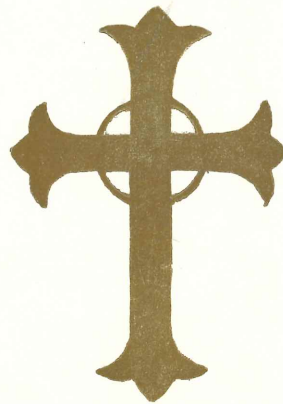


ONE GOD

ONE FAITH



ONE HUNDRED YEARS  
1865 ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH 1965

## **DEDICATION**

*“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
His mercies never come to an end;  
They are new every morning,  
Great is Thy faithfulness” . . . .*

These Words from the Book of Lamentations, chapter 3, verses 22 and 23 (RSV) were used as the opening sentence in both the 25th and 50th Anniversary booklets of our St. John's First Evangelical Lutheran Church.

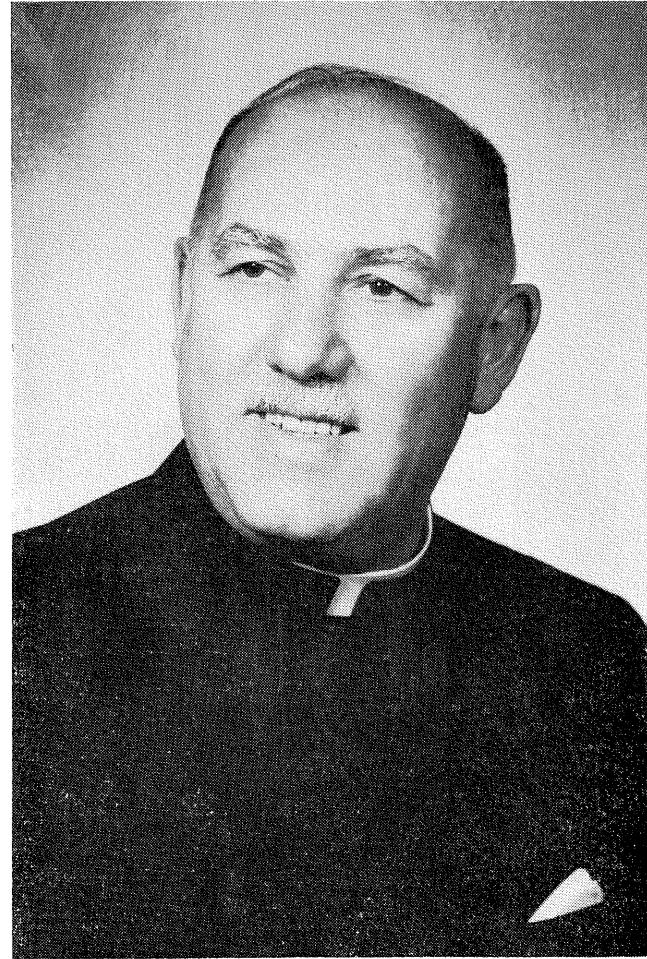
The compilers, the Reverend Wm. Koepchen (25th), and Teacher Charles A. Burgdorf (50th), considered this Scripture appropriate for our Birthday prayer.

We pray that the love, mercy and faithfulness of our dear Lord never leave us; as we, in deepest gratitude, hereby dedicate this booklet, with our words, deeds and prayers, — yes, our very lives — to His Glory and Praise.

**ST. JOHN'S FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT

NOVEMBER 21, 1965



THE REV. HERBERT C. MEYER, S.T.M., Pastor

# **CENTENNIAL THOUGHTS.....**

## **"ONE GOD - ONE FAITH - ONE HUNDRED YEARS"**

This is the theme of our Centennial . . . We believe in God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Faith in this one God has been ours for one hundred years. We pray God that He continue to be our only God and Savior, and by His grace keep us in the faith.

This theme was chosen from the many received by the Centennial committee. Since it was submitted to us by an anonymous member, it has all the more become a theme for EACH member of the congregation of St. John's in Meriden.

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## **EARLY HISTORY.....**

German Lutheran families had settled in Meriden as early as the 1840's, but we are informed that they bothered little about church or school. They evidently were satisfied with the intermittent services of traveling preachers, and did not think seriously of settling a pastor among them. They were aroused to action when St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, wishing to sell its property on South Broad Street, beyond the old cemetery, suggested that the German Lutherans should buy it, and even wrote to the Pennsylvania Synod asking that a minister be sent to establish a congregation.

That happened in 1865. Early in November of that year Pastor Ebert came up from Newark, New Jersey, and frankly laid the matter of organization before representatives of the German Community, Mr. M. Kraemer and Mr. C. R. Facy. They thought it a good idea and invited others to hear and discuss the plan with Pastor Ebert. A meeting of all the Germans in the community was called for Sunday, November 26, 1865 in the Court Room of the Town Hall.

Various opinions were expressed, some wanting a free congregation, and others a school, but when the founding of an Evangelical Lutheran Church was plainly put, twenty-eight men subscribed their names, and the formal organization took place at a larger meeting on December 3rd in the chapel of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

The first name chosen was "Deutsche evang.-lutherische Gemeinde unter den Bekenntnissen, wie sie die evang.-luth. Synode von New York verlangt." The church was incorporated by a special law, approved February 25, 1887, as the "German Evangelical Lutheran Saint John's Congregation, Unaltered Augsburg Confession." By a special act, approved May 21, 1919, the former charter was amended and the name was changed to "St. John's First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Unaltered Augsburg Confession."

This Church is the mother-church of the Lutheran churches in Meriden, and is the oldest congregation of the Missouri Synod in Connecticut.

Bibliography: Minutes of St. John's Lutheran Church — 1865 —  
25th and 50th Anniversary Booklets  
Inventory of Church Archives — Connecticut State Library



# PASTORS WHO SERVED ST. JOHN'S

## **First: THE REVEREND G. GUERICKE 1865-1866**

The Reverend G. Guericke was the first pastor sent to the newly formed congregation. He preached his first sermon on Monday, December 25, 1865. After the services on December 31, he was unanimously chosen by the members as their pastor. His salary was set at \$300.00 for six months, besides an amount promised him by the Synod he represented.

Meriden now had a Lutheran Church with its own pastor; but this did not fulfill the plan of the Episcopal Church to sell its chapel. As the price asked could not be raised, even though a canvass was made of all people in Meriden and vicinity, the congregation decided not to buy the chapel.

Services were then held in the Congregational chapel.

Contributions continued to come in slowly, and as the matter of salary was not met by either the congregation or Synod, Pastor Guericke resigned and left Meriden, August 11, 1866, returning to Germany very much concerned about the "American" way of handling congregational matters.

(Picture Not Available)

## **Second: THE REVEREND G. A. SCHMIDT 1866-1869**

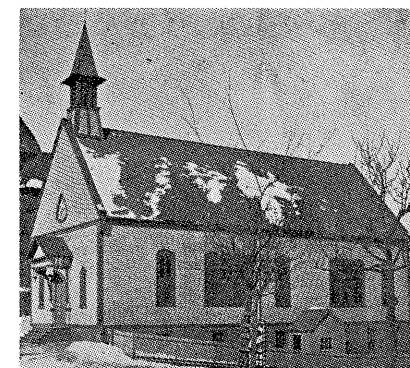
Services were held by vacancy pastors for the next weeks, until the Reverend G. A. Schmidt from Utica, N. Y. became the second pastor.

