

WALKING WITH GOD FOR 50 YEARS

A HISTORY OF ST. MATTHEW'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN

PHILLIP D. SIEVERT

Although Janesville was seemingly healthy from an economic stand point, it wasn't until the early 1940's that our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) decided it was a prime field for spiritual growth as well. The Wisconsin Synod was well established in the area with large congregations existing in Fort Atkinson, Jefferson, Madison and Sun Prairie. So the Mission Board of the Western Wisconsin District decided it was only logical to begin doing work in this growing community. Sometime in late 1941, Pastor William Keturakat of Sun Prairie, a member of the Mission Board, was called to begin the work by gathering together a group of people. This first group of people lived in the area of the A + B Sheet Metal Bldg. in downtown Janesville by the Rock River. It was a Mrs. Oscar Rue who convinced Chester and Marge Miller (present member Judy Henke's parents) to hold services in their own home so that Pastor Keturakat would have a place to conduct services when he drove down from Sun Prairie. The Millers did much work in those early years to keep the group together. They even had their girls baptized in their own house, with Mrs. Rue being the sponsor. Among those other families who began meeting in the different homes were the Dobson family, the Juckett family, the Petri family and the Schadt family.

As more prospective families became interested, the group was organized in April of 1942. At this time the congregation numbered only ten communicant members and 15 souls. The charter members of the congregation listed in the church records were Clarence Beldin, Chester Miller, Gerhard Petri, Kenneth Schadt and Rudolph Wetzel. [Here it might be interesting to note that none of the current members of St. Matthew's are listed among these first charter members. There are many names that appear on early church records such as Larson, Schueler, DeGarmo, ect., but the earliest listing of any current members are Philip and Rosy Frank who registered for communion on November 29, 1942!] Sometime in the year 1942, the Millers wished to free up their living room, so the small group decided to rent a room in the back of the A + B Sheet Metal Building (soon to be torn down).

It was then that this group decided to appeal to the Wisconsin Synod for a resident pastor. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary candidate Richard Jungkuntz was called to continue the work of the Lord. Part of Pastor Jungkuntz' call was to serve a mission field in the Fort Atkinson area as well (now Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church). He was ordained and installed in August 1942 in the local Christian Church.

In 1952, a booklet highlighting the first ten years of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church's history began with this foreword by then Pastor Mentor Kujath: "Our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ, likens the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed, which though small grows into a mighty plant. (Matthew 13, 31) As we look to our congregation in the past with its small beginning, to the present with its God-given growth, and to the future with its promise of even greater growth, God-willing, we see this parable of the Savior taking place in our midst."

How appropriate those words were some 40 years ago, and how appropriate they are now as we look back at 50 years of God's grace in the midst of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Though it was started with only a handful of saints and with limited facilities, our congregation has grown in number and in structure. And like Pastor Kujath did forty years ago, we too must give total credit to our gracious and loving God. He is the one who sent his only Son to pay the price of sin for each person in this church, in this community and in this world. He is the one who has brought men to this community of Janesville, to plant the almighty Word which proclaims that salvation for all mankind. He is the one who has created faith in the hearts of those saints who have made up the membership of St. Matthew's. He is the one who has blessed this church with so many wonderful gifts of time and talents and wealth.

Keeping that in mind, we look at the fifty year history of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Janesville, Wisconsin, giving God all glory, thanks, and praise!

BEGINNINGS

In the early 1940's Janesville was becoming a thriving and growing city. World War II marked the official end of the Depression and times ahead were marked for prosperity. General Motors produced tanks during the war and the future looked very promising. Parker Pen was also well established and the two companies combined, provided Janesville with a strong work base.

The Disciples of Christ Christian Church was the first "church" structure used by St. Matthew's. The members decided it was best to worship there because rent at the A + B Sheet Metal Bldg. was very high. Services were held at the Christian Church until mid 1945 when the congregation moved into its first "self-owned" worship facility. Pastor Jungkuntz tells how grateful the congregation was for this move:

"I remember well how grateful we all were when the District Mission Board agreed to help us purchase the Lamb property. Holding worship downstairs in the Christian Church had been a depressing experience. We could worship only in the evening; the building was much too large, with an interior that looked like an auditorium rather than a place for worship. There was no chancel nor altar; instead a huge tank sat there, sunk into the floor about three or four feet, for baptizing by immersion. In preparation for the move to 705 Milton Avenue, our members put in many, many evening and weekend hours to remodel the downstairs into the kind of space suitable for Lutheran liturgical worship. Upstairs our living quarters were very pleasant- we especially enjoyed the large bay window in the corner of the front room."

[Before their move into the Lamb "mansion" Pastor Jungkuntz and his wife Grace lived in the house (2nd floor) on Walker Street which was then directly behind the Lamb mansion. That first "parsonage" is still standing today and now is church owned. It lies next to the South parking lot.] It's interesting to note that the Lamb family which had built the "mansion" were owners of a fountain pen factory which finally lost out in competition with Parker Pen.

On March 11, 1945, the first service was held in order to dedicate the worship facility of the newly bought Lamb "mansion". The cost of the property was \$9500 which was made available through a loan from our Synod's Church Extension Fund. The building itself presented many changes if the downstairs was to be converted into a chapel. It meant removing a fire-place, knocking out walls, fire-proofing the furnace room, acquiring church furniture and redecorating the interior, just to mention a few of the problems. An additional loan of \$1200 was granted for this purpose, making the total indebtedness \$10,700. This move into the Lamb "mansion" was an extremely important occasion, for it not only provided St. Matthew's with its first permanent worship facility, but it also established the sight for the present St. Matthew's structure. We should be thankful to God for giving our early church founders the courage to face these difficulties and to overcome them.

