

St. John. Calls from other churches began to arrive. Early in 1994, he received a call from a large congregation in the St. Louis area and he accepted it. On April 26, 1994, eleven years almost to the day after he was installed (and both on Good Shepherd Sunday), Pastor Liefeld preached his farewell sermon. Unfortunately, after less than a year at his new congregation, a disability overtook him and he had to step out of the ministry.

St. John Lutheran Church again faced a vacancy. With three churches in the circuit with vacancies and few vacancy pastors available, for the first time, the deacons led the majority of the worship services. "Preacher Clyde Hunt" and "Preacher Stephen Howarth" shared the pulpit with several neighboring pastors.



Pastor Robert Tauscher

In August, the congregation was successful in calling the Rev. Robert Tauscher from New Jersey. Michaela, Rob, Karen, Jimmy and he arrived in November and lived temporarily in the parsonage. He was installed on November 27, 1994.

In all of the previous histories of St. John Lutheran Church (the 50th, 75th, 100th, 125th, and 145th), the writers have spared the current pastor from the scrutiny of the historic spotlight. This history will do the same. No doubt, however, the next history of St. John will have as many interesting things to tell about Pastor Tauscher as it will about all the eighteen pastors who came before him.

*God has richly blessed St. John Lutheran Church for 150 years.*

**Soli Deo Gloria!**

Historical

Issue #12

# Glimpses

of  
St. John Evangelical Lutheran

By Ivan Quandt

This series of glimpses into the history of St. John Lutheran Church has been on going for twelve months. The first eleven issues summarized the first 122 years of the congregation and the leadership of the first fifteen pastors. This final issue reviews the remaining 28 years to the present and introduces the four pastors that have served during that time.

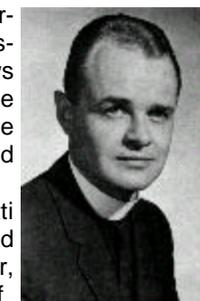
Pastor Aaron Uitti accepted a call to Detroit and left St. John in September, 1970. Compared to some of the earlier ones, this vacancy was easy. True, there was no designated vacancy pastor. Instead, four pastors took turns conducting worship. By December of the same year, however, the congregation was ready to issue its first call. It went to the Rev. Wayne Koenig and, to everyone's relief, this first candidate accepted the call.

Pastor Koenig, his wife Ruth, and their two young children arrived in March of 1971. They moved into the newly refurbished parsonage next to the church. During their second year in Springfield, they purchased that house from the congregation.

Among the belongings that were unpacked were two guitars. Before his first month had passed, Pastor Koenig initiated his first "folk service" based on a Concordia Publishing House liturgy designed for Easter.

It was to become one of the trademarks of the Koenig years. Once a month, the congregation joined in singing Spiritual lyrics and liturgy to the melodies of familiar folk music (music that had swept the nation at that time, including some with anti-Vietnam War themes) as the Bell sisters accompanied with their guitars. Pastor and Ruth Koenig themselves set words to many of the melodies that were used. Ruth even organized and led, briefly, a youth "guitar choir". Statistics showed higher church attendance on folk Sundays.

Another trademark of this era was the type of sermon that was typically preached. Most were very Gospel oriented. Given the contro-



Pastor Wayne Koenig



The Koenig Family  
Easter 1975



St Johns Philadelphia Circa 1940

Original Sign  
(Springfield)



St John Springfield 1957

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versies that surrounded the recent division in the congregation, this was seen as a red flag by some members. Pastor Koenig also supported a more open communion and this caused some concern. But he saw one of his missions as healing a divided congregation, so he pushed forward.

One of the directions in which he pushed was membership growth, for the long slide in membership that had begun already in the late 1950's had continued. He organized a complete canvas of the neighborhood. On a chilly Spring Saturday in 1975, 18 members met at the church to begin ringing doorbells. A second date was set and 8 members continued the canvas. Before a third date was set, Pastor Koenig announced he had received a call to a larger congregation in Maryland. He accepted it and left by the end of April, 1975. No new members were recruited.

The vacancy that followed was bitter to the many members that viewed Pastor Koenig as a friend. But the bitter was sweetened by the presence of a well-received vacancy pastor. The Rev. Jerry Caughlin, a prison psychologist and former pastor, was well liked because he was friendly, continued the folk services, and gave fascinating weekly children's sermons. The congregation even extended him a call to become pastor, but he declined.

The third pastor to receive a call from St. John was the Rev. Charles McClean, who was an assistant pastor of a large congregation in Illinois. He accepted the call and was installed on February 8, 1976. The congregation gave him a housing allowance so he could rent an apart-

ment. Before long, he had purchased his own home on Wayne Ave. In recent memory, he was the only pastor to arrive at St. John as a single man.



Pastor Charles McClean

Hearing that some lay leaders felt the declining membership was partly due to the frequent turnover in pastors, Pastor McClean committed himself to staying at least ten years. He was unable to keep that commitment.

During the McClean years, sometime in 1976, Widener University offered a faculty position to Larry Panek. Larry and Kathy joined St. John. Larry became a leader and served in many ways, but of more relevance to this history,



Kathleen Panek

Kathy became and continues to serve as director of music. A populated and skilled choir has existed for the 22 years she has served.

It was apparent that during his last years at St. John, Pastor McClean was feeling troubled. Abruptly in the summer of 1982, he announced his resignation as pastor. Within a

few weeks, on August 15, he preached his farewell sermon. It was learned sometime later that he had left the Lutheran Church.

The fall of 1982 and winter of '83 saw a parade of pastors leading services at St. John. The vacancy was difficult because some members thought we didn't have the resources to attract a pastor. It was especially disheartening when the Rev. David Liefeld, who was serving two rural congregations in Minnesota, expressed a disinterest in a call from St. John because of its urban location. But only a few days later this pastor telephoned to announce a change of mind, that after prayer and reflection he would consider a call if offered. The call was issued, and he accepted.

Pastor Liefeld, his wife Judy, and children Phil and Kate, arrived in April, 1983. They moved into the "new" parsonage on Wayne Ave. (the congregation purchased the house from Pastor McClean when he left). He was installed on April 24, 1983.

Many things happened during the eleven years Pastor Liefeld served St. John, but those that stand out the most are related to two of his greatest strengths, organization and education. He was not only organized himself, but lifted a somewhat complacent congregation to a higher level precision. Committees and boards had members and met regularly. The peak of this move to better organization was the development and approval of a new, effective constitution.

There was no question that education became a priority. First of all, he was a student himself most of the years he was at St. John first for

a master's degree and then for a doctorate. But a priority for education was also apparent in his ministry. The Board of Education became a functioning and important body, with Judy Liefeld chairing it for many years. The children's Sunday School was given status, two teachers were recruited for every class, in-service training for teachers was given, attendance improved, and mission projects were developed. Vacation Bible School, which had severely declined, was revived and attendance skyrocketed. Adult Bible classes and discussion groups became so popular that two classes (one led by a lay teacher) ran simultaneously about 50% of the time. Even his sermons seemed to many to be education forums.

During the Liefeld years, the long slide in membership and attendance came to an end. Membership still did not grow, but it became stable.

By 1993, however, Pastor Liefeld told a number of members that he felt he had served his mission at



Pastor David Liefeld



Larry Panek & