify this part of the total meaning of history. History textbooks have recorded the different waves of immigration movements to American shores. My grandfather came to this country in one of the movements around the turn of the century, circa 1900, along with millions of other people. How many historians have taken the time to trace the individual histories of these immigrants? General statements are usually the only historical notations that can be found in textbooks. Millions of these people have died unknown while each has created his or her own history, yet nobody bothered to make a record of these individuals. Individual X became stereotyped along with individuals Y, A, B, Z, and T. Many of these immigrants, after arriving here, worked hard and long hours in order merely to keep themselves and their families alive. But each did something different, each immigrant was unlike, in some way, the fellow in the tenement next door. Similarities are traceable throughout the group, yet the differences are seemingly overlooked.

My grandfather, who journeyed across the ocean from his native Italy, was like many of these people from Southeastern Europe; he, however, in the intervening years from 1900 to the present, has had a whole array of experiences that are completely unique, that no one else has ever experienced. My grandfather's life is history; he made it himself. However, his story remains untold, except to those of us who are close enough to become personally acquainted with his life.

Grandpa Pete, as those in our family call him, found life in America to

be a challenge, to be an adventure worth living. After scouting out various locations in which to live, he finally decided to settle here in the Midwest in the town of Blue Island, Illinois. His first job was with the railroad. When he had made enough money to establish financial solidarity, he was plunged into a bold business adventure. His warm, friendly, outgoing personality won for him close friends and associates who were willing to risk their money in the belief that Grandpa Pete could succeed in the business world. After a few years of earnest work and labor (some good fortune added), he had built for himself and his stockholders one of the most successful companies in the Chicago area. Cavallini's Arctic Ice Cream Company was known to all.

Within a few years the business had expanded to include ice cream parlors, complete with candy shops and a full range of restaurant foods. Soon hotels became a part of this fast diversifying world of ice cream. Expanding business went hand in hand with expanding credit. The ice cream business never seemed better but "seemed" is the important word here, for the company became a little too free with its credit, resulting in a financial debacle when the general economy began to taper off. The Great Depression was ushered in and Cavallini's Arctic Ice Cream Company was ushered out. Grandpa Pete made attempts to save the company but all was now lost. The red ink began to write the script familiar to so many other struggling enterprises. The handwriting was on the wall. Forced into a businessman's nightmare, there was only one recourse left--sell the remaining business assets to a larger dairy concern. Beatrice Foods Company purchased Cavallini's. The money Grandpa Pete made on the sale, after distributing most of it to the stockholders, was enough to put him in business again.

This financial catastrophe that would have ruined, psychologically at least, other businessmen merely inspired Grandpa Pete to drive on, to work all the harder, to continue this adventure of life, to continue to make history. There is more to the story, but this is enough to illustrate my point.

History, as we have seen, is personal. It is, therefore, a misconception to think of history as only happening to the other fellow--to the Goldwater's, the Roosevelt's, the Johnson's. History becomes a part of each and every one of us because we are playing a part in making it. History is not the "their's" and "those's;" history is the "you's" and "I's."

The reader now knows something about the history of my grandfather. Why? Because I have taken the time and effort to briefly write something down about Grandpa Pete. Words have now made a part of his history common to us all. If I had not included anything about his life in this introduction, the reader would never have been aware of Grandpa Pete. Is the reader aware of John Smith, Joe Green, or Aunt Tillie? Maybe, if one is a personal friend or relation to the Smith's or Green's or Aunt Tillie's. The chances are that there is no relationship. And it would be a safe wager to say that we will never know anything about them because no one has bothered to record their history. The written word is the prime molder and mover of history. Written records are our only keys to the past--the Rome's, the England's, the Russia's, the Bloomington's, the Smith's only make vivid impressions on us when they are recorded by historians. If not recorded or if written records are lost, then the Rome's, the Byzantine's are forever lost. What may come down to us is legend wrapped in myth with only a taste of fact. Spoken history is frequently distorted history. Passing history

down through the ages by word of mouth is a good way to hear a thrilling fiction story. History can be only history when historians take the time to write down the facts. History can be kept forever in books, in newspapers, in diaries for future generations to read and to re-live!

History, as an area of study, is immense. Historical writings fill the shelves of every library in the world, for there are books upon books upon books dealing with history in one way or another. To the average student, it appears that everything that could be written has been written. History seems to be a field that has been thoroughly combed over until there is nothing more to discover. And to some extent this is true. In certain areas of American history, concerned with leading figures,--Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, John Adams, etc.--the finding of a new letter is a big discovery! Yet, in general, there remains many wide gaps in American history, for American history is much more than a study in the "big" personalities; it is a study in every aspect of American life. The Church is one aspect; the local church is another.

Most Americans are associated with a church in some capacity. In general the Church is playing an ever expanding role throughout society which is affecting our lives in some manner every day. The Church is an institution or organization like other organizations in the community; therefore, it is always trying to match the competition from these other community groups. To do this the local church has taken on jobs that it never has before performed. The Church must fit into the contemporary

scene, and it must offer its members a reason for belonging. The Church has and always will be "Christ centered." That is, Christ is the prime reason for joining a church; the local church provides the spiritual link to the heavenly God. But, at the same time, the 20th Century church must give modern man the proper Christian life on earth--a life that will take on a real meaning in Christian social relationships. In providing its members with the Christ guided spiritual and temporal life, the local church has unfolded its history. Unfortunately, it is a history neatly packed away in filing cabinets unknown to anyone--merely waiting to be compiled, assembled, recorded, and most important read!

Local church history does not deserve this dust collected, filing cabinet fate. The novice historian, if no one else will, must record the story...the story of Christ Lutheran Church in Normal, Illinois.

The title of this paper is The Soul of a Church. A great deal of careful reflection and contemplation went into the selection of this title. It is not just Christ Lutheran Church that I am talking about but a church--any church on any street in any town, in any state. The Christ Lutheran story is, I believe, representative of any church anywhere. Look around and this is clearly seen. The struggles, the problems, the hopes, the achievements are nearly always the same. These become the components of the Church Soul that permeates all local churches. The cast of characters--those persons directly involved--is different, different names, faces, features, etc. Yet, there is always the human spirit present. The common elements of local church history in this paper can be found and applied to

to other churches; nevertheless, there will be uncommon elements that make local church history unique from church to church, that will make the history of Christ Lutheran Church distinctive from Wesley Methodist Church or Holy Trinity Catholic Church.

"Scratch built" history is both creative and exciting; it is a history that materializes before a writer's eyes. Writing history from scratch is like building a model from a kit, for it is fabricated from the necessary parts or facts which have been found and which are carefully assembled to make a finely detailed piece of work. History requires that the historian be a careful craftsman, so that all facts fit nicely together in a logical historical sequence and perspective. The writing of a history, as the building of an exacting model, demands patience and diligence--an exactitude for determining fiction from fact and fantasy from actuality.

The historian must not only be a collector of facts but also an assembler of words. He must mold, shape, and contour his words into brilliant mind-appealing arrangements, in order to attract the reader who sometimes approaches history with a dubious and reluctant attitude. He must lift history out of the Valley of the Dull up to the Mountain of Vivaciousness. Hence, the historian must be a player of words; his history must read like a novel and sing like a poem. The world famous historian, Henry Adams, does exactly this in his noteworthy study of Medieval churches, Mont-Saint-Michel & Chartres.

In attempting to compile the history of Christ Lutheran Church, I have relied upon my typewriter, notepaper, pencils, pens, erasers, and taperecorder.

Without them there would be no paper. However, in addition to these mechanical aids, much faith and reliance has been placed (more importantly of course) upon people. It is with their help and assistance that this paper has been written at all.

To cloak this paper around a semblance of historical/scientific methodology, I attempted to utilize every possible fact, figure, and date that I could find. To add to the overall flavor and zestfulness, of this paper, I tried to spice up the facts with a degree of interpretative date (in part supplied by the author) but primarily supplied by the people of Christ Lutheran Church themselves. This necessitated the use of one taperecorder and a number of reels of tape. It required the intrusion of the author into the homes of a number of people who welcomed me and made my task much easier. Some 30-90 minutes were spent in each private interview. The interview as was finally set up, was informal and flexible, as there were no preconceived questions made out by the author. The topic of conversation was always the church, but it moved along at its own pace, the people telling their story as they lived and recalled it. My sincerest appreciation goes out to the Voelker, Laesch, and Buth families for their time and assistance in helping piece together the Christ Lutheran story.

In addition, I offer a "thank-you" to Vicar Dale Erickson and Rev. Norman Redeker for their willingness to loan me books covering the subject matter in the first chapter. And, of course, to the man who dug out the files for me, who suggested families that I should interview, who gave

me directions to find these people, who offered freely his assistance in any capacity, to this man, Rev. H. C. Pragman, I am deeply indebted. And last, but not least, I am grateful to Dr. R. D. Leonard who suggested to me that local church history was a rich field of endeavor for the beginning historian.

Chapter I

The American Wellsprings of Lutheranism

So deeply sunken were they that the shrouds,
The shrouding shadows, made the petals black
Until the rolling heaven made them blue,

A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth,
And smiting the crevasses of the leaves
Deluged the ocean with a sapphire blue.

...Then the sea
And heaven rolled as one and from the two
Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.
--Wallace Stevens¹

The ships set sail. Bremerhaven was slowly sinking below the sea-blue, sea-tossed horizon. The Saxons looked back to the land they were leaving; they looked ahead to the new land--their "Zion on the Mississippi."

The river steamer Rienzi churned up the mile wide expansive waters of the Mississippi and, on January 19, 1839, the first of the Stephanites reached St. Louis. Their coming was not unexpected. A public gathering was waiting, along the shore, for the first look at the new faces from the old world.

The Missouri Argus reported the arrival this way:

About two hundred and fifty German immigrants from the neighborhood of Dresden, kingdom of Saxony, arrived here on the 19th, on the steamer Rienzi, from New Orleans. Of these, thirty were cabin passengers, most of whom we understand are wealthy.

¹Wallace Stevens, Poems by Wallace Stevens (New York, Random House, 1959), p. 52.

