

A HISTORY OF IMMANUEL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH WOODVILLE, WISCONSIN

by

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CHURCH HISTORY

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## IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

The early history of Immanuel Lutheran Congregation of Woodville, Wisconsin goes back a little farther than one hundred and two years. In the year 1881 a number of Lutheran families of German descent began to settle in Baldwin Township to carve new homes for themselves out of the wooded wilderness. Most of these people had come from conditions of extreme poverty in Europe. There they had been near slaves. Here they had the opportunity of becoming lords and owners of their own lands; their own farms; and their own homes.

A few years after these German immigrants had settled in Baldwin Township the Lord moved the heart of the Lutheran pastor of Elmwood, Wisconsin, the Rev. H. P. Duborg, to visit this tiny group of Germans in order to bring them the Word of God. Pastor Duborg was heartily welcomed, and for some time held services in the various homes of the pioneers, most of whom lived within walking distance of the place where Immanuel Church now stands.

By 1885 it was clear that a larger place of worship must be found. Soon willing and generous hearts were found. A plot of ground was donated by a farmer by the name of Hermah Welk Sr. Since most of his property was

wooded many trees had to be cut and cleared. By May 11, 1885, the new log church was ready for its first service.

The little group of Lutherans now owned their own house of worship. Strange to say, they were not even organized or incorporated at that time, but that did not hinder them from erecting their little church. To be able to worship God in His own house was their first concern. Legal matters could wait until later. In the following years the congregation was officially organized and incorporated under the laws of the state of Wisconsin. The articles of incorporation were signed December 13, 1886.

Whether in its early history this congregation officially joined any synodical organization is not known. Most likely it was simply considered a preaching station or mission congregation of that synod by whose pastor it was served. Most sources maintain that this was always the Ohio Synod, that is until 1899. One of the early pastors, however, expressed the opinion that Immanuel was founded by the Iowa Synod. Since 1900 this congregation has been affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States.

The oldest written source of information regard-

ing the pastors who served Immanuel and the official acts they performed is a "Church-Book" begun by Pastor F. A. Schaffnit in the year 1888. Since the oldest remaining minutes are dated 1893, much of my information must be credited to the sons and daughters of those early church organizers.

Whether Pastor Schaffnit directly succeeded Pastor Duborg is unknown. There is only one official act of Pastor Duborg inscribed into the record, namely one baptism on December 8, 1886. The Church Record shows that the official acts of Pastor Schaffnit were six baptisms, 14 confirmations, 73 communion guests, one marriage, and one funeral. A change in handwriting in this record book leads one to believe that he had moved away by the end of September, 1889.

Thinking it to be better for themselves and for the Church, the fathers of the congregation at this time requested a pastor of their own and made plans to build a house for him. Just how this was done is not shown in the records. The plot of ground very likely was donated by a man by the name of George Gralow. When all was ready Pastor George Diemer came to live in the parsonage and to serve the congregation as pastor. Very likely that was early in the year 1890.

By August of the same year a Pastor B. Ehwald had

been installed in Diemer's place. Things, humanly speaking, did not go very well during Ehwald's pastorate. It seems that he was compelled to take rather severe action against some members on account of their words or deeds; but, instead of allowing themselves to be admonished and to repent, these people severed their connections with the congregation and formed one of their own. This group was organized and incorporated July 22, 1893, as St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church. It built a church on the other side of the section to the northeast and requested to be served by the Missouri Synod.

The resolutions passed by the faithful remnant in the special meeting of January 30, 1893, may contain some hints as to what may have caused the split; yet nothing is known definitely except that it was for personal and not for doctrinal reasons that the group left the church.

Pastor Ehwald received a call and was given a peaceful release during the summer of 1893. The congregation now considerably smaller, was forced again to be served from a distance instead of by a resident pastor. The Rev. W. L. Keller of Afton, Minnesota, was called to serve them. Every three weeks he came to conduct service. Soon new members came to join the congregation. By the following year they were again interested and enthusiastic

enough about their church to cover the outside with siding. Pastor Keller served until 1895, when in the annual meeting of January 7 it was again decided to call a resident pastor.

