

The Ministry of Rev. Paul O. Kupke : Servant of God
Jan. 20, 1935 to Dec. 17, 1983

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Death, especially sudden unexpected death, often shakes us to our very foundations. This is all the more true the closer our relationship both personally and spiritually to the person who has suddenly been taken from us. Therefore, even though at the death of a Christian there is always the glorious hope of the resurrection, of continuing life with our Lord, there is also the human tendency to question the Lord's wisdom in allowing death to come unexpectedly to one that we love. Such was the case when the Lord called his servant the Reverend Paul Kupke to receive the crown of life which God promises to those who remain faithful to him unto death. People, whether family, friends, or fellow-workers in God's kingdom, were prompted to ask, "Why Lord" why would you possibly take from the ranks of your servants one who had worked so long and hard to become one of your public ministers of the Gospel? Why would you allow this man so short a time to serve you and your kingdom in the public ministry here on earth?

This questioning was prompted by the conclusion reached by many that Pastor Kupke had been allowed to serve his Lord but a few short months following years of study and preparation. While such reasoning does apply to his service as an ordained minister, it is my contention that such reasoning does not hold water when applied to the total life of service to God performed by this man whom God himself chose to become a member of his family.

The main focus of this paper therefore, will center upon the

six plus years that the writer knew and could evaluate the life and service performed by Paul Kupke both to his fellowmen and to his Lord.

To help set the stage for what follows, consider with me the day on which I met Paul Kupke for the very first time. It was the first day that we arrived on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato Minnesota. It was registration day and whereas my age made me appear to the typical college student in attendance as being a member of the faculty, Paul picked me out at once as potentially being another "Bethany Student." Paul quickly introduced himself acting pleased to find someone entering the same boat that he was. Following the school activities, Paul insisted that I come to his new home away from home, to meet his wife, and to share some coffee and a cigarette. This meeting was to begin a sharing process that would continue and grow between us until the day that the Lord called him home. We quickly filled each other in as to who we were, where we were from, and why we were there a Bethany in the first place. We were surprised to learn that while our basic desire to more fully serve the Lord and his kingdom was what had brought us together, the encouragement to do so by the men that ministered to us was vastly different. Both of us however, were overjoyed to be standing upon a new threshold, eager to begin down the pathway which would some day allow us to take our place in the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Paul was one of the first Lutheran laymen that I had met who could easily use the name of Jesus Christ in conversation without first looking

behind him to see if anyone was listening.

I returned home that first day with the feeling that I had met someone who would be a positive influence on my life from that day on. I was pleased to meet someone so quickly who shared many of the same values, the same dreams, that I had. Here was a man I could grow with and learn from as we made mutual progress toward our common goal. Little could I know then how close we would become in the years that followed.

Preceding Years

Paul Oliver Kupke was born January 20, 1935 in Omaha, Nebraska. He was baptized and confirmed a Trinity Lutheran Church, Murdock, Nebraska. He grew up on his father's farm in Murdock and attended Murdock's public schools until graduating in 1952. Following his high school graduation Paul obtained employment at the University College of Medicine, in Omaha. He worked in the University's research shop. While working in this position Paul was instrumental in producing the first device able to monitor heart beats over the telephone. During this period other important changes were taking place in his life, for it was here that on September 20, 1953 that Paul was married to his wife Delores. Encouraged by his new bride and by those with whom he was working Paul decided to return to school and he graduated with a degree in Engineering from the University of Nebraska in January, 1962. Following additional employment Paul returned to the books once again and received his M.A. in Business Administration from the University of Missouri at

Kansas City in 1966. Life for the Kupke family was less than routine as he found himself working for the huge Texas Instruments Company at several locations located within the State of Texas. Paul's work with Texas Instruments was both challenging and at times frustrating. Numerous promotions and resulting relocations were one reason for this being the case.

It became apparent, at least to Delores, that the movement from plant to plant and city to city was only a foretaste of what was to come. Paul enjoyed the work that he was doing but he didn't want to remain an engineer for the rest of his life. It was during this period that Paul became an active worker within his church. He served on the Christian Day School Board, as financial secretary, as an usher, voter and as a member of the Board of Elders. As his family grew older Paul was recruited to serve as a Little League manager and all the other things which make up the American dream. It was also at this point that Paul was to become involved in an area of church work which would later change his whole life. It began when he went, somewhat reluctantly, with his wife Delores to an Evangelism Training Program sponsored by his local congregation. He was moderately interested in the work but gave the impression that he was involved more for her benefit than his own.