This article is taken from the May 27th, 1945, issue of The Northwestern Lutheran:

CHURCH DEDICATION

St. Matthew's Cong.
Janesville, Wisconsin

On Sunday Laetare, March 11, St. Matthew's Congregation of Janesville, Wisconsin, was privileged to dedicate its house of worship to the glory and service of God.

The occasion was of special joy for the members of the congregation, because it was the first time they could worship in a church home of their own. Since the organization of the congregation in April, 1942, services had been held in a building rented from a church of another denomination. As one of the members said after the dedicatory service: "It's like coming home at last!"

In the morning service Prof. E. E. Kowalke preached the sermon, basing it on John 1, 14, and showing that the real purpose and strength and success of a Christian congregation can be achieved only when the word increases mightily in its midst. Such a congregation can face the future, with all its difficulties, confidently, in the certain knowledge that the Word never fails.

The Rev. Theo. J. Mueller preached in the evening service, basing his sermon on Gen. 28, 16-17. Carrying out the theme: "Why a Christian Loves His Church," he showed from the text that through the Word and Sacraments the Lord is indeed present among His people and opens to them the gate of heaven, thus making the Christian's church truly the house of God.

The chapel was filled to capacity for both services. Among those present in the evening were members of St. John's Lutheran Choir of Jefferson, who sang two selections.

Since St. Matthew's Congregation is a mission of the Western Wisconsin District, it was through a loan from the Church Extension Fund that purchase of the present church-parsonage combination was made possible. The property consists of three city lots, with a large two-family house on the corner. It is the lower flat which has been remodeled into a chapel, while the upstairs serves as living quarters for the pastor and his family.

Interior dimensions of the chapel are 42' X 16'. A ruling of the State Industrial Commission forbids the seating of more than 100 persons in a building of this type. But for several years at least the present chapel should prove adequate. And until the congregation's growth should make a larger place of worship necessary, the members of St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church will gratefully use this church home which God in His grace and through the assistance of the Synod has afforded them. To Him alone be glory!

R. Jungkuntz

Those early years in St. Matthew's history saw a substantial growth in its membership. Many of the new members came to St. Matthew's through transfers from other churches. The shortage of young men in the area and the shortage in the work force caused by World War II, led to a much higher than normal changing element in the membership. The turnover in those first few years was quite substantial, with people moving in and joining the congregation only to move away again in a year or so. But the majority of St. Matthew's members were brought into the church through canvassing and instruction.

Before much of the early mission work could take place, a "good-will" meeting had to take place with the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod) with whom we were in fellowship at the time. Pastor Jungkuntz writes,

"I recall Rev. Keturakat advising me that Pastor Treu of St. Paul's was somewhat concerned about having another Lutheran church starting up in town (both the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church of America also had congregations in Janesville). So within a month or so of my installation, I called on him to talk over the situation, and explained that by no means were we about to engage in "sheep-stealing". Rather, my intention was to concentrate my door- to -door canvassing on the north side of the city, which at the time was beginning to grow significantly expanding to the northeast especially (the Franks were among the early "settlers" in that development.) I also assured him that I was looking especially for families currently unaffiliated with any local congregation, whether Lutheran or otherwise. Finally, I said that if any St. Paul's member of their own volition expressed a desire to transfer to St. Matthew's- whether for reasons of convenience or because they felt they'd be more comfortable in a smaller group where they could become better acquainted- I would encourage them to make an appointment with him to discuss it candidly and personally. As it turned out, Pastor Tree responded quite amiably to all of this and I have no recollection of any further problems on this score."

Evidence of that early mission enthusiasm installed into St. Matthew's by its pastors is indicated in some canvass statistics taken in late spring of 1945. The purpose of this canvass was to update the basic information that had been originally gathered in late 1942 and during '43. This information was to serve as a guideline for the pastors that succeeded Pastor Jungkuntz who was about to take a call to serve Bethany, Fort Atkinson full time. Pastors Jungkuntz, Ernest Wendland (who would succeed Jungkuntz) of Washington, Iowa, and Walter Wagner of Moline, Illinois all helped on the canvass.

MISSION CANVASS 1945 Janesville, Wisconsin

The canvass was conducted in three distinct areas, as follows:

Area I- Fisher Addition:

This is located in the extreme southwest corner of Janesville. It is a new subdivision of the city, now numbering upwards of 400 homes and still growing, with room for expansion in three directions. Our Synod's new mission chapel* is located in the very center of this section. The nearest other church is twenty blocks away on Center (St. Peter's Lutheran).

Except for about a dozen disreputable shacks on the far ends of Grant and Willard Streets, the homes tend to be neat, modest dwellings. Occupants seem generally to be of middle class modest dwellings. Occupants seem generally to be of middle class status, with incomes probably averaging from \$3000 to \$4500. A very high proportion of the residents are newcomers to the city.

It is to be noted that another new subdivision is now being laid out directly north of State St., west of the School for the Visually Handicapped, to be called Monterey Meadows. Apparently this new section is designed to attract people of a somewhat higher income bracket.

Area II - West of Center Avenue

This is a smaller section, much of it settled for at least twenty years; although at present there is considerable new building activity here also. The new ULC church (St. Peter's Lutheran) is located on southeast corner of this area.

In general, the people here seem to be more established, with firmer connections and associations in the city. The average income bracket is probably slightly higher than in the Fisher Addition - perhaps \$4000 to \$5000.

Area III - Hawthorne Park:

This is the newest and most rapidly growing section of Janesville, located in the northeast corner of the city. The heart of the area is about ten blocks from our St. Matthew's Lutheran church. Two new churches have just been built right within the area - First Lutheran (ELC) and the Evangelical United Brethren.

There is no question that the strategic location of First Lutheran is proving very advantageous in attracting the relatively few unaffiliated families who move into the area.