They advocate the Lutheran doctrine in its original purity--styling themselves Stephanites, from the name of the clergyman, Mr. Stephan, who accompanies them.

It is their intention to purchase land and settle in a body in the State. They expect soon to be joined in their new home by six hundred more of their countrymen of the same religious persuasion.²

These Saxons quickly created a hierarchy with Stephan as bishop and placed him in control of certain phases of their civil affairs. About forty-five hundred acres of land were purchased in Perry County, Missouri, as the site for a semi-autonomous, theocratic community.

However, after only a year, Stephan was deposed as the Saxon's leader. A bitter dispute erupted that nearly wrecked the struggling religious order and certainly intensified the hardships and burdens of the poverty stricken settlers. (It is little wonder, then, with these dark, shadow-saddened clouds of discord hanging so low over the darkened land of Perry County, a man, who looked to the bright and blue skies of the tomorrow, came on the scene daringly trying to dispel the fearful antagonisms that were tearing these Saxon Christians apart.) C. F. W. Walther was that man. He saw a possible solution to the ever complicated and growing feud. Walther's way was dramatic; it had to be in order to make a lasting impression on the settlers. The time and place were both selected--April 15 and 21, 1841 in the log cabin "college" at Altenberg. Here Walther battled with Marbach; here the famous Altenburg Debate took place; here the lasting Altenburg thesis was delivered by the crusading Walther himself. The debate between the two men was stormy. "However the great majority of the audience and the colonists generally were won over

²Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis, Mo., Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 204.

by Walther's presentation of the case. If there was any single factor which saved the colonies from complete dissolution and from the corrosive forces of further internal controversy, it was the Altenberg Debate."³

The Altenberg Debate, however, was merely a catalyst by which the new forces of unity sprung from. It still remained for Walther to slowly begin to build the firm foundation of a new ecclesiastical structure. The task before this man was no easy highway to follow; it took all of Walther's faith and hope to make the Saxons a unified body of Christian believers. He was to devote the rest of his life to building this final edifice--the edifice upon which the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church now stands. (Yes, a new golden sun was breaking through the grey/black storm clouds of controversy. God's sun was dawning; it flooded Perry County in the freshest yellow beams of light, of hope and harmony. Walther and Perry County would see fresh transfigurings of tomorrow's "freshest blue.")

Antagonisms died. The bitterness was buried; God's work could be continued. A firmly felt dedicated spirit grasped the Saxons and soon a college was maintained, churches and schools were constructed, Saxon pastors began carrying their gospel to points as far distant as Wisconsin and New York. A continuing bond was building up between the small and struggling Lutheran bodies; the bond was strengthened by Walther's publication of the Lutheraner which indirectly prepared the way for the formation of the Missouri Synod.⁴ The year 1847 marked the official formation of the Synod through the organizing of independent Lutheran congregations and clergymen on a national level. And it was the Lutheraner that became the spokesman

³Ibid., p. 525.

⁴F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis, Mo., Concordia Publishing House, 1958), p. 183.

of the Synod. Walther was retained as editor of the publication. The Synod, at this time, further resolved to ask Pastor Loehe and his mission board to give Synod full power and control of the missions among the Indians.⁵ Later, mission work was organized on an even grander scale with a board appointed to consider the important matter of foreign missions.

Within a few short years, with the earnest efforts of all the Saxons, the church was experiencing an encouraging and heartening growth. The Synod began to turn out more and more pastors and teachers to carry the word of God to as many as would listen. These pastors and teachers found rich ground in the growing parishes of the Midwestern countryside. And before too long, a series of districts were created to make administrative proceedings more workable and to give a greater unity to the church as a whole, living body of Christians.

The wellsprings of American Lutheranism run deep. They flow from a subterranean spring (of faith and vision) continually feeding and nourishing the silver-blue waters of a ever widening rivulet (of spiritual consciousness and Christian performance.) The Lutherans today are of the same material as their Christian forefathers of the past. They work. They pray. They worship. They build. They stand up for Christ. Time has left those early Lutherans behind. The world they knew is gone with them. Time now moves us to the present, to the Lutherans of the 20th Century, to the Lutherans of Christ Lutheran Church.

⁵Erwin L. Lueker, Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis, Mo., Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 609.

Chapter II

1947--The First Beginning

...A new day
 Heaven shall send,
 Whole as an apple,
 Kind as a friend.
 --Frances Cornford¹

Perhaps that day, now seemingly so far distant, so far away, was just as any other day in a February month. Perhaps there was a tinge of winter in the air, a few snow flakes falling here and there, a sky of heavy grey... or perhaps there was the gentleness of an all too early spring air, the warm cheerfulness of a shining sun casting beams of solar light down, down, on the soon awakening trees, grasses, bushes of Bloomington-Normal land. A February setting--whether a winter or spring scene--provides the background to a beginning drama, a beginning human endeavor.

For some time there had been a general feeling expressed that the population growth rate of Bloomington-Normal warranted careful and thoughtful consideration for the possibility of the formation of a new church, although Lutherans in the area had been attending religious services at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington. While, at this time, no concrete proposals were determined, the idea of a separate church took root, especially in the minds of a number of Lutherans in Normal.² And within a short time definite action was undertaken. Preliminary activity began in 1946.

¹Louis Untermeyer, Modern British Poetry (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), p. 307.

²Christ Lutheran Church, Dedication Booklet (Normal, January 7, 1962), p. 10.

It was during the latter months of 1946 that the idea of a Lutheran church in Normal really started to gain momentum. A number of Normalites took it upon themselves to visit other Lutherans in Normal and the surrounding vicinity to determine if there was any firm conviction to establish a new church. The response was evident. The people of Normal wanted a church of their own. These Lutherans showed their willingness to attend and help support a new church by signing a petition clearly indicating their seriousness for a Lutheran church in Normal. A few of the original signers of the petition included: Mr. and Mrs. Ben Buth, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Wellenreiter, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Laesch, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Oltman, Mr. and Mrs. O. E. Dostal, Mr. and Mrs. Otto H. Laesch, and Mr. and Mrs. Erwin Westfall.

Events were now beginning to move fast. The next step in the process of creating a church required the consent and help of the Lutheran Mission Board. The petitioners sent a letter to the Rev. F. W. Hein then president of the Mission Board saying:

We, the undersigned, do hereby petition you, the Mission Board of Central Illinois District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri for assistance to organize a congregation and establish a church in the town of Normal, Illinois.

The need for such a church here is urgent and we beg of you to give this petition immediate consideration.³

With the note of urgency in the petition, the Mission Board began to act to help these Lutherans start their own church. A series of meetings were held first with Rev. Hohenstein of Trinity Lutheran Church of Bloomington. Rev. Hohenstein was told of the plans and the progress that had

³Petitioners, Normal, Ill., January 12, 1947, letter to Rev. F. W. Hein, Chestnut, Illinois.

been made on establishing the new church; he was told of the Mission Board's favorable response to the petitioners. Nevertheless, Reverend Hohenstein was seemingly reluctant to consent to the setting up of a new Lutheran church in Normal. In fact, he was wholeheartedly opposed to the idea! He was of the opinion that the Lutherans of Bloomington-Normal should attend one church; he felt one large church was better than two smaller churches. Those in favor of the new Normal church attempted to point out to him that the size of Trinity Lutheran was becoming too large--so large that he could not adequately carry out his ministerial duties to the many Christian members of the congregation. Naturally, this became a point of contention. Members of the Mission Board came directly down to Bloomington to attempt to "iron out" the differences between the two factions, for there were a number of people in the Trinity congregation who were strongly behind the position taken by Hohenstein.⁴

With the Mission Board encouraging the Normal Lutherans to go ahead with their plans, the first, more or less, official meeting was held on February 23, 1947.⁵ This preliminary meeting attended by Dan Wellenreiter, Otto Laesch, Oscar Laesch, Otto Dostal, Herman Schuth, and Ben Buth was a prelude to the organizational meeting which was soon to follow on March 7, 1947. It was on this date that 50 Lutherans met in the basement of the First Presbyterian church in Normal. The group organized under the name of the Normal Lutheran Church which then brought the total number of de-

⁴Mr. and Mrs. Ben Buth, charter members of Christ Lutheran Church, (Normal, Ill.), personal interview with author in the Buth home, Normal March 22, 1965. This same thought was expressed by Mrs. T.W. Voelker, although she did not place as much emphasis on it as did the Buths.

⁵Christ Lutheran Church, Life (Normal 1952), p. 2.

nominal groups in Normal to seven. At this meeting Otto Laesch was named president of the organization, with Dan Wellenreiter as secretary, and Ben Buth as treasurer. Discussion centered around the drawing up of a constitution and finding a place in which services could be held. It was expressed that the group had hopes of eventually building its own church in Normal. The Rev. Arthur E. Neitzel of Lincoln, a member of the state mission board, also attended this meeting in an advisory capacity.⁶

An arrangement was made to conduct religious worship services in the Stubblefield Memorial Home, 200 West Ash street. Sunday school classes were held at the home of Mrs. Frank Laesch, 418 North Main street. Five members had volunteered their services to help bring God's word to the children of the new church. The congregation secured the services of Albert Glock, then a student from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Glock served the new congregation throughout the summer months of 1947, from June until September.⁷ Mrs. Ben Buth, when asked her feelings about holding services in a Memorial home, said that while the setting was perhaps slightly unusual everyone seemed satisfied that at least a place had been found to conduct worship services. In fact, she noted that attendance was quite high during their short stay at Stubblefield's.⁸

Still anxious to build their own house of God, the newly formed group worked during the summer months planning for just such a structure. The members gave considerable attention to the possibility of purchasing land

⁶The Pantagraph, 11 March 1947.

⁷The Pantagraph 30 May 1947.

⁸Buth, Interview.

for the new church. Members proposed buying property at Virginia and South Fell avenues in Normal.

