

History of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Burlington, WI

On August 16, 1858, a group of Lutheran Christians and a Lutheran pastor named Carl F. Goldammer were meeting in the village of Burlington to establish St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Among the original sixteen men who met to form this new congregation were John Dahl, Christopher Grabow, Fredrick Schulz, John Vohs, John Rasch, Christian Runzler, Fredrick Schmidt, Lawrence Hess, Rudolph Wald and Carl Hillmann.

The establishment of the Lutheran Church in Burlington actually had its beginnings in the Slades Corners area. In the early 1850's, Pastor Memminger was working among a group of confessionally sound Lutherans near Slades Corners.

Following the departure of Pastor Memminger, a man named George Rosenhauer, a very conservative Lutheran Christian, began to conduct reading services in Slades Corners. By means of these reading services he was able to keep this group of Lutheran Christians together. Throughout this period of time people from the Burlington area would attend the reading services conducted by George Rosenhauer. These people from Burlington requested of Mr. Rosenhauer that he ask these pastors sent by the Wisconsin Synod to stop in Burlington to hold services for them. This they gladly agreed to do. It appears that as early as 1856 Lutheran worship services were being held in the Village of Burlington and that a congregation was quietly beginning to form.

In the summer of 1858, this little flock of Lutherans in Burlington and Slades Corners contacted the Wisconsin Synod to request the services of a Lutheran pastor. It was then that Pastor Carl F. Goldammer accepted the call to serve Burlington and Slades Corners as a dual parish.

On June 2, 1859 St. John's congregation adopted its first constitution. St. John's remained a mission congregation of the Wisconsin Synod until 1866 when it became a self-supporting congregation.

During the four years of Pastor Goldammer's ministry, the congregation purchased its first piece of property. It was a two story home, located on Dodge Street, in the area where the congregation would later erect its first school. This home served as church, parsonage and school for the congregation. A Christian day school has been an integral and important factor in St. John's ministry to its people since the day it was founded.

The dual parish arrangement with Slades Corners was discontinued in 1868.

In March 1874, the congregation made the decision to build a church. They purchased a lot for \$350.00 on the corner of what is now Pine and Madison Streets. On August 22, 1875 the new church was dedicated.

The parsonage was built in 1887.

In 1883, St. John's purchased two bells for the tower of the church. The larger of the two bells was set in place in 1884. The second bell was set in place in 1886. For the next ninety-three years these two bells would call people to worship. In May 1979 these bells were removed, cleaned, polished and revoiced. In August 1979 they were raised to the tower of our present church.

The final decade of the nineteenth century saw the congregation enter into several buildings, expansions and remodeling projects. W.H. Rothering and Co. were low bidders for the erection of a new school; agreeing to do the work for \$1,200.00 The school was dedicated in October 1895.

In 1899, the church was enlarged by the addition of a chancel area and sacristy. A new altar and pulpit were purchased. In 1900 the new art glass windows were added.

In October of 1900, the congregation made the decision to call a full-time teacher for our school. Prior to 1900 the pastors served as the teachers in our school.

On April 15, 1912 a twelve rank pipe organ was dedicated which cost \$2,050.00. This organ was operated by manually pumping the bellows to provide air for the pipes. This organ was wired for electricity in 1944. In 1979 it would be completely dismantled and its pipes cleaned, refurbished and revoiced. These pipes then became an integral part of the congregation's present 25 rank organ that was dedicated in February 1980.

During the decade of the 1930's our congregation began to move away from the use of the German language. In April 1930 St. John's adopted an English constitution. The decade also saw the congregation going to only one German service and two English services and also using the English for its Lenten services. German services would continue into the 1950's when they were finally discontinued.

In 1946 the congregation purchased a house for the school principal to live in. In 1972 this house was sold and the monies designated for the new parsonage. A new parsonage was dedicated in June 1974. In 2005 the parsonage was not being used because the pastors preferred to own their own homes. Therefore the congregation voted to sell the parsonage.

On June 15, 1950 Pastor Reuben Marti was called as our eighteenth pastor. His ministry was cut short by his sudden death in November 1951. Although his pastorate was brief, it was of historical significance for the congregation as well as WELS. Pastor Marti and Bruce Thompson, a recent convert of the Lutheran Church and a member of St. John's, started a boys club as an alternative to Boy Scouts. This group of boys became known as Lutheran Pioneers. The following year the congregation voted to continue the LP program and to organize on a national level. Today Lutheran Pioneers has chartered over 800 trains with more than 2,600 boys and 1,200 leaders.

On November 13, 1957, the congregation voted to purchase 7.3 acres of land on the west side of Burlington. The decision to build a school as the first step in our relocation program was made in July 1959. The school was dedicated in October 1962.

As we entered the decade of the seventies, the congregation in 1971 initiated a weekend vicar program to assist Pastor Wiedmann.

In 1975 St. John's opened their first kindergarten.

At the annual meeting in 1979 St. John's voted to join the Shoreland Lutheran High School Federation.

In the eighties, we would hold our last service in our former church building. On February 3, 1980 a new era in

our history began when we dedicated our present house of worship.

From 1980-1992 we were served with the internship of a vicar for a one year term. Following their year of internship, they returned to the seminary for their final training.

In 1992 a school addition was constructed--adding four classrooms and remodeling the gym. Also in 1992 the congregation decided to call a second pastor. Pastor Kurt Loescher was called as associate pastor. He arrived in Burlington the day after Pastor Richard Weeks suffered a fatal heart attack.

In 1993 Pastor Terry Laabs was called to replace Pastor Weeks. Loving Hands Preschool also opened in 1993 with the intent to teach the joy and happiness that is in Christ.

Pastor Loescher accepted a call in 2002 to Jackson, WI. Pastor Allen Zahn was called to replace him and served here until 2006. In addition to two pastors, the congregation decided to add a staff minister to assist the pastors with the growth of the congregation. Staff Minister Paul Lange was called to St. John's in 2002.

In July 2009 St. John's ordains Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduate, Kirk Lahmann, as our newest pastor. This was the first ordination ever performed at St. John's. In 2012, we ordained a second seminary graduate, Daniel Waldschmidt. Rev. Lahmann and Rev. Waldschmidt currently are serving St. John's.