Most of the residents seem to be Janesville people who are moving to the outskirts. The income bracket is undoubtedly higher than that of the other two sections canvassed - probably \$7500 to \$12,000.

Statistical Summary

Area I - Fisher Addition	Churched	354	63.9%
	Unchurched	200	36.1%
Area II - West of Center Ave.	Churched	151	92.7%
	Unchurched	12	7.3%
Area III - Hawthorne Park	Churched	384	88.5%
	Unchurched	50	11.5%

Evaluation

There is no question that Area I is a mission field of rich potential. In fact, in the experience of your canvassers, they have never found such a high percentage of unchurched in a given area.

The fact that our Synod has already built a chapel* here will prove to be a very great help to successful follow-up work. In your canvassers' opinions this field should be opened up as soon as possible.

Area II is not worth worrying about, beyond following up the few leads that the canvass turned up.

Area III is a problem for St. Matthew's. There are some opportunities to gain a foothold here, but they are not numerous nor highly promising. The advantage that First Lutheran has in its location will be hard to offset. The best procedure will be to follow up as quickly and intensively as possible such leads as the canvass has brought out and then to call on newcomers as soon as they move in to the area.

**The chapel mentioned is thought to refer the original location of St. Matthew's in 1942.*

+ + + + +

It was also during this time that St. Matthew's also had a direct influence on our Synod's educational program. Pastor Jungkuntz describes this connection,

"The connection with St. Matthew's (and Bethany, Fort Atkinson) is simply this; that about 1944 Ernest Wendland, Walter Wagner, and I decided we needed to produce our ^{own} Vacation Bible School (VBS) material, since nothing "Lutheran" was available at the time from either Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) or Concordia Publishing House. So for several years we'd get together, after Easter usually, and spend three or four solid days developing a set of

two-week lessons based on a single theme. Janesville was most often where we'd meet. We'd split up the various tasks among ourselves, e.g., student materials, art work, teachers guides, etc. Then we'd ask our dear wives to type the stencils for mimeographing, and we'd crank out enough copies for all three of our mission stations. After a year or two, other mission pastors began asking for the material and so we had to produce several hundred additional sets each spring, which we sold at cost.

This continued for a couple more years until we were getting pretty exhausted with the annual task. So we got in touch with NPH and asked whether they'd be interested in publishing the material. At the time we had just produced the first course in our Catechism series which we showed them as an example... My recollection is that NPH continued publishing the series for another 20 years at least. So St. Matthew's with their VBS kids and especially their good-hearted members who served as volunteer teachers, were a base and springboard for a special educational program that the WELS found pretty useful for nearly a generation."

The Lord truly blessed St. Matthew's when he led Pastor Richard Jungkuntz to Janesville. God used his many talents to serve the people of St. Matthew's and present the Gospel message to a dying world. For God's gift in Pastor Jungkuntz we give thanks. Pastor Jungkuntz went on to serve Bethany, Fort Atkinson as its pastor. He then began a teaching career that led him to Northwestern College, Watertown, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Springfield, Ill., Eden Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri, and Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington. Pastor Jungkuntz and his wife still reside in Tacoma.

AN ERA OF CHANGE

Later in the year of 1945, the Mission Board made a decision that would once again show that St. Matthew's was growing and ready to take another step forward. Due to the fact that both St. Matthew's and Bethany, Fort Atkinson were steadily growing, it was decided that the Fort Atkinson-Janesville mission field, served by one man, should be divided and each congregation have its own pastor. The Rev. Ernest H. Wendland (who incidentally was the brother-in-law of Pastor Jungkuntz) was called from Washington, Iowa, and installed as pastor of St. Matthew's on January 27, 1946. During this change in pastors, the congregation was very fortunate not to experience any vacancy.

Under Pastor Wendland's leadership the church continued to prosper. During his time in Janesville, many projects were undertaken to improve the property. Much of the work was done by the members themselves. The empty lots were cleared and seeded; a power mower was purchased; an illuminated bulletin board was installed; the building was painted white; the large porch in front was removed and a more appropriate entrance built; the garage was painted and re-roofed; a baptismal font

was built by member Kenneth Schadt; the chapel was enlarged and the floors and woodwork refinished; a beautiful set of crucifix and altar candles was presented as a memorial for Oscar Sommerfeldt (still used today in the school basement chapel); a neon cross was placed over the entrance; and a set of individual communion ware was presented by one of the members. The entire expense of these items was supplied by the members themselves.

During Pastor Wendland's ministry in Janesville, St. Matthew's celebrated its Fifth Anniversary, August 17, 1947. At that time the congregation numbered 65 communicants and 115 souls. In November of 1948, the Lord moved Pastor Wendland to accept a call to St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Benton Harbor, Michigan. Again, St. Matthew's was very blessed to receive the services of this faithful minister of God's Word. Pastor Wendland went on to serve the Lord of the church as a missionary in Africa. He also became a well respected man among our Synod circles when he served on the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Pastor Wendland is now an instructor at our seminary in Africa where his son is also serving his Lord as a missionary.

In order to replace Pastor Wendland, the congregation together with the District Mission Board then called Pastor Mentor Kujath. At the time, Pastor Kujath was serving our Synod's congregation in nearby Brodhead, Wisconsin (St. Peter's). Pastor Kujath was to live in Janesville, but temporarily also serve the congregation in Brodhead. The installation service was held December 5, 1948. Once again, St. Matthew's did not suffer any vacancy during the change in pastors.

Changes continued to take place during Pastor Kujath's time in Janesville. In June of 1949 the congregation purchased a new organ for \$537 to replace the worn out reed organ (bought used in February, 1946 for \$10). This new organ was a spinet model Hammond organ. The first plans for a new church building were beginning to be formed about this time. It also marked the first time that any mention of plans for a school are recorded in church records. In November of 1950, St. Matthew's climbing membership forced the congregation to go to two services. In 1950 a new roof was put on the building. The buildings were painted white again in the summer of 1951. During these years, too, the parsonage was completely redecorated, the furnaces were repaired and an automatic gas water heater was installed.