This early training however, was to be put to use in a manner which he had not envisioned following yet another business move which took the Kupke family to the City of Lubbock Texas in 1975. It was here that Paul and Delores first became affiliated with

the Wisconsin Synod and with Pastor Robert Sawall the pastor who was to have such a profound influence upon Paul's future. For it was while in Lubbock as a member of Shepherd of the Plains Lutheran Church that the spark kindled years before was fanned into flame. Paul's enthusiasm for evangelism work grew more and more as he became involved in the work of sharing the message that Jesus had come to provide free salvation for all mankind. Delores reports that he progressed to the point that he would go to the church early every Saturday morning and not return home until 5:30 - 6:00 in the evening. There, together with Pastor Sawall, Paul worked to learn and develop many of the techniques that he would put into practice within his own mission congregation some eight years later.

The Evangelism Outreach Program that this mission congregation established met with continuing success. It was one particular contact however that was perhaps most influential in the reshaping of Paul's life. An evangelism contact made with a couple with less than promising credentials from a worldly point of view whose names came to the church from a newcomers list. Here was a family living in less than perfect surroundings, a husband and wife burdened with the guilt of sin which weighed heavy upon their souls. A family with real life problems which seemed to compound the problems of being effective witnesses of the Gospel. And yet, God's Word was effective in reaching this couple even as he has promised. After repeated visits by Paul and Delores the couple petitioned the congregation to receive adult instruction classes but found that the church and the pastor were unable to comply with their wishes at the time. This was due to the fact the couple's physical condition made it impossible for them to attend classes at the

church as was customary. Therefore, in order to share God's Word with them, special arrangements had to be made. A plan was developed between Paul and Pastor Sawall calling for Paul to attend the pastor's adult class on Monday of each week and to, in turn, teach the content of this class to this couple on Tuesday evening. Paul's work with them was frequently interrupted by the husband's repeated trips to the hospital resulting from a severe case of emphysema. Following one such episode it became apparent both to the Kupke's and to the man being instructed that this man's time of grace was becoming shorter and shorter. The man's plea to them that he be baptized into Christ's Kingdom was related to the pastor and it was with great joy that his baptism became a reality. The day following this day of happiness the man entered the hospital for the final time. He died two weeks later as a child of God. His passing had a profound effect upon Paul and stressed to him the urgency of sharing the Gospel before it was too late.

Throughout this entire period the effect that Missionary Sawall had upon layman Kupke was immeasurable. Working side by side to carry on the great commission that Jesus had given to his New Testament Church had had what was to be a lasting effect. Paul worked ever harder to assist in bringing others to the knowledge of their Savior.

Once more however, the pressures of earning a living while at the same time serving the Lord threatened to become impossible. The people in charge at Texas Instruments began sounding Paul out about moving once again. Paul countered by feeling out his family

about the possibility of quitting his job and entering into full time laymen's work for the church. The fact that WELS had no program that would fulfill Paul's needs as a husband and father further complicated the situation. Paul was going through the same painful period that has been faced by many others when faced with similar circumstances. The prospect of returning to school once again in the hope of completing the required course of study needed to enter the full time service of the church is hardly something to be taken lightly. Nor are the other surrounding and equally disturbing factors affecting one's family such as the financial burdens one must incur, the possibility of uprooting one's family not once but several times, the pure time one must expend in fulfilling course requirements and many others. History indicates the results of these considerations for Paul Kupke, and in November 1976 he decided that he had to give it a try. The factors which led Paul to make this decision are perhaps best summed up in his own words included on his application to the Seminaries Special Admissions Committee where in response to their questions he replied as follows:

QUESTION: What has induced you to think of training for the public ministry?

ANSWER: A concern for souls who do not yet know of salvation through Christ and an increasing desire to become more active in bringing the Word of God in its truth and purity to His people has developed through an involvement in Evangelism training and Evangelistic activities over the past several years. ...

We are firmly and prayerfully convinced that the Lord had led us to Lubbock for the sole

purpose of properly directing me toward a life in the public ministry; involvement in establishing a WELS mission in Lubbock has only served to strengthen this conviction.

Paul's application was accepted and leaving home and children behind he and his wife set out to chart a new path for their life together leaving four children behind in Texas with little hope that they would ever return to the state that had grown to become their home.

At Bethany

The Bethany years were hardly what any of us had expected them to be. Many times they seemed to be an endurance race rather than a time when we could grow toward the goal we had set of someday becoming pastors. The work itself varied greatly from man to man. Some found that they had been given gifts from God that they hadn't known to exist while others had to struggle and claw their way from one class to another and from one year to the next. Many of the men in the program found it particularly hard to deal with because of the enforced separations that it imposes by its very nature and location. Particularly the separation from lay work and service to the church with which many of the participants had been active before moving to Mankato. There is also a forced separation from meaningful Synodical affiliations imposed by the fact that Bethany is definitely ELS in both its thinking and its practice. Of concern to many of us was the seemingly unneeded

stress placed upon our families that this program imposes as it is presently structured. Paul was particularly unhappy when he found what appeared to be a complete lack of interest in the specific area of the Lord's work that had drawn him into the program in the first place, that is Evangelism. He was frustrated over the apparent lack of interest in this important aspect of building the Lord's Kingdom especially within the churches in the Mankato area. This feeling remained one of his sore spots during the entire time that he was forced to spend living with us "northerners."