Waivers are being presented to residents of the addition Warner and Carter Highland addition to Normal) for permission to build a church on the location, which is owned by Mrs. B. C. Van Leer...The location at the corner of Virginia and South Fell is favored for the church; but other locations in the vicinity, which have no building restrictions, have been offered.⁹

Rev. Albert Glock felt "rather confident of obtaining all signatures" on a waiver of building restrictions to allow a church building to be constructed on the property. Already in early June, Rev. Glock had started circulating the waiver to get signatures for permission to build the church. The petition had to be signed by at least 27 families who owned the blocks concerned. The church will stand on property owned by Mrs. Margaret C. Van Leer, Mr. F. W. Stubblefield, and Mr. Jack Sheean. It was decided to locate the church at this particular site (in the south part of Normal) in order to serve Lutherans from north and east Bloomington as well as Normal.¹⁰

While plans were being made for a church building and property, the Normal Lutherans packed their belongings and made the big move--from Stubblefield's to the Normal Theater. The move was facilitated through the cooperation and courtesy of Mr. Ray Herrington, the Normal Theater's manager.¹¹ The rent paid to the theater by the congregation was \$3.00 a month.¹² A small price to pay for the privilege of worshiping Christ. The first worship service in their new location was on July 6, 1947.

Meanwhile plenty of action was developing over the waiver controversy.

⁹The Normalite, 27 June 1947.

¹⁰The Pantagraph, June, 1947.

¹¹Christ Lutheran Church, Dedication Services (Normal 1950), p. 14.

¹²Christ Lutheran Church, Treasurer's Journal entry of September 7, 1947.

The initial high hopes expressed by Mr. Glock in June were by July 13th turned into a saddened defeat, for most of the residents in the Warner and Carter Highland addition had openingly refused to sign the waiver. A special letter had been sent to Mr. David A. Broleen, who at that time was residing in California, asking him to authorize a close friend of his in Bloomington to sign the waiver.¹³ A Western Union telegram was received in which Mr. Broleen consented. But the effort was to no avail, for the vast majority of those involved still refused to sign. An article in The Pantagraph confirmed the defeat:

Albert Glock said that the church's option on the five lots expired Thursday without completion of the purchase...Mr. Glock said Saturday that it had been impossible to get all signatures from all residents in the addition that would OK construction of the church and parsonage.¹⁴

"I don't think the residents of the subdivision were properly informed about the building we would construct there. I can see no reason why it wouldn't be acceptable."¹⁵

However, the Normal Lutherans had merely lost a battle--the war was still to be won! For shortly thereafter the members were able to purchase other land in the same vicinity. The land purchased was in the 1200 block on South Fell avenue about a block away from the original selected site. In this area there were no restrictions and hence no waivers were required. This land was purchased from Mrs. Margaret Van Leer, president of the Immanuel Bible Foundation.¹⁶ The purchase price for this land was \$8,000.¹⁷

¹³Personal letter from Albert Glock to David Broleen

¹⁴"Church Fails to Get Waiver on Building," The Pantagraph 13 July, 1947.

¹⁵The Pantagraph 13 July, 1947.

¹⁶"Lutherans Buy Site for Church," The Pantagraph 12 August, 1947.

¹⁷Christ Lutheran Church, Treasurer's Journal entry of August 3, 1947.

But if the war had been won, hard feelings lingered on. In a letter to the editor of The Pantagraph, Mrs. James Sharan wrote a sizzling rebuttal to the members of Christ Lutheran Church. She says:

The present location has been obtained by the promoter of this church over the wishes and objections of the present home owners, who desire to preserve what peace and quiet we now have...It seems that with the critical shortage of homes, this of all times is a peculiar time for such construction. These sponsors and their small following should attend the fine churches we now have and fill the vacant seats and thus eliminate further waste of building material. We do not need more churches but we do need a larger attendance to the ones we now have...The idea of this structure in its entirety is ignominious and anile.¹⁸

Nevertheless, during August of '47 a meeting was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Buth. Present at the meeting were the Rev. S. W. Hein, Chestnut, and the Rev. George Albers, Decatur, officers of the Central Illinois District Mission. Discussed at the meeting were ways and means of financing the building program for the new church. Ben Buth, Gordon Smith, Mrs. Frank Oltman, H. Shuth, and Mrs. Henry Martens were elected to the publicity and finance committee.¹⁹ The drive for the church had been launched!

It would only be a few more Sundays and Christ Lutheran's student minister, Mr. Glock, would have to leave his congregation and return to school. The members got together and gave Mr. Glock a real surprise party in the home of the Buth's. Glock was to leave for Winfield, Kansas and there teach Latin and Greek in St. John's College.²⁰ Arrangements were already being made for a new minister. A call was extended to the Rev. Robert Weller of Cleveland, Ohio.

¹⁸"Protests Plan to Construct Church," The Pantagraph 20 August, 1947.

¹⁹"Lutherans Organize For Drive," The Pantagraph 25 August, 1947.

²⁰"Student Pastor Honor Guest," The Pantagraph 18 August, 1947.

Rev. Weller gave careful consideration to this call. As of August 6, 1947, he felt that it was his desire to accept the call, yet he needed time to strengthen and close the affairs of the Gospel Center in Cleveland. In addition, the work load at the Center had been strenuous, forcing him to take a vacation "both for physical and mental reasons."²¹

By August 19th Rev. Weller had decided to become the new minister of Christ Lutheran Church. In a letter to the congregation he says:

You have done me the honor of extending me the call to serve as your pastor. After three weeks of prayerful, careful consideration and inquiry I am convinced that it is God's will that I accept the call. I cannot tell how the gifts God has given me will fit your needs, but I promise to use whatever wisdom and strength He supplies me with all diligence on your behalf....²²

Between the time Mr. Glock left and Rev. Weller assumed the duties of Christ Lutheran, the congregation acquired the services of Rev. Hugo Fleckenstein who became the acting pastor from the 1st to the 20th of September. Rev. Weller and his family arrived in Normal and became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Oltman until the Weller's home was ready to accommodate the Weller's and their two children, George and Marcia.

The installation of Rev. Weller took place on September 21, 1947 in the Normal Community High School Auditorium. "Rev. Weller was installed by the Rev. J. F. Schanck of Secor, The Rev. F. W. Hein of Chestnut gave the sermon...A cornet solo by Dorothy Buth served as a processional for the choirs of Trinity Lutheran Church of Bloomington and St. Paul's Church, Genoa...A reception was held at the Farm Bureau building following the services.²³ Normal had witnessed the birth of a church; the first year of history had been made and many more years were sure to follow.

²¹Personal letter from Robert Weller to Rev. J.F. Schmack August 6, 1947.

²²Personal letter from Robert Weller to Christ Lutheran Church, Aug. 19, 1947.

²³"Lutheran Church Pastor Installed," The Pantagraph 9 Sept., 1947.

Chapter III

1948--Lutherans Crusade for Christ

He sang of God--the mighty source
 Of all things--the stupendous force
 On which all strength depends;
 From Whose right arm, beneath Whose eyes,
 All period, power, and enterprise
 Commences, reigns, and ends.
 --Christopher Smart¹

Much had been accomplished in 1947; in 1948 much remained to be done. Rev. Robert Weller brought with him a zeal that encouraged and sparked the Normal Lutherans to work even harder and longer for Christ. They had a dream, a vision for a church. But churches aren't built with dreams and visions; they are built with initiative, drive, toil, labor and especially money!

Already in 1947, the members had taken steps in the building of a church. A building committee was formed with Mr. Otto Dostal as chairman of the group which included Gordon Smith, Herman Schuth, Otto Laesch, and T. W. Voelker. When Mr. Dostal found it necessary to return to Detroit, Michigan, Mr. Voelker was made the new chairman, while Frank Ottman and Harry Yobski were added to the committee.² By early 1948, the Lutherans had come another step closer to their goal of a church "when they raised enough money in an every member campaign to clear all debt on the church site on South Fell avenue and to make a small beginning on the church building fund."³

¹Oscar Williams, Immortal Poems (New York, Washington Square Press, Inc., 1952), p. 198.

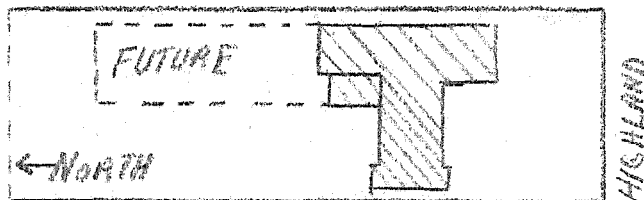
²Christ Lutheran Church, Dedication Services (Normal, June 4, 1950).

³"Lutheran Church Tops Canvass for Funds," The Pantagraph, 23 June, 1948.

To add a stimulus to the campaign, Rev. Weller started a church publication called The Builder. The first issue came out in January of '48. In that issue the name for the publication was explained in these words:

Why the name, The Builder? First because we are in the process of building the kingdom of God in Normal and the surrounding territory. Second, because our very first project is the building of our our own church building. Finally, because all the work of the kingdom of God is really building. 1 Cor. 3, 9 says : 'ye are God's building.' and that 'ye are labourers together with God.'⁴

The building committee traveled far and wide to view churches and consult with architects. A contract was finally signed with Mr. William F. Kramer of Oak Park, Ill.* Mr. Kramer seemed to be an architect of acknowledged ability, for he had built a considerable number of Lutheran churches; he had drawn plans for a remodeling of St. Luke's in Chicago and had been retained as architect by Mr. Calvary Lutheran Church of Peoria.⁵ Mr. Kramer drew up many plans for a church building--many of which had to be discarded because of rising costs and the limited financial means of the congregation. A survey of the lot was to be made by a competent surveyor. The congregation had by October voted to place the church on the building lot as shown in the accompanying sketch:⁶



⁴The Builder, January 1948.

⁵The Builder, No. 5, May 1948.

⁶The Builder, No. 10, October 1948.

*It is interesting to note that in one booklet Mr. Kramer is said to reside in Forest Park, Ill. Yet in the particular issue of The Builder he is said to live in Oak Park. I finally decided on Oak Park because in additional searching an article in The Pantagraph 5/21/48 said that Oak Park was his home. Of course, there is the possibility he had moved at some later date.