In 1952, much preparation was done in anticipation of the celebration of St. Matthew's Tenth Anniversary. The interior of the chapel was completely redecorated and the floors and woodwork refinished. A guest-book stand and a throne for the altar crucifix were made by Kenneth Schadt. A booklet was also produced for that Tenth Anniversary. It provided a short history of the church, a summary of the different church organizations and the official pastoral acts were listed for the first ten years of St. Matthew's existence. According to the booklet, 71 children and 16 adults were baptized, 22 children and 35 adults were confirmed; 3,310 had communed; there were 25 weddings and 2 funerals.

One of the highlights of the Pastor Kujath years at St. Matthew's, was the building of the new chapel/school building. Already in 1950, the congregation became aware of the end of the usefulness of the Lamb "mansion". With the start of two services every Sunday and an increasing enrollment in Sunday School, the facilities were slowly becoming less than adequate (in 1955, Christmas Eve services were even held at St. Peter's, Janesville). Plans were begun to solve the building problem.

The Lord blessed those first efforts in planning. An overall plan, making the best possible use of our property for the foreseeable future, had been worked out by architects Steffen & Kemp of Wauwatosa, and also approved by the congregation. During that year four additional lots, adjoining the northwest corner of the original property, were purchased from the Dutton estate for \$3500. They were to serve as parking and playground area. At that time the small remaining debt on the original property was canceled and the architect's fee was paid (a loan with the WELS Church Extension Fund could not be secured unless St. Matthew's cleared its debt). So by 1954, St. Matthew's had become a self-sustaining congregation, owned a building and 8 lots of land which were well located in a good residential area on one of the main streets of the city.

Pastor Kujath stated the need for still more however, in a pamphlet urging the need for a new structure:

"But what we have is not adequate even for the present, and left this way will only handicap us in the future. Our chapel seats only 95 in any degree of comfort. Even with two services every Sunday we cannot serve our present membership. And if you were present at either of the children's Christmas Services, you wondered how more than 150 persons were crowded into the chapel for each service. Our Sunday School classes are scattered from the third floor attic to the downstairs kitchen. The appearance of our entire set-up seems to indicate a lack of permanency. And a permanent building in a permanent location is what people expect of a Church. Worst of all we do not have facilities for a good religious training, in a Christian Day School, for our children. They are the future Church!"

These statistics were given to help demonstrate the need for a new building.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Confirmed members</u>	<u>Total Membership</u>
1942	10	15
1947	65	115
1952	150	225
1953	177	288
1954	200	320
Future	?	?

During the next couple of years the congregation debated whether the first building to be constructed should be a church or a school and at the same time sought means for financing the construction of a building. At first an attempt was made to plan for a building whose cost would stay within the limits of a loan from the Wisconsin Synod's Church Extension Fund. This was seen to be impossible. Finally it was decided to construct a building that would eventually serve as both a temporary chapel and a school. The congregation was fortunate in securing a loan of \$28,000, from the local Merchants & Savings Bank. This, coupled with the offerings of the congregation, enabled St. Matthew's to proceed with construction.

On July 10, 1955, the congregation held the ground-breaking ceremony. To effect a savings on construction costs, it was decided that the building committee should serve as general contractor. Since, even with the loan, the entire building could not be constructed immediately, it was decided to first build the basement and put up only the shell of the first floor with a roughed-in interior. Despite trouble in obtaining construction materials, this much of the building was completed in late spring of 1956. The congregation furnished the basement as a chapel and held the first service there on Pentecost of that year.

This arrangement served until 1959. Early in that year construction again started on the upstairs of the building. Through volunteer labor by members of the congregation, insulation, wall boards and ceiling boards were put up. Later the same year the washrooms were partly completed so that they could be used. Then once again progress was put on hold. During 1960, the congregation worked to reduce its loan. Late in the year, after considerable discussion and seeking further means of financing, the final loan from the bank was able to be obtained in order to complete the building. While a goodly amount of skilled work had to be done by professional contractors, St. Matthew's can be very grateful for the large

amounts of time and labor that came from volunteers within the congregation. The building was completed and services were held upstairs (on the south side of the building) for the first time on Easter Sunday. Dedication of the new chapel was observed on June 18, 1961, with pastors Kujath and H.C. Nitz, former president of the Western Wisconsin District leading services.

Although Reverend Kujath was no longer pastor at the time of the completion of this building project, much thanks can be given to him for his encouragement and constant reminders to not only focus on the building of a church, but more importantly on the building of souls. Late in 1956, Pastor Kujath accepted a call to Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in South Milwaukee, leaving St. Matthew's in January of 1957. (There is an interesting entry in the church minutes a year later that involves Pastor Kujath. It seems that his South Milwaukee church requested the assistance of St. Matthew's in case Milwaukee was hit by an air raid. Meetings between representatives of the two congregations were held in order to figure out a way the children could be transferred to the Janesville area.) Pastor Kujath not only served in the parish during his ministry, but also took on teaching duties at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School. He is now retired and living in Milwaukee with his wife. Every once in a while he still can be found substitute teaching at Kettle Moraine.

