

125TH ANNIVERSARY

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

DEDICATION

TO THE UNTIRING EFFORTS, THE FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP, THE DEDICATED PRAYERS, THE INSPIRED LEADERSHIP, THE CHRISTIAN' WITNESS, THE PATIENCE IN TRIAL, THE SHARING OF LOVE AND BOLDNESS OF FAITH OF PASTORS AND LAYMEN OF MANY GENERATIONS OF THIS CONGREGATION WE DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

BY GOD'S GUIDANCE, THEIR INSPIRATION AND THE HERITAGE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WE DEDICATE OUR LIVES TODAY TO FAITHFULLY CONTINUE THE WITNESS OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IN OUR COMMUNITY AND THROUGH THE WORLD.

"THY NAME, O LORD, EDURES TO ALL GENERATIONS"

SEPTEMBER 14 - 15, 1968

125TH ANNIVERSARY

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Bolivar,. **Ohio**

1843-1968

From St. Paul's 125th Anniversary publication:
Written by Mrs. Ralph Dietrich

*This Holy House - a sacred heritage-
Our proud bequest
From hearts that prayed and hands that toiled.
And now forever rest.
The seasons of a century have brought
The winter storm and summer rain to touch these walls
So firmly wrought.
Through its wide doors have passed the feet of youth
And slower footsteps of the old.
Music of joy - of sadness,
Round its vaulted arches rolled.
Through lovely windows, soft light filtering
Touches old wood to beauty,
Stirs the heart, remembering
Those builders of the past who worshiped here
Whose feet have trod
Our way, And in their passing reared
This temple to the glory of their God.*

A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ST. PAUL

The program of *"American Missions"* in Ohio in the 1840's was not one of highly organized efforts by a national board. These were the days of struggle between the *"traditional"* Lutherans of the *"old country"* and those born here desiring to have a program in the church which would not be called *"foreign"* by the community as a whole. We travel along I-77 and I-71 with little thought of distance where those who were here in 1843 followed wagon trails which were little more than *"beaten"* into the fertile land. The area was rich in the tradition of Fort Laurens, Zoar and Schoenbrunn all giving witness to the striving of man to know peace and the desire to live in a newly found faith or to protect the right to live in freedom and independence. It was not a time for the weak or the indecisive individual but for men and women of stature willing to sacrifice and work in order to live and raise a family against great odds. Some of the congregations organized in these years were determined to maintain the traditional teachings of the church of their forefathers insisting on the retention of the mother tongue. Others of this era in our history insisted as strongly that they had to become truly American. Dr. Willard D. Allbeck, in his book *"A Century Of Lutherans In Ohio"*, notes that evidences of a German pietism demanding personal faith and piety in the Christian's life found congenial spirits with the Methodists and Presbyterians once the barrier of language was broken down. This factor of language and evangelizing spirit of some of the leaders of the church of that day had much to do with the determination of the direction of the program of St. Paul.

Dr. Arthur H. Smith in writing about Rev. Solomon Ritz, founder and first Pastor of St. Paul, gives us an insight into the caliber of men necessary for the demanding work in the church a century and more ago. *"These were the pioneers of our Lutheran Church in East Ohio, blazing the way through that virgin spiritual wilderness. They endured many hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, riding scores of miles on horseback to their preaching places, often with scarcely a dollar in their saddle bags, braving streams and forest and storm; burying the dead, solemnizing marriages, exhorting, baptizing, confirming, preaching. They were spiritually strong rugged men, fearless in attacking sin, moved by fiery zeal for souls, willing to suffer privation of every sort for Christ's sake. Some of them were scholarly men, others with not so much of the education of the schools, but in their way, they were giants and our church owes them a lasting debt of gratitude."* Pastor Ritz was active in the early missionary and preaching activity of this area from the Wooster charge. Groups of individuals in Bolivar and Sandyville invited him to preach in their localities resulting in the organization of *"protracted"* meetings in both localities. Congregations were organized in both localities within a very few weeks of one another.