I stayed behind in Mankato to complete my course of study at Bethany during Paul's move to Milwaukee and his first year spent at the Seminary. I feel that it was only typical that during the year that he was gone the members of the program were able to work out a two day Evangelism Workshop led by Pastor Verne Voss of Jordan Minnesota. This weekend training session was just the thing that Paul had longed to see become a reality for the members of the Bethany Program. At any rate with a continuing lack of local support and utilization of the now trained workers there was little practical use made of the training even after it had been offered. Perhaps Paul could have changed that, I'm sure that he would have tried once more to kindle local interest had he been there. Paul's image as a father confessor was not something that was particular to his years at the Seminary but began during the two years that he was living in Mankato. Many of those students with problems adjusting to the scrambled lives they found themselves forced into by the circumstances found him to be a willing listener

as well as one who had been around before and who could set them straight or encourage their continued involvement with the program as the individual case demanded.

On To Mequon

No one ever promised that the years at the Seminary would be an easy touch and such was the case. There were new professors and a completely new curriculum to attend to. Yet, here one could begin to see a new attitude a new direction to what we were doing. Perhaps most important was the joy of being able to focus one's attention upon a detailed study of God's Word with that Word becoming the primary text book for his studies. Along with the new surroundings was also a new nickname that although it had been used before in Seminary circles would take on new meaning when it was applied to Paul Kupke. Paul was hereafter known to one and all as "Lazarus." It was a name which fit him in more ways than those who hung it on him could have realized. For here was more than a man who had come back from the grave to resume his education, here was truly a friend of Jesus Christ. He was truly filled to overflowing with the joyful prospect of letting others know that Jesus had indeed come into the world to save sinners, all sinners.

I was not the least bit surprised to learn that Paul had signed up for the summer vicarship program following his junior year at the Seminary. Finally the opportunity was there as he had so earnestly desired it to be. The chance to get out of the

class room and among the people that he so wished to serve with the message that had been locked up for three long and at times agonizing years. Finally he would get the opportunity to put into action what he had learned and wanted to share with sinners like himself. Paul's first summer vicar assignment was to the Nebraska District. It began in Midwest City and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma where he served under Pastor Andrew Domson. His primary responsibilities there were to canvass and do follow-up witnessing prior to the arrival of a newly assigned Seminary graduate in early July. He arrived to find himself appointed guardian of three Lutheran Colligians who had arrived for a two week tour of duty as canvassers. These three young ladies were new to the whole business of Evangelism and were not totally convinced of the validity of such an approach. Paul and Pastor Domson held an hour's training class each morning for the benefit of their students and then proceeded to carry out the canvassing objective. By the end of their two week training and witnessing assignment the girls had met with enough success that their enthusiasm grew considerably. They left the area with a new appreciation of what was involved in serving the Lord and carrying out the commission that he had given to his church. During his month in Oklahoma, Paul had the opportunity of sharing the Word of God with those in the area congregations by preaching two services each Sunday, first at the church in Midwest City and again at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Oklahoma City.

Paul was thrilled with the mission fever that was so evident within these two congregations. His personal work especially at

Midwest City was very fruitful and he was able to provide a substantial list of prospects for the incoming graduate. In typical Paul Kupke fashion, he bore a concern for these people and their souls during the years that followed. So much so that he was moved to inquire about them of Pastor Domson four years later at the South Central District's organizing meetings held in the fall of 1983. Following his work in the Oklahoma City area, student Kupke experienced his only opportunity of returning to the Lubbock congregation that he loved so deeply. There he was privileged to share the Gospel of his Savior with those who knew and supported him on the path that he had chosen to follow. There is something special about returning home to preach at one's home congregation as any student will admit and Paul had much to say about this moving experience once he returned to Mequon at summer's end.

The remainder of that first vicarship experience was considerably different. It was spent essentially serving in the Freemont Nebraska area. It was a different situation in that while Paul had left an area where the enthusiasm and prospects were high he was now faced with a situation where the work had not received such an enthusiastic response. The city of Freemont had already been canvassed on a couple of occasions but had yet to receive a positive recommendation for continued WELS mission efforts. This was at least partially due to the fact that the city was already 97% churched and of this a high percentage was already Lutheran. Still there was a small nucleus of people who had left the large

Missouri Synod fellowship and were quite determined to have WELS establish a congregation within their midst. The average weekly attendance during this period however, averaged only about 11 souls. Yet even though somewhat discouraged while he was there the time was well spent. For it was during his stay at Freemont that Paul decided to try a new Evangelism approach, "The Great Exchange" that had been produced by Pastor David Vallesky. Paul was pleased to find that on certain individuals this approach seemed to be better able to hold the attention of the person being addressed. Paul was impressed enough with the results that he experienced to bring back a copy of the instructions and a cassette to share with me upon his return.