It was the work of Pastor James Thrans to be the spiritual leader of the congregation while the final construction on the new chapel/school building was being completed. After nearly five months and 7 call meetings (during which time the vacancy was filled by a number of professors from Northwestern College, Watertown), the Lord led Pastor Thrans who was then pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Muskegon, Michigan, to accept the call. Part of his duties listed in the call were to: 1) begin a Christian Day School as soon as possible, and 2) make it a priority to reach out to the unchurched. Pastor Thrans was installed on June 2, 1975. Soon after his arrival, Pastor Thrans was also asked by the District Mission Board to start a mission congregation (Peace) on the south side of Janesville. This meant that once again St. Matthew's would have to share their pastor with another congregation (the sharing of one pastor with St. Peter's, Brodhead, was discontinued in 1953). This arrangement, however, lasted only for one year when Pastor Victor Prange was called to serve Peace in August of 1958.

Having completed the building project, opening a Christian Day School was the next major step for St. Matthew's. Already in 1946, Christian education was a high priority to the members of St. Matthew's. At that time the congregation decided to pay one third of the tuition for members who wanted to send their children to St. Paul's. Steps for our own school were being taken when a survey was made in April of 1951 and again in 1957 to find out how many children would attend a Christian Day School. Paper drives were begun in 1952, in order to secure school equipment for the playground. Finally plans were made in October of 1960, to set the opening date for no later than the fall of 1962. This was found to be true, for the grades kindergarten through four were begun in September of 1962. Grades five through eight were added a year later making a complete system of grades K-8 in a three room school.

School Highlights During Pastor Thrans Ministry at St. Matthew's

1961 - June 18, School building dedicated

1962 - School began in the fall with 28 children

Mrs. Marge Haase taught kindergarten

Miss Elizabeth Tornow taught grades 1-4 for \$275 a month

Kindergarten was in the 3-4 grade room of today, 1-4 in the 1-2 grade room of today. The other 1/2 of the building was one large room where the church services were held.

1963 - Wesley Plath was assigned from Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) as principal and teacher of grades 5-8 for a salary of \$4860.

The kindergarten was moved to the area of the 7-8 grade room of today. Mr. Plath's classes were held in the 3-4 grade room.

Mrs. Phyllis Larson replaced Marge Haase in the spring.

A total of 43 students were enrolled in the '63-'64 year.

Boys played basketball at the YMCA.

Junior Choir started in the early 1950's and was disbanded in the late 1950's. Miss Tornow started it again in 1962. All children of the congregation in grades 3-8 could participate.

In August of 1966, Pastor Thrans was led to accept a call to teach religion and history at Northwestern Preparatory School, Watertown, Wisconsin. Twenty-seven years later, now Professor Thrans is still teaching at our Synod's prep school. He has served the Lord faithfully in his duties there where he has taught and influenced many young men (including the author of this paper) and women to go on to serve the Lord in his church. St. Matthew's once again, should thank our Lord for sending them such a faithful man during a time of much change.

In 1966, Pastor Werner Wagner of Saginaw, Michigan, accepted a call to replace Pastor Thrans (Pastor Prange served as vacancy pastor). Pastor Wagner wasted no time in making a number of very welcomed additions to the schedule of St. Matthew's normal routine. Among those changes were the beginning of a Sunday morning Bible Class and the start of a monthly newsletter. A couple of years later both the Boy's and Girl's Pioneer programs got started. Another change occurred when Pastor Wagner was called upon to serve as the vacancy pastor at Christus Evangelical Lutheran Church in Richmond in 1969. After a month, his call to serve was made permanent (with the permission of St. Matthew's) and once again St. Matthew's had the privilege of aiding in the growth and development of a sister congregation while its own membership and school enrollment continued to grow. Growth was so continuous that eventually it caused services to be moved down into the basement of the building and the parking lot^{to be} enlarged.

The property lines of St. Matthew's continued to expand during this time as well. In January of 1967, the Fitchett property, the strip of land on the north side of the property that now holds the playground equipment, was bought for \$850. Later in that year the Harris property, located where the present church building stands, was bought for \$9000 with an additional \$1500 dollars going towards renovations. Later in 1971, the vacant lot at 514 Prairie Avenue was bought along with the 878 East Memorial Drive property which sold for \$28,000.

This was all done in preparation for the building of a new church edifice. For a December 8, 1968, congregational meeting, these minutes were recorded by the Church secretary: "In discussion of the proposed 1969 Debt Retirement budget, the council President (Robert Johnejack) outlined a council recommendation which called for double AAL mortgage payments with hopes in four years our debt will be depleted, and to engage an architect within two years and plan for a completed church building within five years." Already a year later, money was being set aside for this new building project and a future church planning committee was formed. In September of 1971 the congregation chose Al Siewert of Milwaukee as their architect and the plans were well underway. This is the proposed budget that was set up for these new building plans, Church- \$155,000; Architect Fee- \$12,000; Furnishings- \$20,000; Organ - \$5,000; Housing - \$41,000; Land- \$24,000.

By January of the next year, \$75,000 dollars had been raised along with a number of loans from members. In that same month it was decided to move the 705 Milton Ave. house to the vacant lot on Prairie Ave. for \$12,000 which then became the teacherage. The congregation also decided to convert the Memorial Dr. duplex into a one family unit and make that the parsonage. Finally on May 14, 1972, a groundbreaking service was held and construction on the present church building was underway.

Late in that year, the Synod called a full time pastor to Christus, Richmond, ending the last time St. Matthew's would share its pastor with another congregation.

In October, Pastor Wagner was led by our Lord to accept a call to Shepherd of the Hills, Le Mesa, California. St. Matthew's can offer much thanks to Pastor Wagner who saw to it that St. Matthew's continued to grow spiritually as well as growing in property size. St. Matthew's still benefits on occasion from Pastor Wagner's preaching and teaching services as he spends his retirement years here in Janesville with his wife.