"Protracted" meetings were a part of *"new measures"* adopted by the Lutherans in the practices of American church life to combat the danger of formalism in the services and the Church's liturgy. This was a part of the *"experimental religion"* among Lutherans with a concern that each individual should have a conscience experience of repentance and faith in which after a period of marked anxiety he had found blessed relief. In addition to the protracted meetings the new measures involved prayer meetings, Sunday Schools, missionary societies, Etc. Dr. Allbeck points out that these *"protracted meetings"* were really a series of preaching services continued day after day until a satisfactory number of conversions had occurred. There would be fervent preaching in the afternoons and evenings with the mornings being devoted to earnest conversation with those concerned about their salvation. Dr. Allbeck further reports, *"to persons accustomed to the formal dignity of German worship, such meetings were spectacles that were highly offensive."* They were likened to the most extreme examples of the camp meetings of the great revival efforts of the sects with high emotionalism and disorderly displays. It is interesting to note that a book published in 1843, the year of the organization of St. Paul, by Frederick Wynecken makes a very critical and bitter attack on the *"new measures"* of English Lutherans with the *"protracted meetings"* getting a particularly bigoted viewpoint.

The original church record which is in the congregation files today states the singular purpose for the organization of our congregation on March 9, 1843. "We the undersigned, on this 9th. day of March A.D.1843, organize ourselves into an English Evangelical Lutheran Church, to be under the direction of the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio; said Synod being at this day in connection with the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the United States of America. In doing this we adopt the discipline of said church, and pledge ourselves to promote her welfare by every proper and lawful means We profess to act in favor of protracted meetings, prayer meetings, temperance, Sabbath Schools; Bible, Missionary, and all other causes by which the happiness of our fellow men and the glory of God are promoted. And that we may be successful in doing good, May God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Savior, grant us the influence of the Holy Spirit, in all our deliberations, and in all our efforts. Amen." Thus St. Paul Lutheran of Bolivar, Ohio had its beginning. This declaration was signed by 25 individuals forming the congregation. On March 10 the first officers were elected with A. I. Bennet and Martin Tinker as Elders and Jacob Williard and James V. Smith as Deacons. The first Communion was observed on March 14 following the reception of 46 new members "*having been duly examined and conversed with*" to bring the total to 71.

Application was made to join the East Ohio Synod at their meeting in October of 1843. This application was made by letter giving an account of an "*interesting revival of religion*" and the desire to have the congregation affiliated with the Synod. Thus the English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bolivar was accepted into its synodical relationship on the same day as the church in Sandyville which had also made application by letter at the same meeting.

The organization of St. Paul was not however the first Lutheran church in the area. It was in 1822 that a "*Lutheran Society of German and English Lutherans*" was organized by Revs. Melshimer and Schmidt holding services in a log church several miles southwest of Bolivar. This was known as the Zutavern Church. It was the "*English*" members of this church that were instrumental in the organization of the church in Bolivar. The organization meeting, referred to earlier was held at a building known as the "*White Ware House*" which stood on the bank of the Ohio Canal. This was also the place for the "*protracted meeting*" conducted by Rev. Solomon Ritz who was called as the first pastor.

The first house of worship was built for the congregation on the present lot in 1844. It was remodeled several times prior to being replaced by the present brick structure, begun in 1881 and completed in 1882 at the cost of \$7,330.99. A parsonage had been built on a lot adjoining the church. The date of dedication of the new church was July 30, 1882. A history of Tuscarawas recorded the feeling that the church was "*the handsomest structure in the township.*" There appears to be no record of the moving of the old church, but it is learned that it was moved to the rear of the church lot and later to the farm of Byron Whitmer, west of town, where it was made part of a barn.

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

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This structure which certainly represented sacrifice and dedication at the time of its building has needed the constant changes dictated by time and necessity to keep it in good repair and effective for the work of the congregation. Some of these improvements indicate the changing times and are interesting in light of the cost factor involved. A new furnace was installed in 1897 at the cost of \$325.00. It was in 1900 that "gasoline" lights replaced the kerosene lamps of the chandelier. In 1916 electric lights were installed at the cost of \$55.00. The first electric bill was \$1.00. In 1924 the basement was constructed by the men of the congregation. An organ which was used in the old church was replaced in 1915 by the piano now in use. In 1947 the Wurlitzer organ which is used for Worship today was presented to the congregation as a Memorial Organ from a fund begun by Mr. Homer E. Black, Mrs. Mamie Dieringer and Dean Burkhart in memory of Nellie Tomer Black and many members of the congregation in memory of loved ones as well as other contributions by many members of the congregation.