It was also during this summer vicarship that Paul Kupke gave a clear indication as to how far he was willing to go in his service to others. His willingness to sacrifice was made clear by the fact that as the result of his summer's work he was forced to have his precious cowboy boots resoled on two occasions. These were the same boots which had become his trademark among his fellow students.

Paul's Middler year at WLS was all that the Middler year is cracked up to be. The course of study was more intense with more papers required of all students. This is also the year when one's awareness of how little time there actually is to learn all the things one must know in order to become an effective pastor. During this second year at the Seminary Paul was able to put the things he was learning into use by serving frequently as a guest preacher at Trinity, West Mequon where he and Delores were members

during the school year. He was also given a rather unique experience for a seminarian when during the Christmas holiday season as Grandpa Kupke he was privileged to personally baptize three of his own grandchildren. As the days began to wind down toward call day the excitement mounted for Paul as it does for all of us in anticipation of receiving that very first call to serve as vicar on an ongoing basis. What would be his fate? Where would he be sent? With whom would he spend this important year of training and learning? With all these things on their minds Paul and Delores decided that perhaps it would be best to spend the summer in preparation for the year to come rather than to once again go on the road in the summer vicar program. However, when they received a request to sublet their apartment from a fellow student, as they had during the previous summer, Paul regarded this as a nudge from the Lord to apply for the program once more. Call day brought the news that his application had been accepted and he received two assignments. The first to serve a summer vicarship in the South Atlantic District and the second as vicar to Bethlehem Lutheran Church located in Menomonee Falls. The second assignment would allow the Kupke's to retain their apartment during the full four years spent at the Seminary.

Having now had two years of Seminary training Paul found this second summer on the road greatly rewarding as well as busy. Perhaps the fact that he now had a greater number of approved sermons added to his workload for he was now able to preach more than twice at a given location before being forced to move on.

The Kupke's summer assignment began with an introduction to Pastor John Guse, Chairman of the District's Mission Board and the man who would arrange and take primary responsibility for arranging Paul's agenda for the summer. From this meeting held in Lexington S.C. Paul moved on to Summerville S.C. and spent two weeks working with Pastor Randall Bartlet. He preached on two successive Sundays and canvassed the area for mission prospects.

This was followed by a return to Lexington and work with Pastor Guse. Here Paul was to get a real experience of working within a fledgling mission field. He was confronted with a preaching schedule that was challenging to say the least. One that required that he preach Sunday morning at Lexington, drive 80 miles to Greenville, S.C. to preach in the afternoon and hold adult Sunday School class, drive another 50 miles thereafter to conduct a 6:30 PM service at Hendersonville N.C. This was really living. Paul relished both the schedule and the time that he was able to spend with Pastor Guse, learning from a man who was deeply involved in the work Paul himself wished to one day perform.

Next came a move to Knoxville, TN where Paul worked with Pastor Scott Stone. It was while in Knoxville that Paul was introduced to the use of Telephone Evangelism. He was pleasantly surprised to find that personal contact was not the only effective manner in which this work could be effective. This program was being effectively practiced by Paul within his Tyler congregation at the time Paul died.

From Knoxville Paul and Delores traveled to Florida where

they were to spend the remainder of the summer. While in Florida Paul was responsible for carrying out two Vacation Bible School programs and in addition he had regular preaching and canvassing duties. His time was spent particularly in the areas of Pompano Beach, Coral Springs and St. Petersburg. Paul was excited with the number of potential prospects that were available to them as a result of the VBS programs in particular and once more left a significant list of prospects to be called on following his departure. Once again it is easier to see looking back how many lives these two summers had allowed this servant of God to touch directly. On top of that the summers brought a welcome relief from the long hours of study and class preparation which inhibit normal family life during the school year.

Vicar Year

Paul Kupke's vicar year resulted in a change from the treatment that he had become accustomed to as a summer vicar. He was called to serve an established congregation with different goals and priorities than the people that he had served previously. Here the enthusiasm and joy that had been so evident were buried beneath the surface. He found himself in a situation where he got the impression that he was but another short term employee rather than a fellow worker in the Lord's Kingdom. Paul found this situation disturbing to say the least. At the same time he accepted the fact that the hand of the Lord was active in his assignment to this congregation and he was determined to serve to the best

of his ability. He found considerable pleasure in his work as a vicar especially in his dealings with the young people of the congregation. He instructed them in Catechism, Christian Day School and Sunday School Classes. He was also able to establish a significant rapport with numerous members of the congregation at large and with several members of the Christian Day School Faculty.