School Highlights During Pastor Wagner's Ministry at St. Matthew's

- 1967 - Mrs. Eugene (Adelia) Freiberg accepted the call to teach grades 1-4 and replace Miss Tornow who accepted the call to Redemption, Milwaukee.
There were 45 students enrolled in the school.
Church services were moved to the school basement in order to make more room for classes.
- 1968 - Mr. Plath accepts a call.
Arden Wentzel accepted the call to serve as principal and teacher of grades 5-8.
Mr. Wentzel directed the Senior Choir and Junior Choir which consisted of all children in grades 5-8.
- 1969 - In November Lloyd Essmann was assigned the call to teach grades 3,4,5 because of the increase in enrollment. He moved into the Lamb "mansion."
Mrs. Freiberg began teaching K-2.
The teachers changed classrooms on a weekend.
Basketball practices were held at Jefferson School, Adams School, and St. Paul's Luth. School.
- 1970 - First student teacher assigned to St. Matthew's.
- 1971 - Lakeside Lutheran High School makes transportation available to St. Matthew's members.
Enrollment at 91 students in elementary school. Mrs. Freiberg had 36 children that year.
Mrs. Carolyn Wentzel accepted the call to teach grades 3-4.

THE PAST TWENTY YEARS

On January 21, 1973, Pastor David Sievert, called from Grace, Muskegon, Michigan, was installed as pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church (Pastor Myron Schwanke of St. John's, Milton, was vacancy pastor.) By this time, the construction of the new church building was well underway. In fact, Pastor Sievert remembers arriving at Janesville the same day the arch support beams for the new church were being lifted into place by crane. The building of the church continued to move along, with the corner stone setting taking place on May 6. Finally on April 28, 1974, the church building was dedicated to our Lord. This article was printed in the Janesville Gazette the following week:

Dedication over, St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church will have open house at its new church at 709 Milton Ave., Sunday.

The open house will be from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., and after a service of special thanksgiving at 7 p.m. Sunday, according to the Rev. David Sievert, pastor.

The church, which will seat 300 comfortably on the main floor, another 50 in the balcony, was filled to overflowing for the two dedication services last Sunday. There were 450 at morning worship and 360 at the afternoon service. Among them were the Revs. Mentor Kujath and James Thrans, former pastors, and Mrs. Kenneth Flunker, a former teacher in St. Matthew's Christian School.

The Rev. Carl Mischke, president of the Western Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, was guest speaker.

There are all new furnishings in the church, with the baptismal font, the symbols on the altar and pulpit, the candles and candelabra are all interrelated in design with the red, white and gold illuminated cross which is behind the altar. The cross, of contemporary design, represents the suffering, purity and riches brought to the believer through the cross of Jesus Christ, the pastor explained.

Alfred Siewert, Milwaukee, was architect. The building committee was Walden Thiede, chairman, Roger Larson, vice chairman; Fred Henke, secretary, Phillip Frank, Arthur Haase, Arlan Miller, Robert Drause, Jake Sessler, Henry Prust and Eugene Freiberg.

Part of the proposed budget for the new church building included a portion set aside for a new church organ. In the years preceding Pastor Sievert's arrival, an old Lowery electric organ was being used. This organ had been purchased for \$1500 from Pastor Wagner before he left. Much investigation was conducted on where to buy the new organ, but everything seemed too expensive. There was even a congregational vote on whether to buy a used organ from a congregation in the Milwaukee area. Finally, St. Matthew's found an offer that was too good to be true. The Janesville Gazette published this story on the purchase of that organ:

St. Matthew's Lutheran church has purchased a pipe organ for its new sanctuary -- for \$175. Of course, it didn't come to that much. The congregation sold some ornamental pipes, which came along in the deal, for scrap metal, and recovered about \$30.

The pipe organ isn't exactly new. The Lutherans bought it from the Baptists when First Baptist held an auction recently, preparatory to moving from the old church at 61 S. Jackson St., to its new edifice on Woodhall Drive.

Baptists had the organ from around the turn of the century. It was a gift of Mrs. M.P. Leavitt in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Payne.

The Rev. David Sievert, pastor of St. Matthew's, and the Rev. Charles Griffith, First Baptist pastor, are equally delighted with the transaction, Mr. Sievert because his church was able to obtain the 12-rank organ with its 670 individual pipes, and Mr. Griffith because the old organ is to be put to such good use.

Baptists had not used it in recent years, because of its condition, but Lawrence Marowsky, Jefferson, an experienced organ builder and musician for St. John's Lutheran Church, Jefferson, has assured the congregation that it can be successfully restored.

Mr. Sievert said the plan for the use of the organ in S. Matthew's Church involves three basic steps.

The first, following the purchase of the organ, was to remove it from the Baptist Church and store the pipes and parts in the pipe chamber of St. Matthew's Church. Removal, cataloging and storage, under the supervision of Marowsky, cost \$100.

Step 2 will be the rebuilding of the organ into St. Matthew's Church and remodeling the manual so the 12 ranks of pipes will be converted into an organ usable for services.

This step will not take place for more than a year, because Marowsky, who will do the work, has previous commitments which make it impossible to get at the job until the summer of 1975. When step 2 is completed, St. Matthew's will have an organ which, if purchased new, would cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000, according to Mr. Sievert.

The third step is the one that can be taken at any time and it involves the addition of four or five ranks of pipes at a cost of approximately \$5,000.

Mr. Sievert said the sound quality of the 12 ranks will be similar to the sound common in churches about 30 years ago, but the added ranks would improve the tonal quality and give the church an instrument of "today."

The cost of an organ of the type that would be created by the addition of the extra pipes would be around \$35,000 if purchased new, according to the pastor.

The electronic organ, used in First Baptist Church in recent years, will go to the new church on Woodhall, Mr. Griffith said.