The first redecoration of the sanctuary took place in 1903. In 1930 a major project was undertaken by the Ladies Aid Society. This included a complete decoration of the sanctuary and the presentation to the congregation of a copy of Heinrich Hoffman's "*Christ in Gethsemane*" done by Miss India Cryder of Columbus. The total cost was \$755.00. The church was redecorated again in 1954.

It was for the observance of the fiftieth Anniversary of the church building that major renovations and additions were made. On July 31, 1932 the cherry wood altar now in the chancel was dedicated. A cabinet maker in Springfield, Ohio made this altar in 1900 for Trinity Lutheran Church in Ashland. Trinity later gave it to Calvary Lutheran in East Cleveland where it served for twenty-two years. Calvary in East Cleveland in turn presented it to St. Paul. In this same period of time in preparation for the 90th Anniversary the congregation the chancel was improved by the addition of the platform under the altar giving it the proper elevation and completing the symbol of the Trinity in the chancel steps. The Luther League sponsored this change in the chancel. The Ladies Bible Class presented the paraments for the "new" and historic altar. The choir paid for the addition of the choir loft which they used for the first time on January 30, 1932. Mrs. A. C. Helwick was director of the choir and Mrs. R. E. Dietrich was the pianist .

PARSONAGE

The first parsonage for the congregation was built on the lot adjoining the church in 1872. It was papered in March of 1922 at the cost of \$18.37. In May of 1929 there was a major improvement of papering, repairing, painting and the installation of a bathroom and water system for a total cost of about \$900.00. This parsonage served until 1960 when the present modern brick structure on East Street was built at a cost of \$18,000. The former parsonage was used for a time for Sunday School classes until it was disposed of and the lot cleared. The building of the new parsonage was a major improvement in the facilities of the congregation. The office for the parish is in the basement.

WORSHIP

There is no record of the form of worship used in the very first years of the congregation. Dr. Luther D. Reed, in his book *"The Lutheran Liturgy"*, states that the English speaking congregations in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio in this period used a form of worship that was without congregational responses. It was not uncommon for a Synod to order just enough copies of the liturgy and occasional services for the pastors. Dr. Reed further states that the translations from the German were most unsatisfactory reflecting *"cheap sentiments and bombastic phrases in the manner of the Rationalistic era."* We can assume that the most probable choice of a liturgy was one which was authorized by the General Synod in 1843 and printed in 1847. This too left much to be desired according to Dr. Reed.

The congregation adopted *"The Book of Worship"* of the General Synod in 1901. In April of 1920 the widely used *"Common Service Book"* is adopted. When the current *"Service Book and Hymnal"* was adopted by eight bodies of the Lutheran Church in 1958 it was adopted also at St. Paul. The congregation thus participated in the most extensive and ambitious attempt at liturgical development and unity in the Lutheran Church in the United States.

It is evident that the early 1930's were years of great strides in the adoption of the traditional Lutheran liturgical worship. This is evident through the addition of the altar with its elevation in the chancel, the choir loft, the robed choirs and the chancel painting. These were without a doubt years of great inspiration for the congregation in its worship.