Pastor George Fendler accepted the congregation's call and by March of the same year he was living in the parsonage. This part of the property was considerably improved during his pastorate. Additional land was donated so that the pastor could grow his own vegetables. Pastor Fendler remained only until May of the following year.

The congregation's next call traveled all the way to Germany to be delivered to Candidate Ed Schlagdenhaufen. He returned at once and brought with him his young bride from Strassburg. Under Pastor Schlagdenhaufen a new church building had been erected to replace the old one. Pastor Schlagdenhaufen, to the dismay of the congregation, took a call before the church could be dedicated. This left many of the members down in the mouth. Now they had a beautiful building but no pastor again. To make matters worse the Ohio Synod decided that Immanuel could be served best by the neighboring pastor in Afton, Minnesota. It was decided for them that they needed no resident pastor.

God, however, used this opportunity to bring to pass the things He had in mind for Immanuel. He used this

occasion to bring the people to seek service from a different synod in the hope that though Ohio did not want to serve them, maybe some other synod might. The Wisconsin Synod granted them a pastor. It was Pastor H. Wolter, who was ordained and installed on February 1, 1900. It is under Pastor Wolter that the break-off congregation, St. John's once again united itself with Immanuel, due to the fact that Immanuel had joined the Wisconsin Synod and now there were no doctrinal differences. The new church was now filled regularly and often beyond capacity. God once again had shown magnificent grace to His sheen at Immanuel. On April 10, 1904, Pastor Wolter accepted a call to Lomira, Wisconsin. Through the grace of God his pastorate was truly blessed in those four years.

On August 4, 1904, Pastor F. Zarling was ordained and installed by Prof. John Meyer. During his pastorate the congregation realized that the parsonage was inadequate both by location and size. Therefore on May 12, 1906 it was resolved to buy 144 square rods of additional land from Harry Welk and to build a parsonage on this property. By the 7th of October, 1906, the parsonage was completed. Pastor Zarling lived two more years in the parsonage and then took a call.

In November of 1908 Pastor Wm. Fischer had been instilled in Zarling's place. Under Pastor Fischer a school house was built. Pastor Fischer served Immanuel until the year 1913 and then accented a call.

Pastor V. E. Schroeder was installed in Pastor Fischer's place. It was during his time that the first English service was held. It was also decided that English be used every Sunday from that time on. During Pastor Schroeder's years at Immanuel several improvements took place, such as, the cementing of the parsonage cellar; the installation of lightning rods on the church; the painting of the buildings; and finally the shingling of the church roof. Pastor Schroeder's farwell sermon was preached December 15, 1918.

Pastor J. Gehm accented the congregation's call. He was installed February 2, 1919. It was during Pastor Gehm's first year that the custom of having several collectors receive the donations for the pastor's salary was introduced. Also during Pastor Gehm's years at Immanuel the unstairs of the parsonage received a new floor and a pipeless furnace was installed. Pastor Gehm preached his farewell sermon October 16, 1928.

Pastor M. C. Michaels of Henry, S. D., accented



the call of the congregation. The main improvement during his pastorate was putting the basement under the church. This undertaking almost proved disastrous in more ways than one. A storm tipped the church while it was supported only by jacks and caused a great deal of damage. There was extensive damage to the floor to the point that it couldn't be saved. The statue of Christ in the altar was broken and the chandeliers were smashed. Both of these items needed replacement. This disaster and other events that followed proved to be a very severe test of the temper and love of the people. For some years Pastor Michaels suffered from a heart ailment. On one Sunday morning he collapsed during the sermon. After he regained consciousness, he finished his sermon. The same night he suffered a severe attack and fell asleep in the Lord three hours later. Funeral services were held March 28, 1939. He was buried in Juneau, Wisconsin, the next day.