In addition to the activity of planning for the church, the congregation was busy in other ways also. Members were earnestly crusading for Christ, for "On July 21st, just ten months after the installation of its first pastor, Christ Lutheran Church doubled its communicant membership. On Sept. 21, 1947, there were 46 communicant members, including the pastor and his wife. On July 21, 1948, there were 93. Souls rose from 60 to 132."⁷ The church was busy on other fronts as well. Right from the beginning the ladies of the church had gotten together and formed the Ladies' Society. Their functions varied throughout the year from holding regular meetings in their homes to holding ice cream socials and conducting sales or fairs in which handwork, eggs, chickens, canned goods were put up for sale. While the ladies were carrying on their business, the younger members of the church were engaged in various projects. The YPS (Young Peoples' Society) helped sell Christmas cards and canvassed the congregation asking members to subscribe to various church papers.

1948 saw Christ Lutheran's first Confirmation class on May 16th. Crusaders for Christ must, in some instances, be teachers for Christ too. The first confirmation saw eight young people confirmed--Lillian Hickstein, Ruth Hickstein, Nancy Jones, Sharon Jones, James Lusher, Jane Lusher, Donald Smith, and Lucille Svestka.⁸

On Sunday, November 14th, music echoed through the Normal Theater--organ music that is. This Sunday saw the dedication of the new organ, a one manuel, ten stop Wurlitzer electric organ without pedals. The entire cost was \$1350. There was little doubt that the organ would add tremen--

⁷The Builder, No. 8, August 1948.

⁸The Builder, No. 3, May, 1948.

dously to the overall positive effect of the Sunday services.⁹

Crusading for Christ is never an easy task, but the Normal Lutherans were doing a splendid job. And the crusade had only just begun....

⁹The Builder, No. 11, November 1948.

Chapter IV

1949--Build! Say the Builders

Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.--Eph. 2, 20: 21

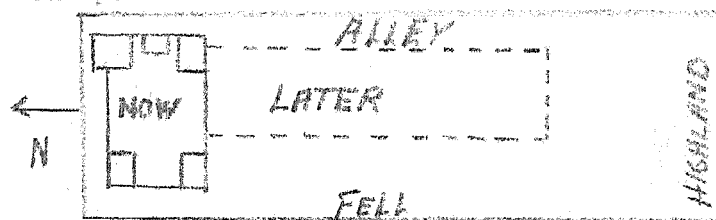
Build! said the congregation in its special meeting held Tuesday March 15th. What shall we build? WE WANT a BASEMENT said the congregation! START WITH THAT was the overwhelming vote of the voters' assembly! O.K! so the building committee is at work planning a church with a basement. The congregation wants to start as soon as possible. It is likely that we shall have to pause when we complete the basement, in order to gather financial strength to finish the church proper, but we are going to START!¹

Finally, after two years of sincere effort, concrete results were becoming evident. There was no doubt now! The church was going to be built! But not without a few more snags and hitches! Given the building regulations--the church had to be 25 feet away from the sidewalk, 3 feet from the alley, and 5 feet from the adjoining lot--plans were drawn up according to these rules. However, when the building commissioner inspected the staked area he disapproved and said the church had to stay back in line with the adjoining house. This, in effect, was to move the church about 45 feet back from the sidewalk instead of the 25 for which plans had been drawn. And another thing--the church had to be 25 feet from the alley.² The result of all this? New plans. Here, finally, is

¹The Builder, No. 3, March, 1949.

²"Lutherans Hit Snags in Trying to Build," The Pantagraph, 6 May 1949.

the plan agreed upon:



A ground breaking service on August 28th marked the beginning of construction. T. W. Voelker, chairman of the building committee, turned over the first spadeful of ground. The final plan calls for

a church approximately 80' x 38' seating about 250 comfortably. The foundation and floor will be of concrete, while the walls will be stone on the west face, fronting on Fell avenue, and brick elsewhere. Inside walls will be of Haydite block. The church will have considerable height and the exposed trusses and woodwork which support the roof will add to the dignity and beauty of the building in typical English style. The church has been so designed that the interior particulars do not support the roof and may be removed later if desired. Ample space remains for a larger church to be added, extending southward at a future date.³

The basement came first. The job of digging was long and arduous, resulting in many members giving a helping hand and a shovel. In order to cut down on financial expenditures, it was necessary for members to grab a shovel and partake in the digging--the basement was practically dug by hand. The soil fast turned into a hardened, yellow clay that stuck to every shovelful. The clay had to be scrapped off the shovel before another shovelful could be dug out. The work was no easy chore; it required strong backs and able bodies. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15: 58. At times there were between 25 and 30 men digging frantically away. Even Rev. Weller rolled up his shirt sleeves and grabbed a shovel.

³"Lutherans Break Ground for New Church," The Pantagraph, 26 Aug. 1949.

He pitched in right with all the others. Some of the farmers came into town with their tractors and added some mechanical assistance to the basement project.⁴

Within a few months, Christ Lutheran Church was celebrating a cornerstone laying. Preparations were long in the making but by November 20th the historic day had come. Traveling from Decatur, Illinois was Reverend George C. Albers the feature speaker for the event. In his address, he told the congregation (now some 200souls) that "a building would stand just as long if a cornerstone laying ceremony were not held. But we are here not just to lay a stone but to erect a temple of God. And that temple is symbolized by this stone which is Christ Himself."⁵ Most of the people attending the ceremony were housed in a specially erected tent, although many were compelled to stand. The cornerstone itself was laid in place by T. W. Voelker, the committee chairman, and Harold Debolt, a mason working on the structure. Reverend Albers concluded his address by saying, "There are few experiences in life that bring greater joy than that you are enjoying today. Building is now underway on a church for which you have worked hard. In the not too distant future you will be able to enter here with your friends and family. All of your fellow Christians rejoice with you today."

⁴Buth, Voelker, Laesch, Interview.

⁵"Christ Cornerstone of Church--Albers," The Pantagraph, 21 November 1949.

Chapter V

1950--Dedicated Christians...Dedicate a Church

To this temple, where we call Thee,
 Come, O Lord of hosts, today;
 With Thy wonted loving kindness
 Hear Thy servants as they pray
 And Thy fullest benediction
 Shed within these walls always.¹

Up go the walls. "The rear wall is finished and the front wall is ready for the setting of the rose window. It is possible that roof trusses may be set before the stone work is finished." So read The Builder of January 1950.

The need for \$50,000 for the church had been practically attained by 1950, except for \$9,000. The remaining \$9,000 was to be secured in either cash or loans. The finance committee issued an appeal to the congregation for loans of all kinds--small loans of \$25, \$50, and \$100. Many members had given in other ways, especially for church equipment. Mr. and Mrs. Otto Laesch offered to provide the church with all the folding chairs. Prof. and Mrs. Herman Schwiemann offered to provide a painting or a similar work of art for the altar. Progress was being made in all aspects; dedication day was near at hand.²

In April a note of urgency went out to the congregation reminding them that dedication week would be held from June 4th through the 11th. Plans were being formulated for the week. Speakers were to be imported,

¹Christ Lutheran Church, Dedication Services, Normal, June 4, 1950.

²The Builder, January 1950.

music was to be provided by the choir, soloists, orchestra, trio, and organists. A dedication booklet was to be printed, containing hymns for the various services, a brief history of the congregation, and pictures of various church groups.³

The new gates to a new Zion were about to be opened on that memorial day. Standing on the church steps were Rev. Robert Weller, Rev.

Albert Glock, Rev. Albert Wiegert, William Kramer, Ernest Raeuber, Frank Oltman, Otto Laesch, and T. W. Voelker. William Kramer, church architect, had just cut the ribbon across the front entrance. Ernest Raeuber, contractor, had just finished giving the keys of the church to Mr. Voelker. Voelker was now unlocking the door as a procession, headed by the church elders, was walking up the sidewalk on into the new Zion. Music filled the June air to the sound of "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," played by an orchestra of young people. The congregation filled the new House of God. Reverend Wiegert's words filled the hearts of the people when he said that the Holy Church of Christ is not built with stones and wood but with people who are the living spirit, the living force of a living God. He then urged them to continue to build. This time they must build a kingdom of souls won for Christ. Reverend Glock recalled to the congregation that "Christ dwells in this building because He dwells in you. God lives not in mortar and wood and stone, but in people, in human hearts."⁴ The dedication festivities continued on into the rest of the week.

Normal Theater had served Christ Lutheran as a house of worship for

³The Builder, April 1950.

⁴"Holy Church Built of People--Wiegert," The Pantagraph, 5 June 1950.

nearly 2½ years. In this theater friendships were cultivated, the Word of God was spoken, and Christian spirits were nurtured. But May 28, 1950 saw the last worship service at the theater. The words of Raymond Herrington, the theater manager, best express the feeling that was felt. Mr. Herrington writes:

I can recall with ease the very first service your fine church group held at the Normal Theatre. It left us with a good feeling to note the sincerity of your group in their work and worship. We feel that during the past two and one half years we have come to know many of you personally and cherish these friendships dearly.

You now have a beautiful house of worship. I know that there has been much work and sacrifice involved in building your church and we admire you for your accomplishments. We know that in this building you will build a still stronger and more beautiful relationship with your faith.

We have truly enjoyed your using the theatre building and if we have been of some help to you, than we are indeed grateful, for we all know that it is in helping others that we help ourselves.⁵

But the work of a congregation goes on whether in a theater or a church. In a church council meeting it was decided to delegate duties to various church officials. The trustees were to sign legal papers and check on insurance policies; the ushers were to care for the windows of the church; they were to be on hand 15 minutes before services start to get out song books, greet worshippers, to gather hymn-books; the elders were to take up the offerings, prepare the vessels for communion and baptism, light altar candles; the custodian was to continually inspect

⁵Personal letter from Raymond Herrington to Oscar Voelker, Secretary, June 18, 1950.

all property of the church, see to the cutting of the grass, and arrange for a fall and spring "clean-up" day; the janitor was to care for the furnace, regulate the lighting and ventilating at Sunday services and all regular meetings, and keep the sidewalks clear from snow and ice; the altar committee was to take care of flowers for the altar, clean communion and baptismal cloths and communion vessels.⁶

A letter was sent to the congregation telling them that an Adult Membership Class was being organized. The group was to review the chief teachings of the Bible in an informal manner and prepare the group for membership in the church. It was also stressed that the meetings are opened to those who are already church members as this would be an opportune way to review some previous instruction.⁷

Indeed, the completion of the church did not end the duties of the members. These dedicated Christians merely rededicated their lives in the service of Christ. They now set out to build again--to build "a kingdom of souls won for Christ."