Paul was assigned to carry out the duties normally assigned to vicars but was allowed little latitude to be his own man or to provide meaningful input as is the case with many vicarship assignments. He was able in the area of Evangelism to put into practice some of the Evangelism talents which he had developed over the years by using his own initiative and resources. He even encouraged the first grade teacher to take her pupils into the neighborhood to circulate flyers for VBS. Paul was convinced that this was the ideal time and place to begin Evangelism training, before the children had an opportunity to establish a fear about talking to others about their Savior. He also established, on his own, a method of obtaining the telephone numbers of newcomers to the area without the church being billed for a large number of information calls that this system necessitated. His vicar year was a learning experience for him to be sure, however it was neither what he had expected nor desired. In fact, Paul was always pleased during the year that followed, to spend time with myself and my own Bishop picking his brain and throwing out ideas for comment and critique. Paul remained ready to learn

from those who had more experience than himself. The congregation and pastor where Paul spent his vicar year no longer makes use of this Synod program, perhaps to the benefit of all concerned.

Senior Year

Paul's senior year at the Seminary was relatively uneventful, being spent as is the case with most seniors with filling in those areas where particular weaknesses or fears arise. He was however contacted by Pastor Terry Deters of Brillion WI and offered the position of Senior Vicar during the school year. Paul completed this assignment by preaching regularly for the congregation and assisting with communion. He was most pleased with the opportunity of serving in Brillion as it gave him an insight into another area of the ministry to which he had not had the opportunity of having worked previously. While serving in this capacity Paul had occasion to become a positive influence upon two young men who were likewise interested in the pastoral ministry but needed a bit of a boost before they would take the step of returning to their studies. One of these is Mr. Thomas Biedenbender, who is presently re-enrolled at the Seminary after a hiatus of six years. The second is Mr. James Sonneman, a parochial school teacher of the Brillion congregation, who has decided to enter the "Bethany Program" in the fall of 1984. Both of these individuals will willingly credit the influence that Paul Kupke had in encouraging them to make service to Christ the goal

of their lives and to pursue that goal to the best of their ability.

During Paul's senior year at the Seminary he fought a lengthy battle within himself regarding the topic of his own Church History paper. As usual he did not wish to impose his own convictions too strongly or to be portrayed as one who was not supportive of the training system that had served the Synod for so many years. Finally however, he felt that a paper outlining those areas where he felt improvement was warranted needed to be written. It was with trepidation that he wrote his paper on "The Seminary Curriculum: A Student's Perspective." The main thrust of his paper was directed toward the two specific areas that he felt were most notably deficient in the preparation of men for the ministry of the WELS. Those areas being the arrangement of the present course offerings in such a manner that they would allow more time for in-depth training in the direct study of the Scriptures in the Seminary's Isagogics program. And secondly, a realignment of the present Paractical Theology program to include more training in the areas of Evangelism and Counseling. The grade that he received on this assignment would appear to vindicate the subject matter as he had presented it even if the Professor was unwilling to embrace his proposals lock, stock and barrel. Paul would be exceedingly pleased to see the inclusion of Pastor David Valleski to the teaching staff at WLS and also with the Evangelism emphasis which was made a part of his call.

Call Day

Few people in attendance on call day 1983 will soon forget the gasp and murmuring which took place when Paul Kupke's assignment to Lone Star Ev. Lutheran Church was announced. The old Texan was going back to the state that he had grown to love. He had received a call to do precisely the work he had set out to do when he had re-entered his course of studies six years previously. While joy is to be expected on call day the joy that filled both Paul and Delores Kupke on that occasion was more than can easily be put into words. Texas was their home and it didn't matter in the least that Tyler was located 450 miles East of the City of Lubbock that they had left six years before. In fact, Tyler was located only 100 miles from the Dallas area where all three Kupke children had relocated during the years their parents spent in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Tyler was the closest thing to perfect one could imagine.

Paul's call was to serve as Pastor of Lone Star Lutheran however, tells only half the story. The second half revolved around the fact that he was also designated to serve as missionary to East Texas, an assignment that he took very much to heart. Upon arriving on the scene in Tyler Paul was advised by the District Mission Board that the 56 souls which were reported to him in the letter which accompanied his call required significant revision. In fact Paul found that 4 families had completely left the congregation and a fifth was contemplating similar action. This exodus was prompted at least in part by the long and continuing struggle which these people had been engaged in while attempting to obtain

mission status at this location. When Paul arrived in Tyler on June 16th he was advised that he was to serve an "undetermined number" of souls with the group's attendance hovering around 20 per Sunday. This was particularly disheartening due to the fact that these people were being regularly served by the Synod's Mission Developer and one would have expected to find enthusiasm among people worshiping in an expository situation. In place of enthusiasm he was greeted by a small group of people with very low morale, people who were burned out from their repeated efforts to establish a Christian congregation. The members did not want to hear the words evangelism or canvassing mentioned let alone to take part in yet another organized program in which they could have no confidence. Paul recognized the poor situation before him at once and realized that the next several months would be critical to the success of this struggling group of believers.