After a long vacancy Pastor E. M. Schroeder accepted the call to serve Immanuel as their shepherd. In 1940 the church was painted and eaves troughs and downspouts installed. An oil heater was purchased for the church to heat the building better on those cold Sundays of January and February. Pastor Schroeder preached his farewell sermon May 2, 1943.

June 13, of the same year Pastor Im. Bade was ordained and installed as pastor. During his pastorate Immanuel declared itself self-supporting. In 1944 the Board of Trustees took a giant step in the building program by installing a bathroom in the parsonage. The following year the congregation remodeled the kitchen. In May of the same year birds decided to build a nest in the chimney of the church. When the stoves were lit to heat the church for service, an explosion resulted. Worship had to be conducted in the basement, and the interior of the church needed to be refinished.

In October of the same year Pastor Bade accented a call to Red Lake Falls, Minnesota. He preached his farewell sermon on October 30th. Later that year, during the vacancy the congregation purchased a Minshall-Estey organ to beautify its services.

Pastor Werner, formerly of the Centuria-Rock Creek parsonage, was installed January 20, 1949. The years of his pastorate were peaceful and calm.

Pastor Paul E Horn of Ixonia, Wisconsin was installed as the pastor of Immanuel after Werner had left. Pastor Horn was installed on Sunday, October 28, 1951. Because of an ailment Pastor Horn was granted a three-month leave of absence beginning in December of 1951. In March of 1952 He returned seemingly recovered and ready to take up his work once again at Immanuel. But in the fall of

1954, it became apparent that his health failed him again, yet he continued to serve the church under the constant care of a physician until the month of February of the following year. Since that time, Feb. 13, he became confined to his bed until he quietly fell asleep on March 13, in the parsonage.

Pastor A. G. Schubring accepted the call to Immanuel in Pastor Horn's place. He served Immanuel for two years. There was not much that took place out of the normal during these two years. Everything was calm and peaceful, there were no major building programs.

Following Pastor Schubring Immanuel did not experience a long vacancy. They extended a call for a candidate of the ministry through the call committee of Synod. They received as their next pastor Glenway Backus who was installed on July 7, 1957. During his pastorate the congregation voted to celebrate Lord's Supper once a month. As a result of this decision the average times that each communicant partook of the Sacrament doubled. Pastor Backus preached his farewell sermon on January 8, 1961.

On May 3, 1961, the members of Immanuel issued a call to Pastor H. A. Pankow, who had been serving them as interim pastor. He accepted the call and was installed on June 18th. Pastor Pankow served Immanuel from

1961-1968. He died on Christmas Eve 1968, shortly before the service, from a heart attack.

Pastor Woller was extended the call and served Immanuel from 1969-1972. During his pastorate, the parsonage was given a much needed remodeling. The porch was remodeled, rooms paneled, and shower placed in the bathroom. Pastor Woller took a call in 1972 to Zion, East Farmington, just 30 miles from Woodville.

William Kirchner served from 1973-1979. He came right from the Seminary. The Lord blessed Immanuel under Kirchner. The congregation needed some stability, and he stayed for 6 years. During his pastorate, the matter of building a new church was brought up. By a close vote, the members decided not to build. Pastor Kirchner took a call to Ringle, Wisconsin in 1979.

Douglas Schalow, a Seminary graduate, served Immanuel from 1979-1981. He resigned in 1981 because of personal problems.

James Schumann a graduate of the Seminary class of 1981 received the call in Schalow's place. During Pastor Schumann's short time at Immanuel, so far, a new hot water tank and pump have been installed. Also a concrete slab and fence have been erected in the backyard of the parsonage, in the area of the old outhouse, as a pen for Pastor Schumann's dog, Luther. So far

Pastor Schumann's pastorate has been calm and peaceful.

This concludes my Church History paper. This paper will be used for the 100th centennial of Immanuel which will take place in 1986.