

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-  
FRANKLIN, WISCONSIN:  
114 YEARS OF CONCERN FOR CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION

by  
Mark Lindner

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library  
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W  
Mequon, Wisconsin

Senior Church History  
Professor E. Fredrich  
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One of the most important accomplishments of Martin Luther during his lifetime was the work which he did to bring about the Christian education of the Church's youth. His emphasis on parochial education and his concern for it was something which rubbed off on many a Lutheran congregation here in America. A good example of this concern for Christian day school education can be found in the history of a small congregation in the township of Franklin, Wisconsin. Since I have been a member of St. Paul's congregation for the majority of my life and a benefactor of its Christian day school, I felt the desire to write a paper about St. Paul's congregation, especially zeroing in on the concern which its pastors and members had and continue to have for the Christian education program of its youth. This paper will scan 114 years of Christian education at St. Paul's, picking out some of the highlights of that history and showing how the Lord has blessed the work of that congregation in training its children in the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures.

Before looking specifically at the Christian day school, it would be well to briefly speak about the story of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church's beginning. Its beginning goes back to old German St. Paul's congregation which was organized in 1865. The old records show that on September 21, 1865, a group of German Lutheran families assembled in the house of H. Sanders on the Smith Road. (Now called S. 51st Street.) These people still had the memories of their dear Lutheran church in Germany fresh in their minds and hearts. They yearned to continue to worship

God here in America and to have their children instructed in Luther's doctrine pure. The purpose of this first gathering was the organization of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in the township of Franklin. In order that the meeting be conducted in an orderly manner according to the laws of the state, the assembled Lutherans chose H. Wolter as chairman and H. Sanders as Secretary. The discussions were devoted to the subject of building a church and the collections of moneys for a building fund. They resolved to give the new congregation the name of "German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation." A truly Lutheran spirit pervaded the thoughts and actions of these early fathers of the congregation. "They resolved by common consent to found their church on the Apostles and Prophets, whose foundation was Jesus Christ." That they were serious about their intent was shown by the drawing up of a constitution. The site for the church building was "the highest spot in the cemetery", which the first Lutherans here had furnished for their own families. These cemetery grounds were located at the intersection of Smith Road and the Town Line Road, which is now College Avenue. This location was to be the hub of congregational activities for years to come. The dimensions of the first church were- 32 ft. wide, 42 ft. long, and 16 ft. high. The cost represented quite an undertaking in those days, but the eager members promised each other to see to it that the money would be there. On September 23, 1865, certain members resolved to speak with others about the cutting and hauling of timber necessary for the church, and to plane it ready for use. The timber was to come from properties of church members. "Das

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Holz wird von der Gemeinde unentgeltlich aus dem Busch gerueckt, und auf dem Platz geliefert" was their decision. By April of 1866 the church was completed. Pastor Brenner of Kilbourne Rd. Lutheran Church was called to be the visiting pastor. His salary was 100 dollars a year, free fodder for a horse, and 80 bushels of oats and necessary hay to be paid quarterly. Each member was to contribute 3 dollars yearly to the pastor's salary and the oats payment was apportioned to each farmer according to his acreage. Pastor Brenner preached every two weeks in the afternoon at Wolter's house until the church was completed. Certain congregations in Germany sent gifts of love to the struggling congregation during its first three years to help it get on its feet.

From the very beginning of St. Paul's congregation there was interest shown by its members for a Christian day school. Confirmation instructions alone did not satisfy the parents' conception of child training. They understood that a child during the formative years (6-14) most easily yielded itself to the learning of God's Word, and that this training would mould their character for future years. They realized that if one "trains a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it." With great insistence they worked to achieve this goal for their children. In December of 1865, H. Sanders addressed the congregation in the interest of a German parochial school. To a man, everyone was for it. Without losing any time, six school trustees were elected; Wendt, Eichstedt, Martin, Zanders, Delikat, and August Schroeder. Sanders offered his house to the congregation for a temporary school. Parents were to send along

firewood with the children. A freewill collection was taken to take care of the immediate needs of the school. Gottlieb Blankenhan, who had been a teacher in Germany, was called as its first teacher. The building of a school was imperative to all the members of St. Paul's. H. Sanders offered a portion of his land about a mile south of the church building. On April 15, 1866, the school was dedicated with a Scripture reading from John 21:1-14. The salary of the teacher was to be 300 dollars, to be paid bi-annually. The school year ran from the first of April to the following year ending in March. During the summer months the tuition was \$2.50 per child, during the winter months the tuition per child was \$3.00. A deed was made out for the school property and a fence was built around it. During that same year a school constitution was made and accepted.

From 1865-1900 there were many significant developments in the Christian day school program at St. Paul's. In 1868 St. Paul's received their first resident pastor, Pastor P. Lukas. The congregation grew and prospered. Mr. Blankenhan resigned as teacher and Pastor Lukas took up the teaching duties. Eight pupils were enrolled in the school by 1869. Pastor Lukas left the congregation in 1874 and Pastor W. Hinnenthal was then called and became St. Paul's pastor until 1885. Pastor Hinnenthal also had the responsibility of teaching the children of the congregation in the day school. From May 1885 until January 1887 the congregation was without a resident pastor. In May of 1888, no pastor available as yet, the congregation resolved to call Professor Notz at the Seminary in Watertown, Wisconsin, as pastor. Prof-

essor Notz was only able to assist in filling the pulpit and acted as temporary "Seelsorger." At the congregation's request, Professor Notz sent students from the Seminary to teach school. Candidates L. Hansen and P. Martin served as teachers.