He immediately devised a plan that would set attainable goals before those members who were still active and would allow him the time to train them and motivate them in a way that would bring these goals to fulfillment. It was apparent that the actual work of evangelism would fall on the shoulders of the pastor at least during the immediate future. Paul's years of prior experience served him well in this area as one can imagine. He immediately began to identify and qualify prospects by devising a system whereby he would send a welcoming letter and follow this with a phone call much as he had done during his second summer vicarship and regular vicarship programs. This method was far less time consuming than

the more accepted canvas and follow-up method that most seminarians take with them into the field. He also was quick to realize that while his people had been struggling to come together for worship for a period of up to two years, they really did not even know their fellow worshipers. The simple act of plugging in a coffee pot prior to the worship service served to rectify this situation quite nicely. Next came a visit to all members and prospective members of the proposed congregation by both the new pastor and his wife. These trips allowed a time both for getting acquainted and to allow the enthusiasm of Pastor Kupke to affect and infect those whom he had been sent to serve with the message of the Gospel. Doing so served to show the enormity of the task which lay before him. This was due to the fact that the field was spread out as far as 80 miles away in four different directions.

In addition to the regularly scheduled worship services being conducted in Tyler, Bible Study/ Fellowship meetings were already being conducted in two out-lying areas. One in the Winnsboro/ Cypress Springs area (60 miles away). the other in Longview (50 miles). Paul continued these meetings as they offered something to which he could invite prospective members who could hardly be invited to drive 50 to 80 miles to try out a new Lutheran Church which didn't even have a church building in which to worship. He also added one additional location at Nacodoches (80 miles away) in November 1983.

The efforts of Pastor Kupke began to produce results very rapidly. Two of those families who had discontinued worshipping

returned to the fellowship at once. Others came occasionally and discontinued their efforts to join existing churches in the area and adopted a wait and see attitude once again. They were moved by what they saw in this new servant of God who had come into their midst and determined that perhaps things could work out in Tyler at last.

There were also encouraging signs in other areas. For example in the area of Telephone Evangelism (a copy of Paul's welcoming letter is attached) he obtained such a response that he was at times forced to suspend making appointments until he could fit them into his schedule. In addition he developed and sent out a five year program with specific goals for the congregation which would allow them to chart their progress in realistic fashion. (Copy attached) He developed a well thought out Stewardship Program for the upcoming year and made plans with a newly appointed chairman of this committee to see that it would be implemented and followed up once it became operational. All of which points to the wealth of organizational knowledge that Paul had brought with him into the ministry from his former occupation. Within the five and one-half months Paul served this congregation he was able to make great strides to return to the people a sense of purpose and being which they had all but lost over the years that had gone before.

Paul was also immediately active and effective in reaching those who had yet to become members of Christ's Kingdom. He began Bible information classes with 7 individuals and had 4

others committed to begin class in January 1984. He had already began to counsel 9 individuals who needed answers from the Lord to help them in dealing with the cares of this present life as well. The role of pastor fit Paul Kupke well and it was readily apparent that he would be successful in carrying out the work of the Savior in his long sought field of endeavor.

Suddenly and seemingly without warning the Lord called Pastor Paul Kupke to his eternal home in heaven. I say seemingly because if one stops to look back on the work that he was able to accomplish in such a short period of time it is possible to see many facts which point to the end of his earthly life which was so rapidly approaching. This was evident in the content of the letters that he wrote to those of us he had left behind when he returned to Texas. It could be seen in the huge amount of work and planning that he put into the Bible Classes that he taught his congregation which centered around the "End Times" as they are presented in the pages of Scripture. It can and will continue to make itself seen in the effect that this one humble man of God had on all that learned to know him throughout his life, but especially those who came to know him during the time he was preparing for the public ministry of the Lord in his church here on earth. For here was a man whom God had chosen to be his spokesman among men for a time. His unexpected promotion to glory serves as a lesson to all who share Paul's conviction that Jesus is the Christ, that the days are indeed short and the work that remains is urgently in need of doing if sin sick sinners are to learn of their Savior before the

night comes when no man can work.

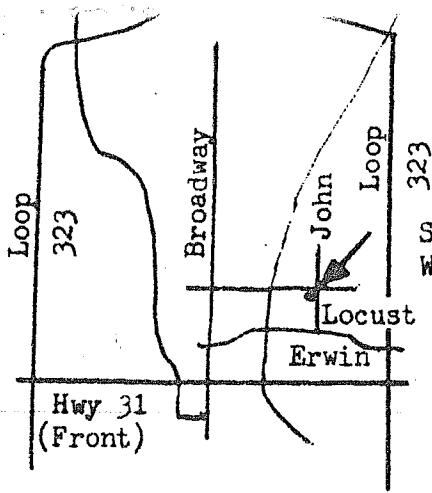
There are many things that the writer of this paper has learned and will long treasure from knowing Rev. Paul Kupke but perhaps the one single thing that keeps entering my mind since his departure bears repeating. It was something that Paul said to me a couple of years ago as we sat discussing our progress toward the end of our studies during a talk following one of our many enjoyable trips on to Lake Michigan in search of the magnificent King Salmon which he so loved to catch. I had asked Paul if he was ever sorry that he had waited so long before beginning his studies for the ministry. Or that the number of years that we would be able to spend in the Lord's service would be shorter than that of our fellow students. Paul said, "John I'm convinced that the Lord will give to each of us enough time to accomplish the things that he wants us to do here on earth for his kingdom and knowing this we can be thankful."