AUXILIARIES

Church School

Pastor Ritz reported to the East Ohio Synod in the first year of activity of the congregation that a Sunday School was in session. Reference was made to a Lutheran Sunday School by Rev. Hauer in 1852 while in 1853 there is a reference to a *"Union Sunday School."* In 1868 this Union Sunday School adopted a constitution for an organization called *"The Sunday School Union of Bolivar, Ohio."* This was to last until 1877 when it was dissolved. Reference to a Sunday School has always been made in the reports of the congregation with minutes of the responsible committee included with the congregational records for the years prior to 1900. From all indications there has always been a very keen interest in parish education for the young people as well as the adults. Many references are made to special programs in support of particular causes and efforts in the church. We note that the *"IXTHUS CLASS"* sponsored the printing of the Ninetieth Anniversary Booklet for the congregation. Mr. Ludwig Birk was teacher of this class at the time. This very fine tradition of dedication to teaching of the Gospel continues today with the excellent support of a fine group of dedicated teachers under the leadership of the *"Christian Education Committee."* The current curriculum of the LCA Board of Parish Education is being used throughout the school.

The youth of the congregation have for the most part had an organization to help them in their challenge in the Christian life. We see the formation of a number of organizations at various times in the history of the congregation for the benefit of the youth. A *"Christian Endeavor"* organization as well as a *"Young Peoples Missionary Society"* have served well in the past. A *"Luther League"* of 30 young people was organized in November of 1930. Robert Dietrich was the first president of this organization. As this history is being written our young people are organized in a *"Junior League"* for youth in Junior High School. The *"Senior League"* is for those, in Senior High and above. These leagues are combined efforts with Good Hope in Zoarville. Total membership is about 30. Plans are now under way with the Youth Commission of the LCA to change the activity from a Luther League to a Youth Ministry with a more vital involvement of youth in the program of the church.

Women's Activities

Records of the congregation show a "*Ladies Aid Society*" in 1872 stating that the women of the congregation have always been busy in supporting the work of the church. In March of 1892 an organization known as "*The Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary and Aid Society*" was organized with Mrs. J. H. Summers as President. These organizations have always been active in many aspects of the work of the congregation and Synod. St. Paul has hosted synodical conventions of these groups in past years. Presently the LCW of the congregation is active in the congregation as well as in the various related organizations in the Tuscarawas County area and Canton District as well as in the Synod. Many contributions of significance have been made in direct support of the congregation and in fellowship for individual members through the efforts of all of these organizations.

Men's Activities

From time to time records have shown the formation of a men's activities without any consistent program over a long period of time. By-laws for a "*Men's Bible Class*" are in the records but this group is not operative at present.

SUMMARY

We are at a point of real frustration at this stage of an attempt to give a brief historical outline of a heritage of over a century of fellowship in our congregation. Through the reading of minutes of meetings of Council and congregation and an examination of reports of expenditures and activities one realizes that it is impossible to truly relate even a fraction of the story. Through the years St. Paul's has experienced the dedicated work of hundreds of faithful people. She has known the agony of the loss of a dear pastor by death. The hearts of Council members have been searched in the making of deep and important decisions. There have been joys unspeakable and sorrows almost unbearable. There have been days of frustration and others of the clear knowledge of God's direction. There have been years in which almost no funds were available and others of great prosperity. Seasons without pastoral leadership have been trying and other times of blessing and spirit-filled guidance have been inspiring. Dedicated laymen in all seasons have faithfully accepted the challenge of leadership and have guided with true wisdom. The congregation has known the tragedy of the epidemics of past history, the joys of bringing loved ones into the fellowship of Baptism and Confirmation and the victory of many passing into the Church Triumphant. As history has unfolded in the cycles of war and peace, depression and boom, fear and love the congregation has been called on to witness to the grace of God which always remains the same.

We could write pages by the score telling of the sacrifice of individuals in the past and certainly would not do justice to many. It is beyond us to call attention to the unknown acts of the dedicated and quiet spirit. We cannot penetrate the veil of hidden desires of so many to do more for a church which is loved. This is not an attempt to recall even a fraction of the dedication making this day a possibility for us but only a review of the witness of this congregation's experience of God's love and concern to our present day.