⁶Minutes of church council meeting of September 11, 1950.

⁷Letter from Robert Weller to church congregation October 3, 1950.

Chapter VI

1951--Welcome Back, Reverend Glock

Send, O Lord, Thy Holy Spirit
 On Thy servant now, we pray;
 Let him prove a faithful shepherd
 To Thy little lambs alway.
 Thy pure teaching to proclaim,
 To extol Thy holy name
 And to feed Thy lambs, dear Savior,
 Make his aim and sole endeavor.¹

The Lord works in mysterious ways....

This was to be Rev. Weller's last year at Christ Lutheran. There is always a degree of panic that sweeps a congregation when a faithful pastor is called to another community and church. Rev. Weller made his decision; he would become the pastor at Rodgers City, Michigan. Christ Lutheran had lost a minister. Under Weller's guidance and effort, Christ Lutheran built its parish hall unit, tripled its membership, and developed an efficient and functioning organization. His years as minister were good ones. Still there are always a few rough storms that minister's and congregation's must travel through. Rev. Weller went through one such storm. In a meeting of the church council of September 8, 1949 there was indeed an element within the church that was, to some extent, antagonistic toward the minister. The laymen spoke their minds. First, criticism was directed against Weller's sermons. It was emphatically stated that his sermons left something to be desired. It was felt that

¹Lutheran Synodical Conference, The Lutheran Hymnal (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1941) p. 491.

they became too involved and engrossed in worldliness. The people had nothing to take home with them; the sermons did not give the people what they ought to have and what they pray for. One person openly stated that the sermons made him nervous! Next, it was expressed that Weller was spending too much time on the building program; it was implied that he neglected the mission work. Someone mentioned that membership was not up to par. The blame for this was placed on the pastor's sermons. It was then brought up that the pastor's dignity was not what people expected. Weller answered this criticism by saying that this was just the opposite of the usual comment made of the ministry. In trying to overcome stiffness and formality, he had apparently gone to far in the other direction.² Weller weathered the storm. It should be remembered that an altercation such as this is the exception rather than the rule.* And, too, some criticism is for the improvement and good of the church. In reviewing church minutes, the author found very few such exciting events to incorporate into the paper.

Weller gave his farewell sermon on May 20th. Christ Lutheran Church was losing a man who was not afraid to mingle with his people, who was not afraid to get his hands dirty in digging out a basement. Christ Lutheran was losing a real helper. But it was soon to gain a real leader.

Through the summer months of 1951, the church was without an ordained minister. But through the help of student William F. McMurdie, who served from June 4 to September 15, the church carried on the job of soul saving.

²Minutes of church council meeting of September 8, 1949.

*In this particular "flare-up" it should be mentioned that the minutes were recorded by Weller himself. Undoubtedly the full impact of the meeting was toned down. Things as this meeting add to the zestfulness of the paper. However, I hope I have not turned up any dangling church skeletons.

It was during these months that a number of calls were extended to other ministers. The church searched for a new leader. A call was first offered to Rev. Lloyd Behnken of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Steeleville, Illinois. In a letter to Oscar Laesch, Rev. George C. Albers writes:

I will be interested to hear the news as soon as you have received word from Pastor Behnken. At Pastor Wessel's request I wrote a letter to Pastor Behnken. I encouraged him by all means to accept the call. I think the congregation would be delighted to have Pastor Behnken as its leader.³

When Pastor Behnken did not except the call the congregation considered a number of other men: Rev. Gilmore A. Lueck, Strasburg, Ill.; Rev. H. W. Hallerberg, Clayton, Ill.; Rev. Fredrick H. Reimann, Bowen, Ill.; Rev. Theodore C. Krause, Danville, Ill.; Rev. Egon W. Gebauer, St. Louis, Missouri, and Rev. Albert E. Glock, Burlington, Vermont.⁴

Come back, come back to Normal, Reverend Glock. Yes, this was the unanimous feeling of the church. The congregation wanted Glock! A call went out to Burlington, Vermont. The suspense was high. Would student Glock in 1947 come back as Reverend Glock in 1951 and again guide Christ Lutheran? The answer was slow in coming. By August 6th, Glock acknowledged the receipt of the call. He had not as yet decided. Then, suddenly, there was no more suspense, for Glock had accepted. Glock was coming back!

The installation of Glock was to take place September 16th. And in accordance with the District custom the Rev. A. C. Wessel of Danvers, the

³Personal letter from Rev. Albers to Oscar Laesch dated June 15, 1951.

⁴Christ Lutheran Church, Sunday Bulletin, July 22, 1951.

Vacancy Pastor, was to deliver the sermon, and the Rev. E. Glock of Washburn, the Circuit Visitor, would install Rev. A. E. Glock. That's right--- father would install a son!

In some additional comment about the event, The Normalite reported:

Special guests at the installation service will be Prof. and Mrs. Otto Sohn and their daughter, Miss Lois Sohn, all of St. Louis, Mo. Prof. Sohn is a member of the faculty at Concordia Seminary. Miss Sohn and the Rev. Albert Glock will be married in St. Louis on Sept 29.⁵

Not only was Christ Lutheran gaining a pastor, but the pastor was gaining a wife. His wife to be, Lois Sohn, had been for two years the Editorial Assistant on the staff of "The Lutheran Witness." She graduated from Valparaiso University and was to receive an M. A. from Washington University in St. Louis.⁶

As a momento of praise for Christ Lutheran, student McMurdie expressed these sentiments:

To the Congregation of Christ Lutheran Church:
Thank you very much for your gift of a half dozen Irish linen handkerchiefs. I would also like to say that it has been a pleasure to serve in your midst. I only hope and pray that when I am assigned a congregation next year that the people of that congregation are as kind, thoughtful, and as appreciative of my work as you were.⁷

McMurdie had experienced the soul of a church. Reverend Glock would do so next.

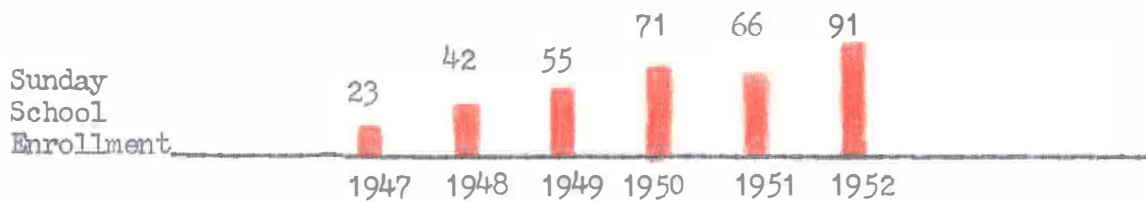
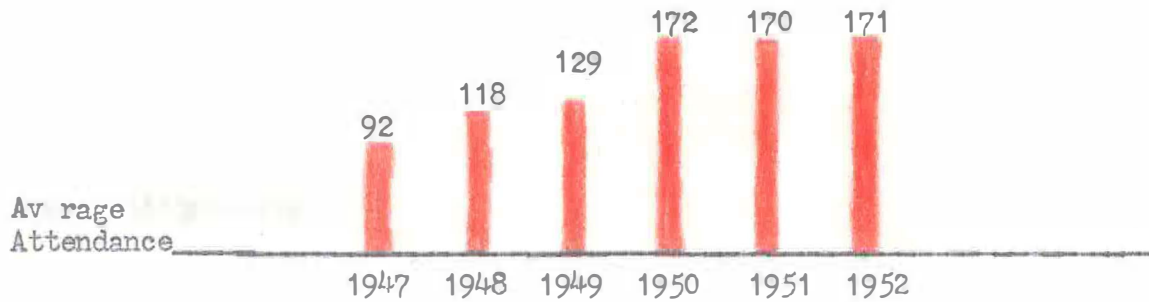
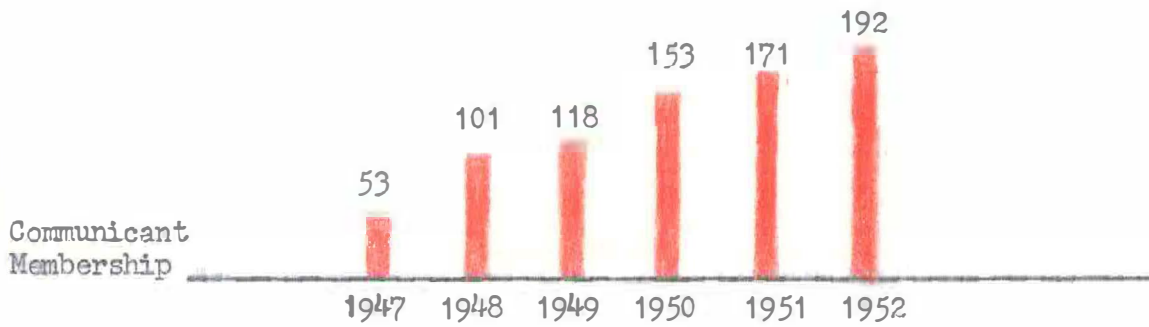
⁵"Lutheran Church Holds Installation For New Pastor," 14 Sept. 1951.

⁶Christ Lutheran Church, Sunday Bulletin, September 23, 1951.

⁷Person letter from McMurdie to Albert Glock. Quoted in September 23, 1951's Sunday Bulletin.