During these weeks three important decisions were made. First, on August 12, 1866 to build a church 50 feet long, by 30 feet wide, and 20 feet high. Second, on September 13th, to use only bread and wine in the Communion Service. And third, on September 23rd, to change the name of the congregation to: THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SAINT JOHN'S CONGREGATION.

(Picture Not Available)

Reverend Schmidt took his office on October 1, 1866, and was formally installed on the occasion of the church dedication, March 5, 1867.

Interest in the church again waned, attendance and contributions dropped off. Rev. Schmidt felt he was to blame, and though the council tried its best to work out the matter, he resigned on May 4, 1869, and left Meriden to become chaplain on Wards Island, N. Y., where he later died.



The First Church  
Dedicated March 5, 1867

### **Third: THE REVEREND CHARLES A. GRAEBER 1869-1886**

After hearing Pastor Graeber as guest preacher on July 4, 1869, at the invitation of Mr. Baltzer of Rockville, the Board called him to serve as our pastor. He accepted the call.

The Reverend Graeber, born June 27, 1841, received his theological training at our Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He was ordained to the ministry by the Rev. Prof. C. F. W. Walther, first serving a church in Pilot Knob, Missouri, and then in Rockville, Connecticut.

It was in 1869 that St. John's requested an honorable dismissal from the New York Ministerium, and joined The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Under Pastor Graeber's leadership the congregation grew and prospered. He was an eloquent speaker and inspired the members to do their best. The newcomers from Germany found in him a friendly counselor and helper. The pastor conducted a school with classes in Religion and German two afternoons a week.

More room was soon needed, and in April 1879 a decision was made to enlarge the church building.

Pastor Graeber was also a doctor of medicine, dividing his time in the two professions, with the result that on Sept. 17, 1885 he resigned to accept the chaplaincy of the Home for the Aged in Brooklyn, N.Y.

He returned to Meriden several years later to practice medicine and to establish another Lutheran congregation in our community, known as Immanuel Lutheran Church.



### **Fourth: THE REVEREND A. KRAFFT 1886-1890**

The Reverend A. Krafft of Ohio was called and installed as our pastor by the District President J. P. Beyer, on April 4, 1886.

He suggested abolishing the renting of church pews, insisted on personal announcement for Holy Communion, and strongly stated the church's opposition to secret lodges.

Soon after his arrival he opened a Christian Day School, conducting it alone at first and then with the help of a student pastor, Mr. Lobenstein. A regular teacher from the seminary in Addison, Illinois took over the school in the fall of 1886, with a helper in the lower grades.

The members appreciated the faithfulness and uprightness of Pastor Krafft and were averse to having him accept the call which came to him from Canada. They asked him to return it, twice, but at the third call reluctantly let him go. His farewell sermon was held on July 6, 1890, and on the 10th he left with our prayers for God's blessing in his new parish.



## **Fifth: THE REVEREND WILLIAM F. KOEPCHEN 1890-1900**

As successor to Pastor Krafft, the Reverend Wm. F. Koepchen was called from Zion Lutheran in New Haven in 1890. He was not unknown to the members of St. John's since he had served as an advisor on several occasions. The Reverend Koepchen was installed by the vacancy pastor, the Reverend Theodore Gross, on August 10, 1890.

Plans were immediately begun for the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of St. John's Congregation. Guests were invited from the surrounding congregations, and three Festival Services were held on November 27, 1890.

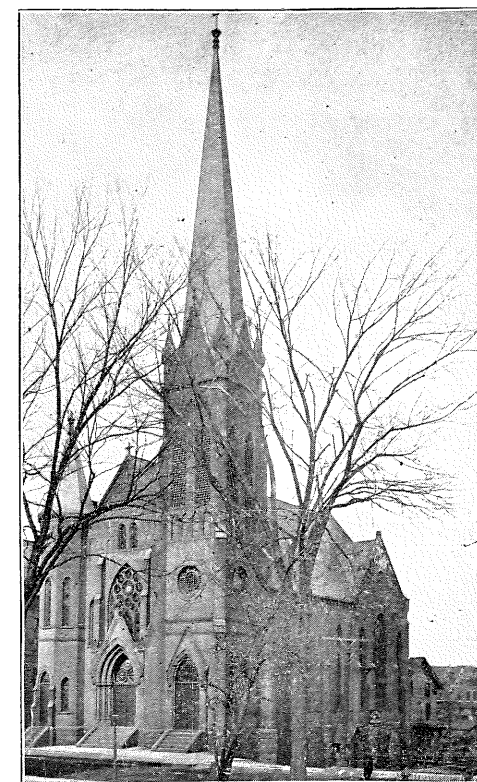
The District President, Reverend J. P. Beyer, preached in the morning worship. The school teachers, Mr. C. A. Burgdorf and his assistant, conducted a Children's Service in the afternoon. Pastor Koepchen conducted an evening service in the English language. Enlarged choirs were heard, and the guest organist, Mr. Bolze from New Haven, assisted by violin-virtuoso Mr. Wm. Neebe, added much to the beauty of the services.

A new spirit seemed to reign . . . and in February 1891 the decision was made: "We want to build a new church." Plans were accepted to build a church of brick and sandstone—110 feet long, 58 feet front, with a tower 172 feet high (after long debate it was decided to reduce that by 20 feet) at a contracted price of \$28,000.00. During the building, services were held in the Town Hall. When all was completed the new building was dedicated to the glory of God, with appropriate Services, on March 13, 1892.

In 1896 the congregation purchased and dedicated the land on Bee Street as "Gethsemane Cemetery of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation."

The parsonage on Liberty Street was purchased in 1897.

Reverend Koepchen received a call to St. Luke's Lutheran Congregation in New York City in early 1900, which he accepted. He had won the hearts of the people of St. John's and it was difficult to part with this beloved servant of the Lord.



## Sixth: THE REVEREND SAMUEL F. GLASER 1900-1937

The Reverend S. F. Glaser accepted our call to be the next pastor. He had received his pre-ministerial training at Ft. Wayne Preparatory School, and was graduated from our Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Pastor Glaser had previously served congregations in Lockport and Syracuse, N. Y.; as well as those in Alexandria, Virginia, and Ashland, Kentucky. His installation at St. John's took place on the evening of March 29, 1900. District President Walker assisted by our former pastor the Rev. Wm. Koepchen, officiated.

God granted Pastor Glaser a long and blessed ministry among us — and many of us, whom he baptized, instructed and confirmed — can well remember him.

There were many changes at St. John's during these years. About the first being the new organ, built to replace the old hand-pumped organ from the first church. Teacher Burgdorf, who was the organist, had tried to make the best of it, but he said "it was the most excruciating thing to listen to the discordant sounds which issued forth Sunday for Sunday." In 1901 the decision to get a new organ was made, and the sum of \$3,000.00 was voted for it. Pastor Glaser, himself a fine musician, and Teacher Burgdorf were on the committee, and they eagerly took up the interesting task of choosing a suitable instrument. The final choice was an organ by J. W. Steere & Son of Springfield, Mass. This had the famous German "Weigle Tubular Pneumatic Action System," and was operated by water power.

On the tenth anniversary of our church building, March 13, 1902, the noble instrument was dedicated to God's glory. Teacher Dressler from Danbury and Teacher Wagner of New Britain with their choirs, assisted our organist and choir in the dedication service.

As the years went on our people began to feel the need of services in the English language as well as in German. At first an English Service was held one Sunday evening a month, but soon there were two a month and then each Sunday, with Holy Communion three times a year. This schedule prevailed until 1921, when the English service was held at 9 a.m., with Holy Communion four times a year. The German Service was still the "Haupt Gottesdienst," and Sunday School was

held between the two services. In the summer of 1925, Sunday School was omitted and the German Service was held from 10 to 11 — immediately following the English Service. This remained the summer schedule for many years.

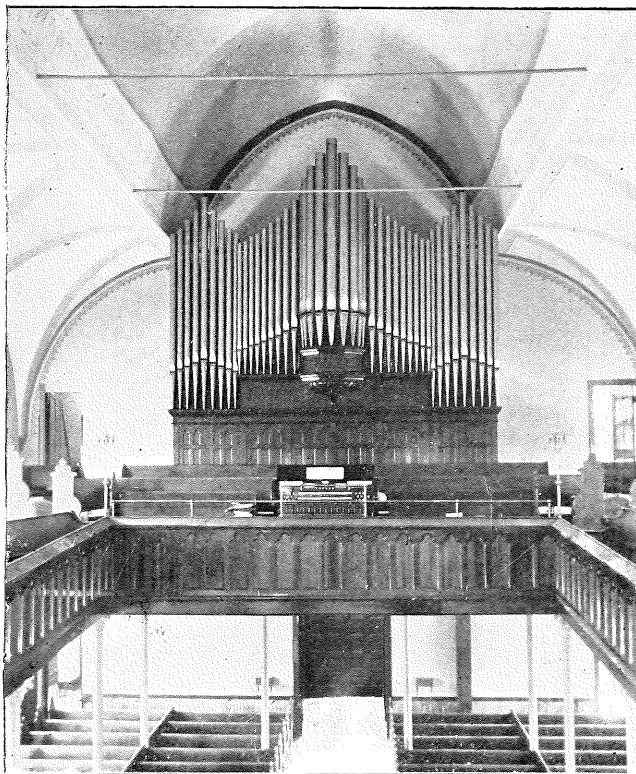
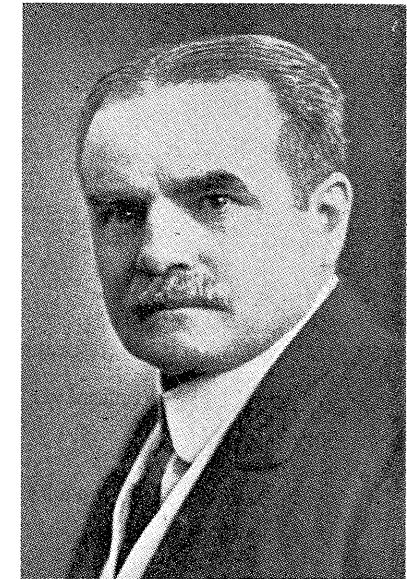
In 1912 the envelope system for monthly contributions was tried for one year. It was found so satisfactory a way of bringing contributions to the Lord, that it continued until 1920, when the weekly offering envelope was introduced.

The year before our 50th Anniversary in 1915 — the decision was made to re-point the outer brick walls and redecorate the interior, which had not been painted since 1891. A member, Mr. Wm. Wendt, did the painting, and the generous Ladies' Aid paid the cost. The old gas lights, from the original church, were replaced by electric fixtures made by Brenner Brothers. Pastor Glaser volunteered to visit the homes of our members, personally, to collect funds for this project. Our God's House, outwardly in good repair, and now beautifully redecorated and lighted, seemed to us an almost perfect place to give thanks to our Lord for His love and protection for 50 long years.

The tall steeple on our church, which was likened to "a finger pointing us heavenward," was quite severely damaged by a lightning bolt in July 1918. It was repaired, but in July 1934 it was again struck, and once more severely damaged. The weakening of the timbers prompted the removal and redesigning of the steeples in 1958.

It was also in 1918 that the word "German" was deleted from our congregation's name. In 1934 a memorial mural, "The Path of Faith," was painted in the triple arches, by a young member Edward N. Dittmer, and was accepted by the congregation. This same year a generous bequest was received from the Clarence Bradley Estate.

On October 22, 1937 Pastor Glaser was called to his heavenly home. The funeral service was held in the Church, the body lying in state for four hours. Members of the Church Board served as special honor guards — and six deacons were the bearers. Pastor Glaser, our faithful shepherd for 37 years, was laid to rest in our Gethsemane Cemetery.



## Seventh: THE REVEREND PAUL WOY 1938-1949

After Pastor Glaser's death our immediate parish needs were filled by Teacher Rabe, with pastoral aid from the Rev. Rudolph Blum, then serving Zion Lutheran in Wallingford.

The Rev. Prof. Paul Woy was sent to be our vacancy preacher, coming to us from Bronxville Concordia each Sunday.

After a special meeting of all communicants, it was decided to send a call to Pastor Woy. He did not accept our first call due to the pressure of his work at Concordia Collegiate Institute, but after the second call in March 1938 he did accept, and was installed on June 19, 1938.

In the meantime the parsonage was renovated and modernized to receive the new family.

Pastor Woy received his schooling at Immanuel Lutheran Church School in New York City. His pastor urged him to study for the ministry, so he enrolled at our Concordia in Hawthorne, N. Y., going on to St. Louis Seminary from which he graduated in 1911. His first pastorate was at Trinity Lutheran in Schenectady, N. Y. In 1912 Synod called him to serve in Perth and Freemantle, West Australia, and assist at Concordia College in southern Australia. He also spent week-ends in the back woods of Australia as "Reise-prediger." In 1914 he served at St. Mark's in Brooklyn, N. Y. and at Synod's call became Camp Pastor at Newport News, Virginia during World War I. In 1921 he went to Zion Lutheran in Stamford. Synod again called him to teach religion and German at Concordia Collegiate Institute, Bronxville, N. Y. from 1931 to 1938, when he came to St. John's.

After the purchase of a mimeograph a regular Church bulletin was now begun. In 1939, memorial gifts to beautify the sanctuary included: a set of altar paraments in the liturgical colors, and a new altar rail. Then as the time for the 75th Anniversary approached, plans were made to undertake an extensive program of renovations. "Why do we wish to make our church beautiful?" wrote Pastor Woy. "Because God, our heavenly Father, dwells there by means of His Word and Sacraments. Having such an Honored Guest we want to make our sanctuary beautiful." The work included new flooring, new pews, and a new altar and pulpit, with matching paneling . . . During this work our Services were held in the Parish House, to which Carl Hoppe had given a very churchly decor. Many of us were much younger then, and did not mind climbing the stairs!



On November 24, 1940 the 75th Anniversary of our organization was celebrated with a Children's Service at 9:30 A.M.; a German Service at 11 A.M.; and the English Service at 3 P.M. Special speakers included Pastor Dick of Paterson, N. J. and Pastor Erwin Kurth of Brooklyn, N.Y. Miss Anita Bieberthaler, an accomplished pianist, was heard; as well as the choir, with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ketelhut and Miss Ella Rulfeth as soloists.

About here the new Hymnal appeared, and we learned the new liturgy, by having several Sunday afternoon practice sessions with our faithful members . . . Time of the services was again changed: Sunday School at 9 A.M., English Service at 10, and German Gottesdienst at 11:15 A.M.

In 1943 a huge Service Flag was dedicated and hung in the nave, as a tribute to the many boys and girls who were serving in World War II. On V.E. Day in 1945 as well as on V.J. Day, the church was open to the general public for meditation and prayers. Members of the congregation also helped in the war effort by purchasing War Bonds, which were accumulated for later use in the church's work.

In the fall of 1945 Pastor Woy became seriously ill, and a temporary pastor was sought. We felt deeply thankful to the Lord, when the Rev. Dr. A. R. Wismar, who had recently retired, accepted our plea for help and came to us for four months while Pastor Woy recuperated.

In 1948 the first of our Vicars — Edmund Peters — was assigned to assist us in our work. But in October 1949 Pastor Woy felt constrained to leave our large parish and to serve the smaller St. John's (now Grace) Lutheran Church in Middletown. We were sorry to see him go, but gratefully accepted his offer to minister to our sick until we had another pastor. The Lord had indeed been good to us.



## **Eighth: THE REVEREND ADOLPH H. WISMAR 1949-1959**

The next pastor answering our call was the Rev. A. H. Wismar. He had been serving Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Peekskill, N. Y. Pastor Wismar, a son of the Rev. Dr. and Mrs. A. R. Wismar who had helped us in the past year, was a graduate of Concordia Collegiate Institute in Bronxville, N. Y., and also of our Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He continued his studies at Union Seminary in New York, and received his Master's Degree at Washington University, St. Louis. He also attended Columbia University in New York. He was ordained and became the pastor at St. John's Lutheran Congregation, Hoboken, N. J. in 1940. He was installed as our pastor on December 18, 1949, with his father the Rev. Dr. Wismar preaching, and District President H. Rippe officiating.

As the 85th anniversary of our church was approaching, plans were made to renovate our church building, and install a carollonic bell system as a memorial to our service men.

During the summer of 1951 a deaconess served us, and as extensive renovations and alterations were going on in the church proper, we again worshipped at the Parish House.

The Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Wismar presented us with a pair of antique service candlesticks, which had been used at old St. Matthew's Church in New York for many years.

A service for Individual Cup Communion was presented to the congregation. It was decided to use this on the 5th Sunday of the months having five Sundays. This remains the custom, though the service has been used on many other occasions.

Many displaced persons had been coming to live in Meriden and vicinity. A group of Lithuanian Lutherans requested the use of our church for services.

Another step in modernization was the decision to rebuild our organ, now 52 years old. The plan was to have it ready for the 90th anniversary year. The Skinner Organ Company of Massachusetts began its work early in 1955. During the re-building a small electric organ was rented for use in the Church. It was very weak-voiced for our big building, and "a capella" singing was almost a necessity, but the choir courageously processed and sat in front to give full support to the organists' efforts. Following a long summer's work, the organ and the refurbished balcony were ready for a joyous re-dedication service.

It was also in 1955 that we voted to adopt or underwrite a Mission in Cheshire, Connecticut. Pastor Wismar reported periodically on the progress made in gathering together a new congregation. The opening service was held on December 9, 1956.

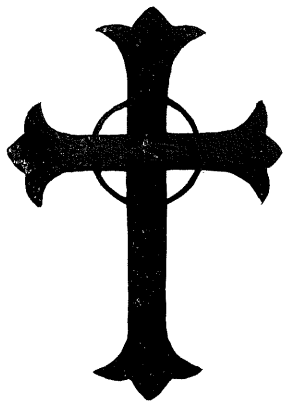
In the spring of 1957 we participated in the "Preaching, Teaching, Reaching Mission" endeavor. There was a busy week of daily services, and meetings, and calls on all our members. Congregations and pastors of our New England District took part in the work.

One of our boys, Robert Olson, completed his studies at the seminary and was ordained to the ministry at a special service in our church on August 4th, 1957.

In the fall of 1957 the first plans were made for remodeling our steeple, but it was not until 1959 that the work was finally begun. "Was lange dauert wird endlich gut."

Attendance at our German services began to fall off very noticeably during these years. We had been holding service only on the second Sunday of the month, but after several almost zero attendances, the congregation voted in July 1958 to eliminate the service in German.

In December of 1958 Pastor Wismar was called to a parish in Ohio, which he decided to accept. The congregation gave him a peaceful dismissal, and he and Mrs. Wismar and the two boys, whom we had seen growing up, left us in February 1959.



## **Ninth: THE REVEREND FREDERICK WILLIAM DODGE 1959-1964**

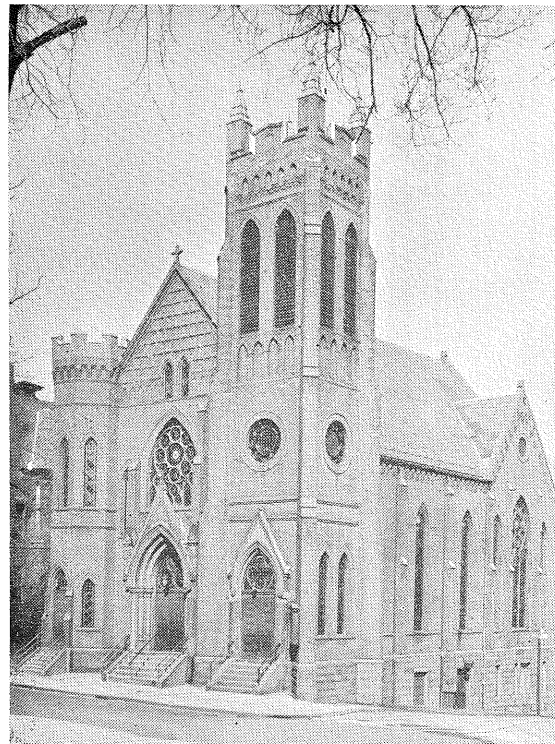
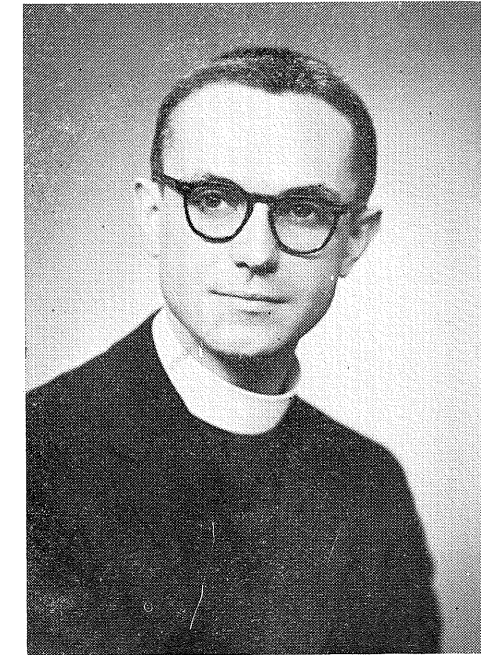
After Pastor Wismar left, we were without a resident pastor for several months. The Rev. Theodore Kuehn of Zion Lutheran Church, Wallingford served as our circuit counselor and visitor. The Rev. Prof. Carl F. Widmann was our vacancy preacher, coming to Meriden every Sunday from Bronxville, N. Y.

Our several calls were not answered—until in May we called the Rev. Frederick W. Dodge, who was an instructor at Bronxville Preparatory School, as well as the pastor of St. Matthew's in Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y. God moved him to accept our call, and we joyfully prepared for his installation on June 28, 1959.

Pastor Dodge had received his early education in his home towns of Burns and Eugene, Oregon. His college training was at Concordia in Oakland, California, and the University of Oregon in Eugene. His Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of divinity degrees were earned at our Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis. He became an instructor at Bronxville Concordia in 1953—and earned his Master's degree at Columbia University in New York City in 1956. He was ordained to the ministry, became pastor of St. Matthew's, and was married to Alice Burgdorf of New York in that same year.

Before the pastor came to Meriden, plans had already been made to remove our tall church steeple, cap it, and have parapets built on both of the towers.

We were now approaching the 95th anniversary of our congregation, and plans were made to observe it. One of the year's events was an organ recital called "The S. F. Glaser Memorial Concert." The organist was the gifted Mrs. Viola Spongberg-Holmberg, Ph. D. of New York, assisted by her son Anders as soloist.



In June of 1960 our Mission Church in Cheshire installed its very own pastor, and became the Cheshire Lutheran Church.

In the fall of '60 the Board of Governors of the Parish House requested that the congregation take over the control and maintenance of the Parish House building.

In 1961 a deaconess, Miss Edith Hovey, was called to assist in the youth work of our church. She was installed on September 10, and served us faithfully for two years.

We also had the services of an organist and choir director, Mr. James Reyes, a Yale University Music School student.

In the fall of '61 plans were begun for a complete renovation of the Parish House, to make it suitable for Sunday School. The work was finished in 1962, and the offices of the secretary and the deaconess were also moved up there.

During the year of '61, new red hymnals were obtained by donations of gifts and memorials; a speaker system was installed in the church and nursery room; and a processional cross was brought into use.

In 1962 Mrs. Sherron Adrian took the post of organist and choir director and she was followed by Miss Patricia Melcher in '63. Both were gifted students at Yale Music School.

Also Roy Consiglio, a Lutheran from Yale Divinity School, came to us for field work in his

course. For 30 weeks he assisted the pastor at services, conducted Bible Class and Sunday School teachers' meetings, and worked with our young people.

Our Evangelism committee planned a series of Communion services as reunions for Confirmation classes. This was a very rewarding experience for all of us. Their endeavors also included visits to members, and canvasses of various districts in town for possible Sunday School and church members, as well as contacts with new people in Meriden. The Stewardship, Christian Education and Publicity committees, all worked for the same goal—more believers in Jesus our Savior.

In April 1964 the congregation participated in the New England Open House, a week of mission work with our fellow Lutherans of Augustana and United Lutheran Churches. The week culminated in a congregational dinner, with guest speakers, and a testimonial to our retiring secretary, Ida Sternberg who had served the congregation many years as teacher and organist.

Another project of '64, carried out through memorial gifts, was the replacing of the stained glass windows over our three entrance doors. The new windows depict "the Good Samaritan" in the center; "Jesus Blesses the Children" over the East door; and the triple group St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Evangelist, and "the Great Commission" over the west door. Communion card holders in the pews, as well as a white funeral pall were also put into use.

When the large parking lot at the foot of Norwood Street became available, we decided to purchase it. Since the City of Meriden plans to extend Norwood Street eventually, they retained a sixty foot right of way.

Plans were going forward for our Centennial in 1965, when Pastor Dodge received and accepted a call to Plainfield, New Jersey. He asked for a peaceful dismissal, and we reluctantly saw him leave on June 30, 1964.

Pastor Dodge had been the youngest pastor to serve us. He was so full of drive and vigor, and the desire to see more and more of us involved in the work of our Savior, that we were able to carry on after he left, until another pastor was sent to us by our Lord Jesus.

## **THE INTERIM: July 1964 to May 1965**

A parish administrator, Mr. John C. Hecht, had been called to serve us, as well as a secretary-organist, Miss Eunice Reimann. They, together with our Boards, helped maintain the church affairs while we were without a resident pastor, from July 1964 to May 1965.

Our visitors, the Rev. Louis Nuechterlein of Cheshire, the Rev. Willard Holsten of Wallingford, and the Rev. Roger Schleef of Hamden, ministered to us. The Rev. Prof. Carl F. Weidmann again served us as vacancy preacher.



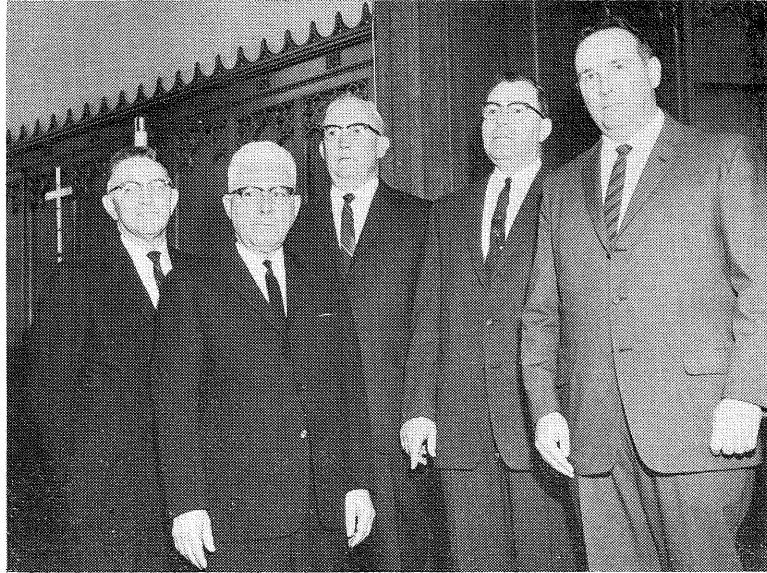
## **Tenth: THE REVEREND HERBERT C. MEYER 1965-**

Our present pastor, the Rev. Herbert C. Meyer, M.S.T., came into our midst about half way along in our centennial year. He was installed on May 16th of this year. He came to us with a varied background in the ministry. Since graduation from Concordia Seminary at St. Louis in 1931 he has served as a missionary in China and mission lecturer, as a war-time interim vacancy pastor, as a service center chaplain and, before coming to Meriden, as the pastor of Martin Luther Chapel of Pennsauken, N. J. for 19 years. Other church activities have included services as Visitor of the English District, Counselor to L.L.L., L.W.M.L., and Walther League groups, and editor of The Philadelphia Lutheran and The Minaret. He has continued to maintain a keen interest in "foreign missions" and it is hoped that some of this may help St. John's to a wider outlook on the work of the church in the kingdom.

His wife is Bernice nee Hollrah. Of five daughters two are still at home attending school in Meriden.

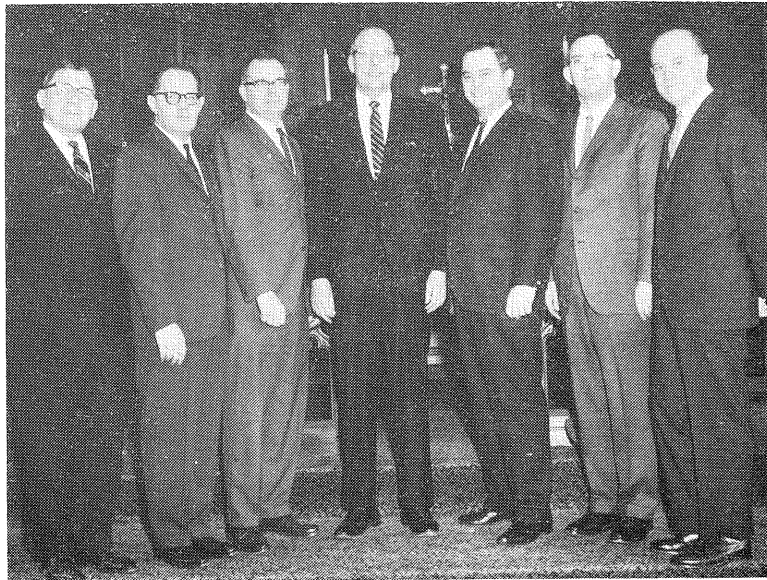
The family lives at the new parsonage — 19 Daffodil Lane.





## **BOARD OF ELDERS**

Ernest Swanson, Llyod Fenelon, John Rebstock, George Warner, David Baur.



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Arthur Warner, Charles Burkhardt, Howard Brechlin, Walter Totzke, Clarence Marlow, Norman Duke, Roy Winkel.

## BOARD OF VESTRY



Lester Zimmerman, Dwight Ketelhut, Fred Schmidt, Arthur Schnick, Emil Hermann, Edward Krampitz, Ronald Rogstad, David Baur, Howard Blessing, Lloyd Fenelon, John Rebstock, George Warner, Ernest Swanson.

Norman Duke, Arthur Warner, Charles Burkhardt, Walter Totzke, Roy Winkel, Howard Brechlin, Clarence Marlow.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS



Fred Schmidt, Erhardt Ness, Robert Lucas, Norman Duke, Neil Walsh, Charles Porter, Fred Krampitz.

Joyce Hughes, Mildred Walsh, Lydia Ceritto, Sharon Porter, Gail Porter, Virginia Porter, Elsie Kazimer, Margery Hintz, Ruth Ness, Lore Neun, Bernice Meyer.

Elsie Hafner, Mathilda Pekari, Evalena Zerbe, Ruth Kutschinski, Laura Glaser, Janet Flynn, Ida Sternberg.

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In the matter of Christian Education, St. John's has always offered Sunday School instruction to its children. The old minutes speak of the various changes of the hour the school was held — once it says “voted to hold the Sunday School session at 3:00 p.m. so the noise of the children will not disturb the worshippers in church.”

From its very organization the need for a school was uppermost in the minds of members, and almost from the first the pastors conducted a Saturday school; or a Wednesday afternoon-and-Saturday school.

When Pastor Krafft came, early in 1886, he was very anxious to establish a Christian Day School, which he did . . . He taught school himself at first, and then with the help of a student pastor, W. P. Lobenstein. In the fall of 1886 a student of our Teacher's College in Addison, Illinois — Albert H. Miller — took over the classes. But the school grew so rapidly that a second teacher was called to take the lower classes. Over the years, the school was served by twenty-seven different educators. Among the many consecrated teachers, was Edwin Rabe who served our congregation faithfully for 39 years.

Many of us had the blessed opportunity to attend St. John's Christian Day School, for which we are grateful to St. John's and to our dear Lord.

Even though, after an administration of 70 years, the Day School was closed in 1955, the Christian Education of our youth and adults still goes on through the agency of the Sunday School, Bible Classes, Walther League, and the branches of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, as well as in the pastor's classes of confirmation and/or membership instruction.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Fred Schmidt, and the Board of Christian Education, the following now serve as Sunday School and Bible Class teachers: Mrs. R. Kutschinski, Mrs. Lydia Ceritto, Miss Laura Glaser, Miss Gail Porter, Miss Sharon Porter, Miss Ida Sternberg, Mrs. George Zerbe. Also, Miss Ruth Ness, Mrs. C. Anderson, Miss Edith Ellis, Mrs. Edward Hintz, Miss Janice Manthay, Mrs. Harold Neun, Mrs. C. Porter, Mrs. Neil Walsh. Also, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Duke, Miss Ruth Fede, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hoff, Mrs. R. Kazimer, Mr. Robert Lucas, Miss Margaret Manthay, Mr. E. Ness, Mrs. T. Pekari, Mr. Paul Schnick, and Mr. Neil Walsh. Joining the staff in Sept. '65 are: Mrs. E. Flynn, Mrs. W. Hafner, Mrs. Joyce Hughes, Mr. D. Ketelhut, Mr. and Mrs. Krampitz, Mr. C. Porter, Miss Eunice Reimann, and Pastor Meyer.

## **OUR SECRETARY -- ORGANIST**

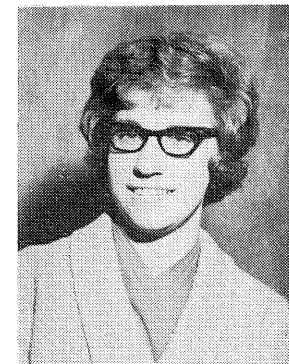
In July 1964, Miss Eunice I. Reimann came to serve us as secretary and organist. Miss Reimann is the daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. F. H. Reimann pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Auburn, Michigan. She has a sister Lois, Freshman at Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan and a tiny baby sister, Kristine. Her brothers are Dennis, first year High and David, a 5th grader.

Miss Reimann is a Parish School and High School graduate, and has received her Junior College training at St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas, majoring in religion and organ.

Her activities at home and school included Walther League, Sunday School and Youth Choir, as well as secretarial and organ work. Her hobbies are swimming, sports of all kinds, and work and just being with people, she says.

She lives at 185 Colony Street in Meriden.

We are very happy to have her with us, and thank God for her.



## **PARISH ADMINISTRATOR -- Mr. John C. Hecht**

John C. Hecht has been our efficient and very helpful Parish Administrator since July 1, 1964.

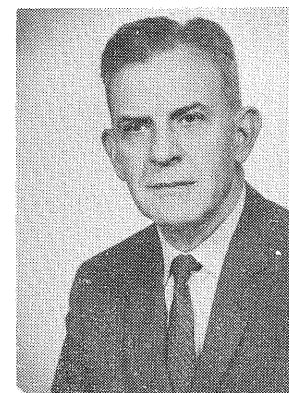
He was born in Brooklyn, N. Y., and received his primary and secondary education in the public schools there.

He was a member of the New York City Police Department for twenty-six years, retiring with the rank of sergeant in 1958.

He became the first full-time Stewardship Counselor of the Atlantic District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, holding that position until he came to us.

He is a Lutheran born and bred, was a member and president of the congregation of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Brooklyn. He also held membership in St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Richmond, Hills, N. Y.; and St. Luke's in Woodhaven, N. Y.

He and his lovely family live at 7 Shadycrest Road in Meriden.



## **OUR SEXTON -- Mr. Paul A. Ellstrom**

Mr. Ellstrom, our genial sexton since September 1955, came to us just after the closing of our school, and the retirement of our former sexton.

Born in Brooklyn, N. Y. in 1905, he is the son of the Rev. Carl G. and Mrs. Kristina (Renhult) Ellstrom. His youth was spent in several different states, as his father was called to new parishes.

He is a man of varied trades and talents. One of his hobbies is deep-sea fishing.

He was married to the former Gertrude Tappert at our church by Pastor Wismar, and joined St. John's as a communicant member soon after. His present residence is South End Road, Southington.





## **SENIOR CHOIR**

Walter Totzke, Clarence Marlow, Sally Leining, Ella Ruffeth,  
Lester Zimmerman, William Zielke.

Joyce Hughes, Ruth Ness, Edna Duke, Charlotte Zimmerman,  
Mildred Greenwood, Claudia Valentine.

Ruth Kutschinski, Lorraine Shea, Sandra Shea, Katherine  
Schnick, Eunice Reimann.



## **YOUTH CHOIR**

Donna DiPietro, Patricia Barnes, Jane Brechlin, Ruth Bradley,  
Kristy Meyer, Eunice Reimann.

Joyce Bradley, Deanna Heath, Ellen McCarthy, Karen Neun,  
Donna Mauri, Martha Hintz.

# GETHSEMANE CEMETERY

Our forefathers planned ahead for themselves and us . . .

*“O Christ, do Thou my soul prepare  
For that bright home of love  
That I may see Thee and adore  
With all Thy saints above.”*

In the year 1896 a resolution was made to purchase a plot of ground that would be suitable for “einen Gottesacker” (God’s Acre). Mr. H. Wogatzke was given the task of securing the piece of land. He did this, and presented the contracted deed to the members at an extraordinary meeting on May 11, 1896. The purchase price was \$850. A name was chosen for the plot: “Gethsemane Cemetery of the St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, Meriden, Connecticut.”

The land located on Bee Street about a mile out of town, seemed ideal for the purpose, high and dry. Under the leadership of Pastor Koepchen, members with their own equipment cleared and graded the land, and laid out plots. A spirit of good will seemed to lighten the tremendous task.

A board of directors was then named to supervise and maintain the cemetery, and rules and regulations were adopted. At present, our Board of Trustees and three laymen carry on the work of supervision.

Over the years improvements have been made in landscaping. In 1922 a vault was built near the entrance, especially for burials in the winter. With our modern tools, this does not seem to be so much a necessity.

In 1955 a bequest from Mrs. Bertha Bauman included a strip of land which would make a road to Bee Street possible. The Board decided to call it “Bauman Drive.” In 1956 the Board voted to purchase a plot of land adjoining Bauman Drive.

As the State of Connecticut began to build highways through the eastern part of town, some of our land was required. Once an exchange of sections was made, and more recently quite an amount was needed. Negotiations were made and a final settlement in the neighborhood of \$50,000 was awarded us.

This past summer water was piped into the cemetery from city sources, so the old pump handle will no longer be heard squeaking to bring up water from the old well.

The acquisition of a truck for use in heavy work both at the cemetery the year ’round, and at church properties, especially in winter snow-plowing was completed during the past weeks. A new garage and tool storage building will be erected.

To this date there have been 1,197 burials in our own Gethsemane Cemetery.

(Bibliography: Our 50th Anniversary Booklet, and Congregation minutes)



# OUR CHURCH SOCIETIES

St. John's first church society was the group of ladies who organized in 1866 as the LADIES' AID Society. They were, and still are, an integral part of the work of the church. At first, their meetings were held in their homes, and then in the church undercroft until 1887, when a Parish House was built on the lot behind the parsonage. This one-room building was used until 1915, when the present building was erected.

The first president of the LADIES' AID was Frau Emilie Kraemer. The present officers are Mrs. Willis Fogg, president; Mrs. Carl Nielsen, 1st vice president; Mrs. George Zerbe, 2nd vice president; Mrs. Lester Salka, secretary; Mrs. George Lacoske, treasurer; and Mrs. Theodore Garoppolo, financial secretary. Christian Growth, and various welfare projects are served by the appointed member-chairmen.

The WALTHER LEAGUE, formerly the Young Men's and Young Ladies' Societies of the early church, was next. The two groups consolidated on August 22, 1892 and were known as the Young People's Society.

The present officers are Paul Schnick, president; Lester Zimmerman, vice president; Margaret Manthay, secretary; Nancy Rochette, treasurer; and Sandra Shea, Christian Growth.

The MEN'S CLUB was organized in 1912, with Julius Stremlau as the first president.

The present officers are Howard Brechlin, president; Willis Fogg, vice president; and Herbert Massow, secretary-treasurer.

The MARY-MARTHA GUILD, organized as the Ladies' Auxiliary also called the Altar Guild, began its work in 1938.

The present officers are Mrs. Anita Leining, president; Ida Sternberg, vice president; Mrs. Geraldine Bess, secretary; and Clara Greiner, treasurer.

The CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP SOCIETY was organized in 1951, when Lester Zimmerman received authorization to begin a new society for the older-young people.

The present officers are George Lips, president; Paul Arndt, vice president; Mrs. Gertrude Sorenson, secretary and Mrs. Claudia Valentine, treasurer.

The L.W.M.L. GUILD, the evening group of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, was organized in 1960, with Mrs. Edna Duke as president.

The present officers are Mrs. Eleanor Oberempt, president; Mrs. Marilyn Hoff, vice president; Esther Burgdorf, secretary-treasurer; Viola Sorenson, mite box secretary. Christian Growth, and projects etc. are headed by chairmen.

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## STATISTICS

In 1965 there were 1,205 souls in St. John's membership. 806 of these are communicant members.

In the 100 years there have been 3,953 Baptisms; 2,386 Confirmations; 1,158 Marriages; and 1,417 Burials.

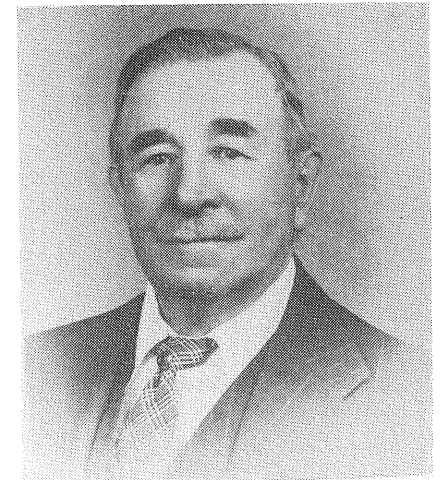
## **DESCENDANTS OF CHARTER MEMBER ---**

John Arnold, who sailed from Germany with his bride, Barbara in 1853, died at age 90. His family consisted of ten children. Of these, the widow of *Charles Arnold* is a member at present. Her daughter, Mrs. Louise Arnold Lacoske, with her son, Jere B. Lacoske, and his wife and children, Jere, Brett and Gwen, are members in 1965.

Also, Mrs. Mabel Morse Salka and her son, William and Mrs. Doris Morse Abele, children of the late Mrs. Eva Arnold Morse, the eighth child of John and Barbara Arnold, are members of St. John's at present.

## **THE OLDEST MEMBER IN 1965 ---**

Mr. J. F. Bruno Blume born March 11, 1874, now aged 91, is our oldest living member. For many years he was active on the Church Board. He now lives in the Lutheran Home in Middletown, Conn.



## **SONS OF THE CONGREGATION - who are serving in the Lord's Vineyard -**

The Rev. Frederick Neebe, The Rev. Rudolph P. Blum, The Rev. George Zimmerman, The Rev. Robert W. Olson. Now studying for the ministry, William F. Pekari, student in his second year at Concordia Collegiate Institute, Bronxville, N. Y.

## CENTENNIAL YEAR EVENTS

November 22, 1964 — Ninety-ninth Anniversary and Inauguration of the Centennial. The Rev. A. H. Wismar, A.M., guest preacher.

January 17, 1965 — A son of St. John's, the Rev. Rudolph P. Blum, was guest preacher at both services. A coffee hour followed.

February 14, 1965 — The Rev. George Zimmerman, another son of St. John's, was our guest preacher at the morning services. A coffee hour was held after the second service.

March 20 and 21, 1965 — A "Mission Fair" was sponsored by all the Church societies. Miss Carol Mueller of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, New York was the guest mission speaker.

April 25, 1965 — A "Thank-you" Luncheon for the Rev. Prof. Carl Weidmann, who had served our pulpit since August 1964; the Rev. Willard Holsten of Wallingford's Zion Lutheran, who visited our sick and shut-ins; the Rev. Louis Nuechterlein of Cheshire Lutheran, our helpful Circuit Counselor; and the Rev. Roger Schlee of Hamden Lutheran, who concluded the training and confirmation of our 1965 Class of young people.

May 2, 1965 — The Rev. Dr. Frederick L. Neebe, St. John's third son in the ministry, conducted the services as our guest. A reception and refreshments after the services.

May 16, 1965 — Installation of our new pastor, the Rev. Herbert C. Meyer, S.T.M. by our Circuit Counsellor, the Rev. Louis Nuechterlein. The guest preacher was the Rev. Robert J. Riedel, S.T.M., District vice-president. A "Get-acquainted" reception followed.

October 16, 1965 — A German Night Supper for St. John's members and friends.

October 24, 1965 — The Rev. Dr. Karl Graesser, District President, was our guest preacher in both services.

November 21, 1965 — The culmination of events . . . Our Centennial Service, with the Rev. Dr. Oliver R. Harms, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, guest preacher; the Rev. Prof. Carl F. Weidmann and the Rev. Frederick W. Dodge, liturgists; and the Rev. Louis Nuechterlein, guest-organist.

# **“ONE GOD :- ONE FAITH :- ONE HUNDRED YEARS”**

## **A SUMMARY**

The theme for this Centennial Year is most of all a call to grateful remembrance. It is also a challenge to the members of today to carry on into the second century this same fidelity to the One God and a commitment to those things concerning this One God which have been believed, treasured and witnessed to over the past century.

We of today are the connecting link between the St. John's of yesterday and the St. John's of tomorrow. It is our task to be faithful in our transmission of the spiritual treasures of the past to the future generations, so that in the changing scenes of an automated society the generations of tomorrow will continue to serve that One God of our fathers and know the riches of His grace and mercy, as revealed in Christ Jesus, His Son and our Lord.

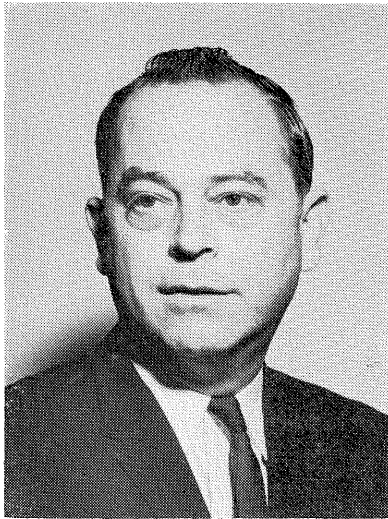
We know that the sins of yesterday which needed forgiveness through the merits of His cross are the sins of today, and will be the sins of tomorrow—in different form and dress perhaps, but still the same old sins. The one and only cure for the sins of yesterday, of today and of tomorrow, is the same blood of Jesus Christ shed on a cross, not one century but nineteen centuries ago . . . St. John's of today is not the St. John's of yesterday, nor the St. John's of tomorrow. BUT the GOD of St. John's of yesterday, today and tomorrow, is the same GOD and the CHRIST to whom St. John's was, is, and we pray God, always will be committed, is the same CHRIST: “the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.”

It is in His name that we close out the first century and begin the second, pledged to redemption through His cross and a way of life that follows in His steps.

Pastor Herbert C. Meyer

## Special Faith Forward-Centennial Committee

Organized, September 3, 1963, it was made up of a member of each society and four lay-members, under the leadership of the pastor. Chairman Clarence Marlow appointed these four sub-committees:



CLARENCE MARLOW  
Chairman of Centennial Committee

### PUBLICITY:

Howard Blessing (chairman)  
Martha Hoffmann  
Arthur Schnick  
Ida Sternberg  
Norman Wusterbarth

### SPECIAL SERVICES

Lloyd Fenelon  
Alma Fogg  
Esther Lippoldt  
Ella Ruffleth  
Frederick Schmidt  
Walter Totzke (chairman)  
Arthur Warner

### SOCIAL

Fern Arndt  
Marilyn Brechlin  
Viola Hass  
Walter Hass  
Louise Lacoske (chairman)  
Anita Leining  
George Lips  
Mathilda Pekari  
Paul Schnick

### STEWARDSHIP

Michael Altieri  
Gertrude Burgdorf  
Edna Dowling  
Norman Duke (chairman)  
Edward Hintz  
Alfred Kroll  
John Rebstock  
Neil Walsh  
John C. Hecht (ex-officio)