We pay tribute to the sons and daughters of the congregation who have served the Church at large through membership on Boards and Committees of Synod. We are thankful for the dedication of men who have served not only as pastors of the congregation but who have shared with the Synod their talents and abilities in so many ways. We are thankful for the witness of the Gospel that so many members of the leadership in the Synod have shared with us through the years. It has been the privilege of the congregation to share the fellowship of the Gospel with fellow Christians in other congregations in the area with whom we have been affiliated through the years. It is our hope that our witness to our community has been and shall continue to be one of concern for the welfare of all who need the comfort and guidance of God. We rejoice above all for the opportunity to share with others the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ which has been the only true hope of the children of St. Paul's through all of the generations past and present. Truly we can say with the Psalmist "*Thy Name, O Lord, Endures To All Generations*"

Our primary source for information on the history of the congregation has been the booklet printed for the Ninetieth Anniversary of the congregation in 1933. The book "*A Century of Lutheran's in Ohio*" by Dr. Willard Allbeck was invaluable in furnishing information on the period of the early history of the congregation. We express our sincere thanks to Mrs. Ralph Dietrich for her preparation of the background material for this history and for many who have so willingly made valuable suggestions for content and form.

PASTORS AND CHARGES

Through the years St. Paul has been affiliated with a number of different area congregations in pastoral charges. We List the pastors and the charges that they served together.

| PASTOR | | CHARGE |
|---------------------|-----------|---|
| Solomon Ritz | 1843-1844 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| Richard D. Emerson | 1844-1848 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| W. C. Hauer | 1849-1854 | Bolivar and Magnolia |
| A. R. Smith | 1854-1856 | Bolivar and Magnolia |
| W. C. Hauer | 1856-1858 | Bolivar, Strasburg and Broad Run |
| | | |
| A. R. Smith | 1859-1861 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| J. W. Shreeves | 1862-1864 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| William O. Wilson | 1864 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| J. W. Swick | 1864-1866 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| A. R. Smith | 1867-1870 | Bolivar and Sandyville |
| Charles Fickinger | 1870-1875 | Bolivar alone from 1871-1875 |
| | | |
| George Z. Cochel | 1876-1881 | Bolivar and Magnolia from 1875-1879 |
| | | |
| Noah H. Weaver | 1881-1887 | Bolivar, Magnolia and Strasburg 1879-1889 |
| | | |
| Jacob H. Summers | 1888-1900 | Bolivar and Strasburg in 1889 Bolivar and Magnolia in 1890 to 1891 |
| | | |
| H. E. Zimmerman | 1900-1902 | Bolivar, Magnolia and Sandyville |
| | | |
| Charles S. Bottiger | 1903-1907 | Bolivar, Magnolia and Sandyville to 1906 Sandyville to 1906 Bolivar alone in 1906 |
| | | |
| P. A. Hartman | 1907-1909 | Bolivar and Beach City |
| W. K. Himes | 1910-1911 | Bolivar and Beach City Bolivar alone 1911 |
| Charles Fickinger | 1912-1919 | Bolivar and Beach City |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| August Miller | 1920 | Bolivar alone |
| Max Hering | 1920-1924 | Bolivar alone |
| Howard I. Pospesel | 1924 | Bolivar alone |
| Paul F. Ebert | 1924-1929 | Bolivar alone |
| Lewis C. Westenbarger | 1929-1935 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| Leo LaFontaine | 1935-1936 (Supply) | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| Elmer J. Gregg | 1936-1943 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| George F. Dittmar | 1944-1950 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| C. A. Portz | 1950-1952 (Supply) | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| Robert B. Barr | 1952-1955 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| Paul J. Korntheuer | 1955-1959 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| Karl A. Grieshaber | 1960-1964 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| William F. Gunther | 1965-1967 | Bolivar and Zoarville |
| George E. Hautala | 1968- | Bolivar and Zoarville |

SONS OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE MINISTRY

THE REV. GIDEON C. SMITH, D.D. - Born at Bolivar on December 21, 1862 and passed away here on April 6, 1930. He was ordained at St. Paul's on October 22, 1893. He was the son of Edward and Judith Smith.

THE REV. HERBERT J. WEAVER, D.D. - He was the son of Noah H. Weaver a pastor of St. Paul's. He and Dr. Smith were confirmed in the same class on January 29, 1882. He was ordained on October 7, 1894.

1968 CHURCH COUNCIL

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 MR. ROBERT SISSON-Vice-Chairman
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