Chapter VII

1952--The Record of Growth



Chapter VIII

Through the 50's: An Interlude
 or
 Let the Church Be the Church*

The history of a church is not restricted to church building programs or the installation of new ministers. Church history is the record of Christian activity on all levels: Sunday School, Bible class, mission work, choirs, youth societies, dinners, plays, and a multitudinous host of other activities. These are the things that make the church really the church. It is through working, playing, praying, singing, studying that Christ and His Christians can experience a living interaction. It is this action and this interaction that we are now concerned with.

Local churches, as Christ Lutheran, are never isolated from the bigger, sweeping aspects of Christian activity. Through individual or little church doing is the big church doing accomplished. When, in 1952, the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod encouraged local churches in a "Conquest for Christ," the Normal Lutherans responded with appropriate action. The "Conquest for Christ" movement was looking 25 years into the future of the Lutheran Church; it saw, using projected statistics, a time when there would be at least a million more members to serve, requiring that the total of pastors and parish school teachers graduated from the church's colleges and seminaries would have to nearly double and that more workers in every category would be needed if the church was to continue to expand at the present rate of

*This title is based upon a series of sermons delivered by Rev. Norman Redeker at Salem Lutheran Church, Blue Island, Ill. in 1964.

of two congregations a week. Thy Synod would need funds to enlarge all of its colleges and preparatory schools. Plans would necessitate the building of one entirely new college. Funds would be needed to staff schools and hospitals and to build more schools and hospitals in the United States and foreign countries as well. Christ Lutheran gave strong local impetus to the "Conquest" when fourteen members attended a general meeting in Lincoln, Illinois at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. These fourteen would act as a steering committee and use their time to help the "Conquest" be a successful church activity.¹

This Christian action continued when solicitors went to members' homes and personally tried to answer questions about the program, and tried to encourage contributions for the "Conquest." The interaction followed when members offered \$3,500 in cash and pledges in response to Christ's action on their hearts to help finance the future plans of the Church.²

Music, like sacraments, is an outward sign of an inward and spiritual feeling. Music is the singing soul rejoicing, showing its exuberance to one and all. Music is an integral part of a church. The Normal Lutherans recognized this fact at the very beginning. Recall the purchasing of the organ. This spirit for music continued and was given an added stimulus in the 50's. There had, for some time, been a Senior or Adult Choir, small as it may have been. Nevertheless, there was still a need for more voices. Seeing the need, director David Greer, a student of sacred music at Illinois

¹"Christ Lutheran Church Joins in 'Crusade for Christ' Drive," The Normalite, 1 February 1952.

²"Area Lutherans Give \$37,499 in 'Conquest for Christ' Drive," The Pantagraph, 1952.

Wesleyan University, decided to organize a Junior Choir on October 4, 1952. This was realized as an important move for two reasons: Christ Lutheran children would be taught to sing to the best of their ability by a trained instructor and a Junior Choir would be a source of supply for senior singers in years to come. All boys and girls in fourth grade or up were eligible to join. Parents were urged to bring their youngsters to the church under the knowledge that the children did not have to know how to sing but that they would be taught how to sing by Mr. Greer.

After the chorus had been established, it was only a matter of practice and time before special choral programs could be presented. On a Sunday evening, back in 1953, one such program was given. Choral selections revolved around the theme "Behold the Lamb of God" which depicted the seasons of the church year as they tell of the birth, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. The program was under the direction of Greer who had worked diligently and patiently with both the Senior and Junior Choirs. The accompanist for the evening's program was Mrs. Fred Brian. Rev. Glock, himself, wrote the narration introducing each of the choral selections. To add to the total euphonious dimension of the evening, the audience was asked at times to participate in the singing of several hymns.³ Music is made both to participate in and listen to. It was on a May night that the twenty-voice male choir, frequently heard over the International Lutheran Hour, came to entertain the members of Christ Lutheran. The choir was under the direction of Walter Keller and had made frequent tours of mid-western cities. Choirs are one of the voices of God; they help to make

³"Lutherans Set Sacred Concert," The Pantagraph 6 May, 1953.

the church the church.

In a newsnote to the congregation concerning the Lenten season of 1956, these words were expressed to show how active Christians can interact with their Lord:

There are two fine new features in the devotions this year. The first is that the choir will sing at each service. Listening to our choir is always an uplifting experience. The second new feature is that our meditations will be illustrated. Not slides, or movies, but original drawings by Mr. Fred Brian of Illinois Wesleyan University and a member of our church. The sketches will focus the sermonette for us. We feel sure that these meditations will broaden our understanding of God's Word and measurably deepen our faith....

By 1957, Mrs. L. Holle Brian had taken over the direction of the choir. Her letter to the congregation shows, too, the need for music in the church; it shows that the voice of Christians singing together can learn and serve together. Her words urge the congregation to lift their voices in praise of the Lord.

...I am making a very special appeal to all church members either to join or to urge reluctant friends and relatives to join [the choir]. There is only one requirement for membership--that you like to sing. Past musical training or experience is not necessary ...We learn together.

The Choir is an important part of our church and provides an opportunity for you to edify our worship service and to render a service to God.

Please, young and old, give this appeal serious consideration; if at first it seems impossible or too difficult to arrange, think again. Remember, you will be doing something very pleasant, as well as serving the Lord.⁴

Missions and missionary work have always been important and central

⁴Letter from L. Holle Brian to congregation August 23, 1957.

elements in church life. The very nature of the Christian faith makes us all missionaries, for after we come to know God for ourselves we cannot help but share it with those who as yet do not know Him. There are two kinds of missionaries who go into the world to preach the Gospel--the "go"-missionaries and the "co"-missionaries. Both are serving God. Christ Lutheran Church, throughout the years, has set aside a special Sunday for the work of missions. As Christians who care and share, these days all set aside for a better understanding of the Lutheran mission program. Christians can hear about what the "go"-missionaries are doing to win souls for Christ. Coming to Christ Lutheran Church to explain the part they have played in mission work have been a number of interesting people with interesting and exciting stories. The Rev. and Mrs. Elmer H. Thode, who were held as prisoners by the Chinese Communists while preaching for God, came to Normal to share their experiences with the "co"-missionaries of Christ Lutheran. Since the 1920's, the Thode family had carried on missionary work through many political upheavals in China. They spent most of their time, after World War II, at the Lutheran seminary in Hankow. They remained there in spite of the fact that the Chinese Communists who overran the area identified missionaries as agents of American imperialism. They had been called before the People's Court on trumped up charges; they were forced to ask for permission to leave the country. After leaving in 1952, they took refuge in Hong Kong while awaiting passage to the United States.⁵

⁵"Missionary From Red China Speaks For Lutherans," The Normalite 6 March, 1953.

In another instance Rev. Herman H. Koppelman, who had completed a year tour of Lutheran mission stations in the Far East spoke to the members of Christ Lutheran. He told them that during his tour he surveyed mission activities in New Guinea, India, the Phillipines, Formosa, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea. He said that of these only the 58 year old India mission activities existed before World War II. The others came into being after the native's contact with Lutheran soldiers and chaplains had created interest in the Christian faith.

The Rev. Delmar J. Glock, a brother of Christ Lutheran's Albert Glock came to Christ Lutheran and related his missionary experiences he shared in Japan. His talk concerned the growth of the Japanese Lutheran Hour, which he had managed since its beginning in 1950. Adapted to Japanese listeners by Pastor Glock, the radio program originating in Tokyo includes the dramatic presentation of a Bible truth, hymns, and a question and answer period. Glock explained that listeners were encouraged to join the Bible correspondence course, which he also had a hand in directing. In addition to the radio work, he conducted services and Bible classes in a mission outpost near Tokyo.⁶

The Christ Lutheran Women's Missionary League sponsored the appearance of Miss Shirley Groh, field secretary for the Lutheran Deaconess Association. Miss Groh told church members that about 450 deaconesses serve the various United States Lutheran bodies as parish workers, nurses, social workers, in city and foreign missions, or assisting in university centers, institutions for the aged, deaf, feeble minded and destitute

⁶"Missionary from Japan Speaks at Lutheran Church," The Pantagraph 30 November, 1956.

children.⁷

An absolutely essential activity in church life is, of course, the Sunday School. Opening the hearts of children is always a thrilling and totally fascinating experience. Youngsters are the future church. Parents must provide the proper facilities and atmosphere to help their children receive the Christian Story. Christ Lutheran has a sparkling record in reaching and teaching its children. Great effort has been placed on Sunday School and Vacation Bible School classes. Vacation classes have been open to all children and have provided them with appropriate story telling, handicrafts, music, and games. In 1953, Mrs. A. D. Dirks, Sunday School superintendent, and her assistant Mrs. Otto Laesch guided a group of 16 sincere and dedicated teachers. Vacation classes were divided in different age groupings: Nursery (three and four year olds), Beginner (late four and five year olds), Primary (grades one, two, and three), Junior (grades four, five, and six), and Senior. Transportation was even provided by a number of mothers to bring the children to school.⁸ By 1955 enrollment in the Vacation Bible School had increased so much that the Immanuel Bible Foundation granted its facilities for the large pre-school group whose enrollment would simply overflow room at the church. This was a very convenient arrangement as the foundation was opposite the church site.⁹

During the regular year of 1954, a branch Sunday School was opened in Northeast Normal for the benefit of children in that area. Classes

⁷"Christ Lutheran Women to Hear of Deaconess Work," The Pantagraph 16 October, 1955.

⁸"Lutheran Bible School to Open," The Normalite 12 June, 1953

⁹"Lutherans Enlarge Bible School Facilities," The Normalite 1 July, 1955.

were to be held at nine o'clock in the home of Mr. and Mrs. David Totten. The four branch Sunday School teachers were Mrs. John Flachs-bart, Mrs. Donald Dornfeld, Mrs. Lewis Young, and Mrs. Richard Griffeth.¹⁰

In preparation as their job of teachers, Sunday School staff members would often attend large meetings held especially for teacher guidance. The semi-annual meetings of the Lutheran Sunday School Association were part of the teacher training program in each of the Lutheran churches of the Bloomington circuit. Training included weekly lesson reviews, systematic courses in Bible study, church history, and teaching techniques.