I thank God that he brought Paul Kupke into my life and into the life of my family. To God be the Glory.

Bibliography

The content of this paper was drawn from two sources. The first of these was the writer's personal knowledge of Pastor Kupke gained during the 6½ years that I was blessed in knowing him. The second and perhaps more informational source, was a series of telephone conversations and 4 detailed letters written to the writer by Mrs. Delores Kupke the wife of Pastor Kupke. Without her input the preparation of this assignment would not have been possible nor complete.

EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
(Wisconsin Synod)
200 N. John St., Tyler



Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service: 10:00 a.m.

Pastor: Paul Kupke
301 Clemson Dr.
Phone: 581-7520

Lone Star
Lone Star Church
& 75705
(Lutheran Synod)

Phone: (214) 581-7520

Dear Friend,

The members of Lone Star Evangelical Lutheran Church join me in extending to you a warm welcome to your new location. Whether your move was local or across the nation, we as a congregation are compelled by the love of God and as a member of this community to greet you.

But before I continue, may I ask that you pause for a moment to reflect on this question:

Have you reached a point in your spiritual life where you know that you have eternal life -- that is, do you know for certain where you would be if you died today?

If you are unsure or if this question raises some doubt in your mind, we would like to share with you the Way of Salvation as revealed in God's faultless and truthful Word. This Word, the Bible, tells all people how they may be absolutely certain of their salvation because of what Jesus Christ, God's Son, has done for them.

This is the Gospel, and it is the center of each and every one of our church programs. Lone Star Evangelical Lutheran Church is a small church in the early stages of growth. At present, our worship services are in a rented facility, the I.B.E.W. Union Hall, 200 North John St., (intersection of John and Locust), Tyler. Sunday School and Adult Bible Class begins at 9:00 a.m., Worship Services at 10:00 a.m. You are invited to join us in the worship of our Saving Lord. Also, please feel free to call upon me if I may serve you in any matter of individual concern.

If you have already found a church home, we rejoice with you and pray that you may grow there in the knowledge of your salvation.

Again, welcome to your new location, and may the Lord richly bless your home.

In Christ,

Paul O. Kupke

Paul O. Kupke, Pastor

Lone Star Ev. Lutheran Church
Tyler, Texas 75703
(Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod)

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301 Clemson Dr.

Phone: (214) 581-7520

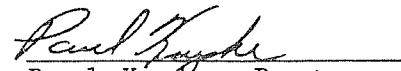
Dear Families of Lone Star Ev. Lutheran Church

Reference is made to our previous letter regarding goals and plans for Lone Star Ev. Lutheran Church. Since that time we met with the Texas District Mission Board and discussed those goals and plans. The attached forms have been revised to reflect the results. You will note that the schedule for a worship facility has been accelerated one year and other events rescheduled accordingly.

Key milestones are dictated by meeting schedules of the General Board for Home Missions. These plans are very optimistic and success oriented. Accomplishment is highly dependent on cooperation and effort by all members.

The Texas District Mission Board voted to request mission status for Lone Star Lutheran Church and gave us top priority. We know that all of you will place these considerations in your daily prayers that the Lord will guide the General Board to do His will in the best interests for East Texas.


Gaylen Hargrave, President


Paul Kupke, Pastor

9-9-83

LONE STAR EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH TYLER, TX.