The work on the organ however went very slow and took over three years before it was played in St. Matthew's for the first time on Good Friday, 1977. Soon after that the Lowery organ was sold to member Ellie Fietz for \$1100 dollars and preparations for the organ dedications were being planned. Finally after much time and money, the organ was dedicated on October 9, 1977. Mr. Marowsky and Mrs. Franklin Zabell were the guest organists for this festive occasion. But that wasn't the end. Much more work and money had to be put into the organ over the last eighteen years. The age of the organ began to show itself. Pipes began to stick and go out of tune. More ranks were added and more repairs caused by leaking water (the balcony roof was replaced in 1988 for an approximate cost of \$20,000 - \$25,000) had to be made.

Finally the congregation turned to a professional organ consultant, Scott Riedel. After he told the congregation that the organ was beyond repair, the Organ Committee began to tour and study different organs throughout the state. By 1992, St. Matthew's approved the purchase of a new organ at a cost of nearly \$180,000 plus the restructuring of the balcony at a cost of \$20,000. If all goes as planned, the Committee hopes for a dedication date of late November 1993 and an end to all their organ problems.

Meanwhile St. Matthew's property lines continued to grow during the past 20 years.. In 1975, the church received the 728 Yuba Street house as part of the Summerfeldt residence (Mrs. Summerfeldt lived on the corner of Memorial and Yuba, and was a faithful member of St. Matthew's since the mid 1940's). This property was rented out for a while, but eventually became the teacherage for Mr. Greg Hoffmann. Now it is once again is being rented out.

As the church continued to grow (average attendance for 1975 was 292), so the need for more parking became more evident. It was finally decided to tear down the Lamb "mansion" and use that for parking space. A number of other factors, however, led to the raising of the first structure owned by St. Matthew's congregation. The first was the difficulty in maintaining the building. The large three story building was difficult to keep painted and when Mr. Lloyd Essmann and his family moved out of the house, it was decided not to do anything to maintain it. Another factor also led to the decision to tear down the building in June of 1977. Earlier in the year, St. Matthew's was the victim of a number of break-ins. The first break- in resulted in nearly \$350 stolen from the church safe plus damage. The burglars chiseled their way in through doors as well as pulled out the safe into a hallway and chiseled it open. When the church was broken into a mere two weeks later, it was decided that the Lamb "mansion" had to be taken down as soon as possible so that the buildings would be more visible from Milton Avenue.

The year 1977 wasn't just a year of chiseled doors and raised buildings. It also was the year when St. Matthew's began another major building project. At that time the Feasibility Committee for the proposed Gymnasium/Fellowship Hall was started. By April of the next year, the Committee made their recommendations to the congregation that they go ahead and construct the new building with a proposed budget of about \$200,000. Within months a Building Finance Committee was formed as well as a Building Committee and things were well under way.

The Building Finance Committee was particularly active during the building of the Gymnasium/Fellowship Hall. First they promoted the ground-breaking activities and organized a special offering under the theme "To the Glory of God -- Body -- Soul -- Mind." But the biggest event the Committee organized was an innovative fund raising dinner. A prime rib dinner donated by Selen's Prime Rib restaurant owned by members Terry and Carol Campbell, along with former Milwaukee Bucks player Jon McGlocklin as the key-note speaker, provided the congregation a chance to gather together in fellowship and offer their gifts for the new building. Tickets were sold for \$10 a piece and all proceeds went directly to the Gymnasium/Fellowship Hall.

The Committee then addressed the congregation with this message on September 16, 1979, on the occasion of the Gymnasium/Fellowship Hall dedication and corner stone laying service, "To the Glory of God -- Body -- Soul -- Mind. This is the theme of St. Matthew's newest building program, that of a gymnasium - fellowship center. We rejoice that God has seen fit to provide us with fine facilities in which to worship, in which to educate our children, and now also in which to keep our bodies in good health." St. Matthew's truly can be thankful that the Lord has blessed this congregation with such a facility. So far it has served its purpose well, allowing Christians to gather together and fellowship in a different setting, as well as providing a great convenience for our Christian Day School.

School Highlights During the Past Twenty Years

- 1973 - Mr. Wentzel broke his foot in the fall. Mrs. Mary Sievert volunteered to direct the Junior Choir and has been doing so ever since then.
Mr. Kenneth Hanson is hired to begin the band program at St. Matthew's.
- 1974 - Mrs. Thea VanderWel volunteered to teach art for grades K-2. The following year she taught art to all the grades. She continued teaching art for 12 years.
School receives \$20,000 from the Juleth estate. A woman who left her money to the various parochial day schools in Janesville.
- 1975 - St. Matthew's joins the Federation of Lakeside Lutheran High School.
Gym rental budget is set at over \$300.
Miss Kay Sturtevant substitutes teaches for Mrs. Wentzel who was laid up in the hospital for back surgery.
- 1976 - Gregory Hoffmann out of DMLC is assigned the call to teach grades 5-6 and athletics to replace Mr. Essmann who accepted a call to teach at Faith, Antioch, Illinois.
Mrs. Paula Winters accepted the call to teach kindergarten. There were 17 in the kindergarten that year. A temporary kindergarten room was built in the church basement.
Physical education classes were held in the church basement.