Simply for the sake of a little human interest, I am going to include, in this chapter, the story of Louise Hanssler Sommer. Mrs. Sommer, although directly affiliated with St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Peoria, attended Christ Lutheran and was a member of its Ladies Aid and Mission Societies. She is an interesting sidelight to the general flow of church events. Mrs. Sommer was a Normalite poetess! Even in her youthful days in Eagle Grove, Iowa, she had a flair for memorizing lengthy prose and poetry. Back in 1955, when she had turned 75, she was not only memorizing but writing as well. Many of her little verses have a religious theme as in "Prayer" when she poetically says:

If I pray not aright
Dear Lord, forgive,
Grant me Thy gracious light,
Teach me to live.

Many were written to her sons in service, about sleep, illness, birthdays, popcorn, or just noise. Accused by a friend she had not seen for sometime

¹⁰"Lutheran Church Opens Branch Sunday School," The Pantagraph 16 October, 1954.

for dyeing her hair, compelled Mrs. Sommer to write this verse in direct answer to the accusation.

Hair Dye? Not I!

I should be gray at seventy.
 But most of the brown is still
 there
 And recently I was accused
 Of using some dye on my hair.
 Believe me, if that were the
 truth
 Mom Sommer would not be my
 name
 And you could never see my
 face,
 It would be so covered with
 shame.
 But if eating the right kind of
 food
 And giving it the proper care,
 Has helped to keep the grayness
 back
 Then Nature is dyeing my hair!

"Mrs. Sommer was born near Cullom to a family of German immigrant farmers. Hers was a plain, humble, God-fearing household. There was little printed matter then; she recalls a German Bible and German song-books in her home and her father published the weekly newspaper, 'Germania'."¹¹

It is people like Mrs. Sommer, many people whom we never hear of, who help make the church the church; they add the flavor of the human spirit to the church of concrete and glass; they bring life into an otherwise lifeless church; they are the essence, the heartbeat; they are the Soul of a church!

¹¹"Normalite Says It With Verse," The Pantagraph 2 October, 1955.

Chapter IX

Goodbye, Reverend Glock; Hello, Reverend Pragman

Preserve this ministry
 While harvest-days are keeping;
 And since the fields are white
 And hands are few for reaping,
 Send workers forth, O Lord,
 The sheaves to gather in
 That not a soul be lost
 Which Thou art come to win.¹

The party was over. Rev. Etzold had given the evening's address, refreshments had been served, the gift had been given; all were leaving, all were heading home. Another farewell party--honoring a faithful minister, saying goodbye to Rev. Glock--marked the end of a triumphant seven years.

Glock, already in May of '57, had been considering leaving Christ Lutheran. He had received a call--not from another church but from a college. He was offered the opportunity to teach in the Religion Department of Concordia Teachers College at River Forest. Those seven years at Christ Lutheran had been lively and vivacious ones for Rev. Glock. He had charge of students in the ISNU and Wesleyan campuses, and had been chairman of the interreligious council at ISNU, and had been an active member of the Bloomington-Normal Ministerial Association, as well as the Cerebral Palsy Association. He had also been vacancy pastor for Zion

¹Lutheran Synodical Conference, The Lutheran Hymnal (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1941) p. 486.

Lutheran Church in Danvers and was a member of the stewardship committee of the Central Illinois District of the Missouri Synod.²

In explaining his decision to leave the church, Glock wrote a thoughtful letter to the congregation telling exactly his feelings and reasons for the decision.

This has been a difficult decision to make. To accept this call would mean a redirection of profession, while, of course, still serving the Church. Some of you may know that Concordia Seminary in St. Louis had asked me to teach a course in the Old Testament field in the School of Graduate Studies next Spring. It was, however, a complete surprise to receive the call to serve at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill...Let me give you a few details concerning the call. The official title of the position is Assistant Professor of Religion. I am to teach four courses, four hours each week, making a total of 16 teaching hours. The courses for the Fall Quarter are entitled: "Old Testament Survey and Introduction" (two units), "History of Israel" and "Messianic Prophecies"...This call has been extended to me because of need to expand the staff in Religion which presently has no one specializing in the Old Testament. The School anticipates an enrollment of more than 800 students in the fall...No one will deny that there is a great field of labor in Normal. The members of Christ Lutheran have been patiently learning how to serve the Lord through the Church. We have grown, inside and outside. In these years our membership has almost doubled while our income has tripled. We are on the eve of an extensive building-planning program...As a churchman I am not interested in rank, rather serving God with my whole heart and mind and soul. Because I truly think I shall be able to serve God even more fully at Concordia Teachers I feel I should accept this call...The Voter's Assembly has granted me a peaceful release from my duties as your Pastor effective July

²"Rev. Albert Glock Will Leave Lutheran Church, Accepts Teaching Position," The Normalite 14 June, 1957.

31. Humanly speaking, it will not be easy for us to leave this city. We have grown to love its people. Our small family of four was born here. We came here after we were married in 1951. You have always been kind to your Pastor and family. We have appreciated this. But we feel that we move at the call of God. If we did not know this for sure we would not be leaving.

Sincerely in Christ,
Albert E. Glock, Pastor³

Again Christ Lutheran was to search for another servant of God. During a regular meeting of the congregation, criteria were set up in selecting a new minister. All members of the church were given an opportunity to place a candidate for the pastorate of the church in nomination. Nominations were to be made by the following procedures:

1. The nomination made was to be in writing with the church member signing his name.
2. A written statement, in addition to the minister's name, was to include some information of the man--candidate's age, family, places served, length of service, etc.
3. There was to be an outline of his qualifications and a statement telling why he should be pastor of Christ Lutheran.
4. Statements were to be sent to Mr. Harry Yobski or any other members of the Call Committee.⁴

The first call was extended to Pastor L. Behnken. However, Rev. Behnken, at the time, was on vacation in California. It took many weeks for Behnken to acknowledge the call, and when he did he rejected Christ Lutheran's offer. Another call was immediately sent out to Rev. Paul

³Christ Lutheran Church, Sunday Bulletin, June 9, 1957.

⁴Letter from Harry Yobski to members of Christ Lutheran Church, June 14, 1957.

Bretscher of New Orleans, Louisiana. Meanwhile, Glock had already left to take up his new teaching position at River Forest. The Vacancy Pastor became the Rev. Herman Etzold of Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington. Within a few weeks a letter had been received by the church from Pastor Bretcher; it enclosed his reply to the call. He said, "Last night, climaxing three weeks of careful and prayerful thought and study regarding your call...and after discussing the matter thoroughly with our men, I reached the final conviction of the Lord's will, that I should remain..."⁵

Another call was issued to Rev. E. J. Otto of Quincey; he, too, did not accept. Rev. H. E. Simon of Appleton, Wisconsin and Rev. Walter E. Bussert of Pekin also received calls. In each case the answer was the same--we elect to remain. Finally, a call was extended to Herbert C. Pragman of North Little Rock, Arkansas. By February 23, 1958, the congregation had been informed that Rev. Pragman had accepted the call.

From the hills of Arkansas to the prairies of Illinois would be a big change of scenery for the Pragman's. Naturally, any minister who accepts a new position is going to wonder about the new surroundings. In a letter to the members, Rev. Pragman writes:

All of us are getting anxious and in the coming weeks the joy will grow at the prospect of serving Christ Church. We ask your prayers in our behalf that God will keep us and bless us while continuing here even as we remember the members of Christ. On Sundays after the services are completed here we do considerable musing--how were the services in Christ Church, who conducted the service today, are the students attending the services in great numbers.⁶

⁵Christ Lutheran Church, Sunday Bulletin, September 22, 1957.

⁶Christ Lutheran Church, Sunday Bulletin, March 9, 1958.

The Pragman's made the big move in April of 1958. They were in town for only about 4 or 5 days when the installation of Rev. Pragman took place on April 20th in the afternoon at 2:30 in the church. The installation rite was performed by the Rev. Alvin Mueller of Decatur, president of the central Illinois District. Preaching the sermon was Christ Lutheran's Vacancy Pastor Rev. Etzold who spoke on "Peter's Pattern for a Faithful Pastor." Rev. Otto C. Simonsen, retired pastor and member of Christ Lutheran, was the liturgist for the occasion. A reception, following the service, was held for Rev. Pragman. Members of the Ladies Aid provided the food and served the meal.⁷

In relating part of the story, The Pantagraph reported:

The Pragman family moved into the Christ Lutheran parsonage at 308 Highland Ave., Normal, this week from North Little Rock, Ark. Mr. Pragman was pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in that city. He held pastorages at Bunceton, Mo., and St. Joseph, Mo.

The Pragman's have four children. James is attending St. Paul's College at Concordia, Mo., Genevera and Martha are high school students and Sarah Elaine is 1½ years old.

Pastor Pragman is a graduate of St. Paul's College and the Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, Mo. He has served as pastoral counselor for the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the Walther League, board member of the St. Paul's College Association, chairman of the Arkansas-Tennessee Lutheran Pastoral Conference, visitor of the West Arkansas Circuit and assistant editor of the Western District Voice, a publication.⁸

⁷"Normal Lutherans Get New Pastor," The Pantagraph, 17 April, 1958.

⁸The Pantagraph, 17 April, 1958.

After one month, the Pragman's were beginning to get accustomed to the corn and prairies of their new home. Rev. Pragman writes to his congregation:

We have been in your midst a little better than a month, and in this time have not only met many of you but also know you. Another month and we should be able to match all the faces and all the names. I am very happy that with just a few exceptions we have called at the homes of our members living in Normal and in Bloomington. With equal joy we are now looking forward to our visits in the homes of our members living in the country... Last Sunday afternoon we were in the company of the Married Couples at the New Salem State Park, until then we actually believed that Illinois had nothing but black soil; however, on the way we saw some yellow clay, so even Illinois must have a little of this and a little of that. I still believe that the Married Couples took us in the direction of Athens and New Salem, where it is hillier and there are more trees, so that we wouldn't forget the hills and trees of Arkansas. All in all, this is a beautiful country, and we shall enjoy serving the Lord Jesus and his people in this area.⁹

⁹Letter from Rev. H. C. Pragman to congregation, May 27, 1958.

Chapter X

The End of the Beginning

How often at night when the church is alight
 For a meeting of work, praise and prayer,
 Have I stood there amazed and rejoiced as I gazed
 At the crowds of fine folks that were there

Sing, sing of the church
 Where the man in the pew does his part,
 Where seldom is heard a discouraging Word,
 And the service all comes from the heart!¹

We are there! Where? At Trinity Lutheran Church of Bloomington. Why? For a Loyalty Dinner. The Culinary Guild of Trinity has just finished serving the dinner of salad, corn, mashed potatoes (with gravy), Swiss Steak, and our choice of either cherry or apple pie. It is now 7:15 p. m. Mrs. Leon Borcharding is now about to lead us in a community sing. There is a hush, a silence, then suddenly the room fills with voices all singing (to the melody of "The Caisson's Go Rolling Along") these words:

Come along, join the throng,
 Let's all sing some good old song
 And we'll drive all our worries from sight.
 Get some pep, let's be hep,
 Not one person out of step,
 'Tis a good time we're out for tonight.
 So let's sing out loud,
 If you want to you may shout,
 Sing one---sing all---with main and might
 So when all is done and our homeward way begun
 We'll be happier for singing tonight!

¹Christ Lutheran Church, Building For Christ, October 25, 1958.

The clock now says 8:00 p. m. The singing stops. Mr. Otto Laesch begins to address the group giving us a brief introduction to the church expansion program. After Mr. Laesch we hear from other members concerning the program. Rev. Herman A. Etzold, who is the guest speaker for the evening, concludes the speech making. The meeting ends with Vespers conducted by Pastor Pragman.² The members leave the church; they each take home their own thoughts...perhaps remembering 1947...remembering the struggles...remembering the success....

Rev. Pragman had come just in time. Christ Lutheran Church was making a second start, and it needed leadership and direction more than ever. Expansion for Christ would require a great deal of sacrifice and earnest work. But with time and God's help the job could and would be done.

The challenge was simply for a larger church. With the return of the students, with church attendance being well over 200 every Sunday, with five Sunday School classes meeting in the church auditorium and one class in the balcony, with two Sunday School classes meeting in the basement and the Adult Bible Class, Junior Bible Class and the Nursery Class meeting at Immanuel Bible Foundation, the challenge was all too obvious. In answer to the challenge, the sum of \$60,000 was needed by the end of 1960!³ Immediate steps were taken to meet the pressing need. The Building and Finance Committee determined to scientifically set up a methodical system that would help meet the challenge. Perhaps for the sake of con-

²Ibid.

³Christ Lutheran Church, Church Expansion, Bulletin No. 1, October 7, 1958.

notation, this committee soon changed its name to "Christ Lutheran Church Extension Fund." At a later date would another Building and Finance Committee be created. Arrangements were made for publicity, headed by Al Kothe; canvassing with 20 or more teams participating; a pledge system including envelopes, pledge cards, and advance pledges; future loyalty dinners; and a philosophy based upon a "need of the giver to give for his own soul's welfare" and "not equal giving, but equal sacrificing backed up by Prayer, Faith, and Sacrifice, plus a lot of good hard work."⁴

The Building Committee finally included five men: John Marinchek, chairman, Elmer Nelson, Ralph Schroeder, Oscar Voelker, Harry Yobski. The newly created Finance Committee was composed of Charles Kellogg, chairman, Loren Ehling, Walter Wesselhoeft, Herman Steljes, and Eugene Osman.

The members had, more or less, decided to meet the challenge and build but not without disagreement. The following letter is an expression of that disagreement:

...you would like all members to declare themselves in regard to: if, when and how to build and proceed. My personal opinion; to finance a \$200,000 church project...I don't think the present membership justifies such an expenditure. The first drive, I think, should be for new members. We may have to delay building to four or five years but that, in my estimation, is good common sense...Another important item, we should not place too much of a burden on the next generation....⁵

Nevertheless, progress was being made. The canvassers visited many

⁴Christ Lutheran Church, Recommendations of Sub-Committee, September 16, 1958.

⁵Personal letter from J. H. Flachsbart to John Marinchek, August 28, 1958.

homes and by April 12, 1959 the total pledged to the Extension Fund was \$36,284.20. On the surface things appeared quite favorable, however, a closer look revealed that there was a negative side to the story. 32 people were behind in their contributions while 33 members, although they had planned to give, had not contributed at the time. In addition some members had neither pledged nor contributed at all. These people were to be contacted once again.

What exactly was to be built? A number of plans were proposed to answer this question. Plan A called for Sunday School rooms, parish hall, remodeling of the present building. Plan B called for a new church (sanctuary) and Sunday School rooms and remodeling of the present building. The two plans were submitted to 72 of the members. When a straw vote was taken neither plan had a big majority. Because of this new factor Plan C was proposed--to re-locate for the purpose of better serving God's Kingdom. This helped to confuse and complicate the picture all the more. This proposal raised a series of questions:

1. If we build where we are, will the congregation again be confronted with the question, say 15 years from now? The question that faces us now: Shall we build where we are or shall we build elsewhere?
2. If we build where we are, will we limit the growth of our congregation?
3. If we build where we are, will our people really be happy with the arrangement? Will you be happy to have our present building remodeled into the sanctuary, pews, carpets, etc.? Will you be happy to have our present building remodeled into a parish hall? Is remodeling ever cheap or is it expensive?
4. If we build on another site, what will it cost, what are the advantages? Do you know?
5. Is there another site available? The Building Committee has been looking and they have found several. Before our people pass judgment they should hear the report.

6. Can we sell our church? Again our people should hear the Building Committee. Nothing has been sold.⁶

But the questions would be answered and decisions would be made.

Soon it was all over...the ground breaking, the construction, and the building. Christ Lutheran had its extension. In jubilation the dedication service was held on January 7, 1962. Returning for the special occasion was a man who was very much aware of church building-- Rev. Robert E. Weller. His address was "Dedication Day--Thy Day Which the Lord Has Made." The new addition, designed by Keith Middleton and Associates of Normal and constructed by Dell Construction Co. of Washington, added much to the overall impressiveness of the church. The 102 by 61 foot addition included a sanctuary seating 300 people and provided room for 50 choir members in the balcony at the rear of the church. Seven Sunday School classrooms can be found in the basement; several can be divided to provide additional meeting rooms. A small chapel seating 50 people is located on the main floor east of the sanctuary. A church library and a room in which to arrange flowers and keep altar equipment are situated behind the chapel. Remodeling of the old church included a kitchen located at the back of the former chancel with the pastor's and church secretary's offices built at the entrance of the old sanctuary.

Other ministers who spoke at this special celebration, besides Weller, were Rev. Herman F. C. Wetzel of Rock Island, Rev. Ernest Gerike of Trinity Lutheran, Rev. Holland Jones from Redeemer Lutheran, and Albert E. Glock

⁶Letter from H. C. Pragman to congregation June 7, 1960.

of River Forest.⁷

John Keats once said in a poem that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." Well, whatever makes up the quality of beauty can be found at Christ Lutheran. The sanctuary presents a certain curious solemnity about itself that makes the worshiper feel the beauty of the church. There is a serenity, a calmness about the sanctuary. Perhaps it is the elemental simplicity of the structure that conveys the silent beauty to the worshiper. The gigantic, mechanical equipment of modern industry, the skill of the wood craftsman, and the dexterous fingers of the artist have all combined to produce the desired effect of a simple yet all embracing beauty.

As we examine the church, we are immediately impressed by the interesting yet meaningful symbols of the chancel. Designed by Fred B. Brian and carefully and meticulously constructed by Roger E. Herberts, the symbols have a story to tell. They are based on a familiar Biblical text from Ephesians 2: 19-22: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit."

The four Major Prophets are represented in symbols to the left of the altar. Isaiah's symbol is a pair of tongs and a burning coal from the altar of God. Jeremiah is represented by a stone, since he is said

⁷"Normal's Christ Lutheran Church To Dedicate Addition," The Pantagraph, 5 January 1962.

to have been stoned to death, and by a scroll containing words of his prophecy. Ezekial is shown by strong towers and a closed gate. Daniel is picture by a ram with serveral horns. The four Evangelists are represented in symbols to the right of the altar by the four winged creatures mentioned in Ezekiel and in the Revelations to St. John. The winged man represents Matthew because he begins his Gospel by tracing the human descent of the Savior. The winged lion pictures Mark because he begins his Gospel by telling of John the Baptist, who was "no reed shaken by the winds." The winged ox denotes Luke who gives a detained account of the suffering and death of Christ. The symbol for John is the winged eagle. From first to last, the Gospel that John proclaims soars on eagles' wings and is carried to men everywhere.

On the east wall in the nave is Fred B. Brian's multi-paneled painting depicting the Savior's Parable of the Sower and the Seed. The first panel shows the way-side; the second panel reveals the rocky soil; the fourth and fifth panels show the thorny soil and the good soil. The center panel contains a number of symbols. The cross in which Christians glory-is placed in the center; the vine in its immediate sense represents the Savior and in a secondary sense also denotes the Christian Church, which is made up of true believers who abide in the true vine, Jesus Christ. Also the familiar Chi-Rho is placed upon the fish.

Because Christ Lutheran had always worked closely with the students of the universities, the church was given a grant of \$25,000 toward the construction of the new extension. In this same spirit, within the recent years, the Missouri Synod has recognized the heavy responsibility and burden on the minister in his job in working with these people. In May of

1963, the Synod assigned a vicar to assist in helping with this tremendous work. Arthur Krentz of Windsor, Ontario, Canada arrived in August of '63.⁸ He served the church for one year when another vicar, Dale Erickson, was sent to assist in the growing duties of the church.

Christ Lutheran is still a young church; its history is a mere 18 years. Its history of yesteryear has happened and has been recorded; its history of tomorrow remains to happen and to be written. But certainly the great bulk of the happening will occur in that tomorrow, for these past 18 years have been only a prelude, a beginning.

This history merely marks the end of that beginning.

⁸Letter from H. C. Pragman to the congregation, May 14, 1963.

A Pictorial Epilogue