GOALS: FACILITIES

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

FEBR. LAND SEARCH AUTHORITY
MAY PURCHASE SITE

FEBR. WEF FUNDING APPROVAL
MAY PARSONAGE FUNDING APPROVAL
MAY BEGIN WEF CONSTRUCTION

FEBR. DEDICATE PARSONAGE CHAPEL PLANNING AUTHORITY

JUNE DEDICATE CHAPEL

MAY BEGIN CDS PLANNING

OCT. MISSION STATUS

JULY BEGIN WORSHIP SERVICES - LONGVIEW
SEPT WEF UNIT PLANNING AUTHORITY
PARSONAGE PLAN - NING AUTHORITY

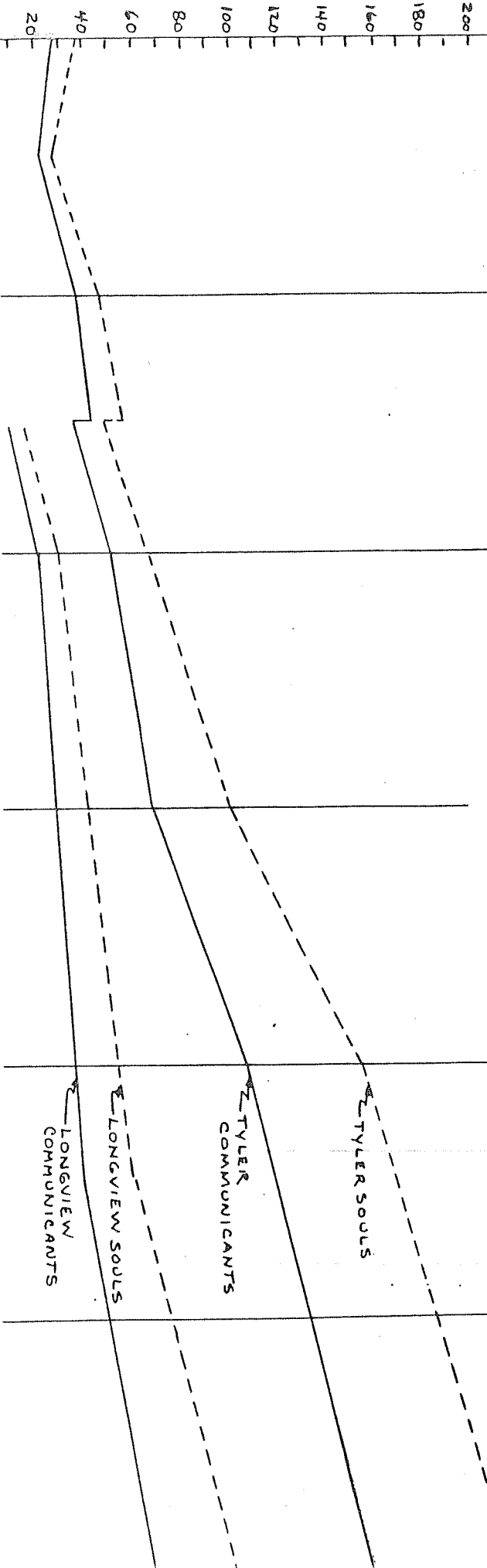
JULY BEGIN PARSONAGE CONSTRUCTION

SEPT CHAPEL FUNDING APPROVAL

WEF = WORSHIP/EDUCATION/FELLOWSHIP
CDS = CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOL

WEF UNIT RECEIVES TOP PRIORITY - PARSONAGE SECONDARY PRIORITY

GOALS: MEMBERSHIP GROWTH



Tyler, Texas
 PLANS FOR ATTAINING 1983-84 GOALS-FACILITIES

GOALS	PLANS	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION DATE
Obtain mission status	Meet with the District Mission Board - Present case for mission status - Submit required forms: Request for Mission Status (M-2) Schedule of Information (S-1)	pastor president members	August 30, 1983
Obtain land search authority	File request for mission status with the General Board for Home Missions	DMB	October, 1983
	Adopt congregational charter	voters	February, 1984
	Elect site/building committee(s)	voters	November, 1983
	File for Synod membership	voters	November, 1983
	Adopt stewardship program - Building fund - Unfiled budget	voters	December, 1983
	Adopt congregational constitution	voters	January, 1984
	Hold site information meeting with the District Mission Board	site committee	January, 1984
	Incorporate congregation	voters	January, 1984
Purchase site	File request for land search authority	voters	February, 1984
	Enter into Phase I CEF Loan Agreement with the Synod Board of Trustees	voters	May, 1984
	Search for sites	site committee	March, 1984

Lone Star Ev. Lutheran Church
Tyler, Texas
PLANS FOR ATTAINING 1983-84 GOALS-FACILITIES

GOALS	PLANS	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION DATE
Purchase site (cont)	Submit church site information to the District Mission Board	site committee	March, 1984
	Site survey by the Synod General Board for Home Missions	site committee	April, 1984
Obtain WEF planning authority	Request purchase of site	voters	May, 1984
	Close purchase of site	site committee	May, 1984
Obtain WEF planning authority	Hold orientation meeting with District Mission Board	site committee	September, 1984
	Submit PFR statement to District Mission Board	voters	July, 1984
Obtain parsonage planning authority	File request for planning authority	voters	August, 1984
	Enter Phase II CER loan agreement with Synod Board of Trustees	voters	September, 1984
Obtain parsonage planning authority	Request planning permission from District Mission Board	site committee	September, 1984
	Submit building plans and bids to District Mission Board and General Board for Home Missions	voters	June, 1984
Obtain parsonage planning authority	Submit request for parsonage to General Board for Home Missions	voters	July, 1984
		voters	September, 1984