- 1977 - Mrs. Mary Sievert accepts the call to teach kindergarten.
 Mr. Wentzel accepted call to Immanual, St. Paul, Minn.
 Mrs. Wentzel resigns.
 Mr. Hoffmann is called as temporary principal.
 Mrs. Marilyn Ehlke (her husband Steve was pastor at Good Shepherd, Beloit) accepted a one year call to teach grades 3-4.
 Mr. Leonard Punke was called from DMLC as an emergency teacher for grades 7-8.
- 1978 - Mr. Dale Stelter accepted the call of principal and teacher of grades 7-8.
 Miss Linda Bruskewitz accepted the call to teach grades 3-4.
 This was the year the school roof had to be rebuilt. While this was being done, there was a torrential rainstorm. The teachers came to school in the morning and found it raining inside the hallway. there was no school. The teachers and helpers spent the day mopping up inches of water in classrooms and the basement.
- 1979 - The school begins to use the New International Version translation of the Bible.
 The Gymnasium/Fellowship Hall is dedicated.
- 1981 - Mr. Stelter accepted a call to Shoreland Lutheran High School.
 Mrs. Ellen Miller accepted a one year call to teach grades 7-8.
 Mr. Hoffmann served as principal.
- 1982 - John Campbell accepted the call as principal and teacher of grades 7-8.
 Enrollment is 119 students.
 Bleachers were purchased for the gym from Milton College for \$100.
 A new wall was put up in the kindergarten room.
- 1983 - Mrs. Freiberg resigned after 31 years in the teaching ministry.
 Miss Carol Krowas accepted the call to teach grades 1-2.
- 1984 - Mrs. Darcie Matzke accepted the call to teach part time in grades 1-2 because of the large enrollment.
- 1986 - Miss Krowas accepted a call to Milwaukee.
 Mr. Campbell accepted a call to California.
 Miss Kathryn Freudenwald out of DMLC was assigned a one year call to teach grades 1-2. It wasn't certain that there would be a high enough enrollment to make her call permanent.
 Her call was made permanent the following year and she had 30 students in her classroom.
 Mr. David Enter accepted the call as principal and teacher of grades 7-8.
- 1987 - Mr. Hoffmann accepted a call to Winnebago Lutheran High School after 11 years at St. Matthew's.
 Mr. Kevin Proeber accepted the call to teach grades 5-6 and athletics.
 School basement is re-tiled.
- 1988 - The pre-school was started in the church basement next to the kindergarten room on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Mrs. Jill Proeber was the first teacher.
- 1989 - Mr. Enter resigned as principal and teacher.
 Mr. Craig Sonntag was assigned from DMLC to teach grades 7-8.
 Mr. Proeber was called as principal.
- 1990 - The new library completed in the school basement.

1991 - Mrs. Proeber resigned as the pre-school teacher.

Mrs. Catherine Sonntag accepted the call to teach the pre-school.

1992 - 30th Anniversary of the school celebrated on November 15 with the theme "Anchored in Christ."

Certainly St. Matthew's has gone through many visible changes through the past twenty years. New buildings, new teachers and new members (the 1992 annual report lists 717 baptized members and 533 communicants) are just a few of those changes that have taken place over the years. But more importantly, we need to remember those things that can't be measured by numbers. We also need to remember the spiritual growth that has been taking place at St. Matthew's. And there is evidence of that as well. Looking at the Evangelism annual reports shows that St. Matthew's is conscious of their calling to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Lately members have been conducting Bible Class and devotions at the Janesville Rock County Health Care Center on a weekly basis. A number of sons and daughters out of love for their Savior, have given themselves to the full time service of the Lord. These members are known to have gone into the preaching or teaching ministry, Gary Brown and David Prust into the preaching ministry, Sharon (Carl) Uekert, Susan (Carl) Anderson, Donna Johnejack, Peter Wentzel, Jane Wentzel, and Elizabeth Sievert into the teaching ministry.

More evidence of our congregation's concern to carry out Christ's Great Commission "to go and make disciples of all nations" could be seen in the way they supported the work of Marianne Peterson. Marianne, a daughter of the congregation, was commissioned to serve as a nurse for the WELS Central Africa Medical Mission where she served the Mwembezi Lutheran Dispensary in Lusaka, Zambia, Africa on June 12, 1988. Marianne spent nearly four years serving her Lord away from family and friends. But her courage and love for her Savior were an example and an encouragement for the entire congregation. The Ladies' Guild still is sending aid packages over to our medical missions in Africa.

St. Matthew's concern for the spiritual welfare of its own members demonstrated itself in 1991 when the congregation conducted the "Spiritual Renewal" evaluation put out by our Synod. This evaluation involved research on population, economic factors, church history, congregational member survey, ten year statistics of church attendance, membership, bible classes, day school and Sunday School enrollment, financial reports, actual church attendance for one month and location of members in relation to the church.

Upon completion, the report was sent to Pastor Paul Kelm for his evaluation. Pastor Kelm spent three days in our midst interviewing the pastor and staff, talking with members of the congregation and church council. On the third evening, he presented his recommendations to any interested church member. Many of these recommendations have already been put into practice.

Truly we can say with the Psalmist: "The beauty of the Lord our God has been upon us." And likewise that God has established "the work of our hands." The evidence of the Lord's grace can be seen. In fifty years, St. Matthew's has seen 727 souls reborn through baptism; 638 confirmations; 133 burials; and 188 marriages. God truly has made St. Matthew's an established Christian congregation. He has made her prosper both spiritually and materially.

When a period of fifty years has passed, it is natural to pause and reconsider the events of the past. For a church it is indeed fitting to consider the blessings of God during such a period of time. It is with this purpose in mind that the members of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church took the occasion to remind themselves of the favor which they have enjoyed at the hands of our gracious Lord and to thank and praise him for his surpassing goodness during the past year under the theme, "Walking with God for 50 Years." A number of anniversary services in honor of the event were held at different times throughout the year, including an outdoor service on July 19.

Former pastors Wagner and Kujath as well as Synod president Carl Mischke all emphasized the need to be grateful that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to provide a congregation here in our midst, by which the Father may draw men to his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. They emphasized how grateful we can be that God has seen fit to continue such a congregation through us, whereby we may nourish our souls with his pure Gospel, build up our faith through his Sacraments, and find joy, strength, and consolation in them in days of need and in our last hour.

We pray that the Lord keeps us mindful of the spiritual heritage that has become our possession, so that we may hand down the same precious heavenly treasure to future generations.

"Praise the LORD, O my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits." (Psalm 103:1,2)