In January of 1887 Pastor H. Ebert became St. Paul's permanent pastor. A parsonage was built for him next to the school on Smith Road. 1887 was an important year for the school, for a new school building was planned. It was to stand on the site of the old school. Carpenter Hans Hoehnen built the new school for \$59.00. New "patent" desks were also to be purchased. On October 16, 1887, the new school was dedicated. Since water facilities were lacking, a well was dug for the use of the school and parsonage.

1888 was a significant year for St. Paul's Lutheran School. It was decided to have its first "Kinderfest" which from then on became a yearly affair. The year 1888 was a signal year for the school in another way. Permission was granted the teacher to teach English from then on. An attempt was made that same year to unite the school with the public school so that the teacher could fill both positions. The faithful members of St. Paul's congregation saw the danger here. To preserve their pure doctrine for their children, they rejected this attempt at unionism.

In 1890 teacher M. Gruber was called to alleviate the work load of Pastor Ebert. Mr. Gruber, besides his other duties, consented to act as Secretary of the congregation. In August of 1891 Mr. A. Brockman was procured through Professor Ernst of Watertown College to replace Mr. Gruber as teacher. By 1893

the school could boast of having 65 pupils. New desks were purchased and a shed for coal was built. That year also saw an addition to the school in the form of an instruction room for the confirmands. In 1894 a call came to Pastor Ebert from Saron congregation in Milwaukee and he accepted. A call was extended to Pastor H. Monhardt who accepted and took up his duties on May 19, 1895.

The first 30 years of St. Paul's existence were shaky ones. The school also had its problems and yet the Lord blessed the faithful efforts of St. Paul's members, its pastors, and its teachers to lay a firm foundation upon His Word from which both the church and school could build on.

From 1895-1936 Pastor Monhardt faithfully served St. Paul's congregation. It was during these years that both the church and the school grew and stabilized. In 1916 the present church building was constructed next to the school. By 1922 it was paid for. A number of male teachers taught at St. Paul's from 1895-1902 until in 1903 the congregation resolved to give the responsibility and control of the school into the hands of Pastor Monhardt. He was a gifted teacher and administrator, and the Lord used his talents to bring about stability to the Christian education program of St. Paul's congregation. His daughter, Miss Frieda Monhardt helped him by teaching the smaller children, but the majority of the teaching, administrating, and spiritual guiding of the children was done by Pastor Monhardt until 1936 when he left St. Paul's congregation after 41 years of faithful service.

Much of the work done by Pastor Monhardt in the school was a good foundation for growth. This can be seen during the

pastorate of Gerhardt Schaller who was St. Paul's pastor from 1936-1949. Modern educational methods were used and advanced. Eighth grade diplomas were given to those students who completed their Christian day school education. An entire eight graded system of education was instituted which was a requisite for entrance into high school. Mrs. Schaller assumed the teaching duties until 1940 and then Mr. Julius Ingebritsen became the full-time teacher. Pastor Schaller accepted a call in 1949 and St. Paul's called Pastor Gerhardt Hillmer who was St. Paul's pastor until 1963. During the majority of his pastorate Hillmer was the principal of the school. Two lady teachers handled the teaching duties of eight grades, while Pastor Hillmer handled the administration and confirmation instruction of the children.

1959 was a land mark year for St. Paul's Christian Day School because it was then that it received its first principal who wasn't the pastor. Mr. Frederick Wulff became the principal of the school in 1959 and faithfully served St. Paul's in that capacity until 1971 when he accepted a call to teach history at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. Mr. Wulff was a talented and hardworking individual whom the Lord used to influence many Christian young people, including the writer of this paper. He was a strict disciplinarian, and yet one who correctly used Gospel motivation in all of his teaching and disciplining. Home visits to parents of school children and prospective students became a regular part of the summer activity of Mr. Wulff and the teachers who served under him. Curriculum studies were introduced. Mr. Wulff improved all aspects of the educational



program of the school, especially in the area of music where he and his wife worked at adding to the worship of the church service with the singing of the school children. Each year Mr. Wulff and his wife would make a trip to either N.W.C. or D.M.L.C. with children, and by so doing served as a valuable recruiter of church workers for our Synod. In 1967 a beautiful and modern new school building was built to accomodate over 100 students. The school grew tremendously during Fred Wulff's 12 years at St. Paul's and when he left the school had four full time teachers. St. Paul's owes much to him for those years when the Lord used his faithful service to feed many of His lambs with the Word.

Gary Wille, who served under Mr. Wulff, became the principal in 1971 and continues to serve in that capacity today. The Lord has blessed the school throughout its 114 year history. At present it has an enrollment of 108 children. Throughout those 114 years the Lord has used faithful pastors, faithful teachers, and faithful lay people to educate children in the truths of Holy Scripture. How thankful the present membership of St. Paul's can be that the Holy Spirit has led generations of Lutherans in Franklin, Wisconsin, to see the value of bringing up Jesus' little lambs in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

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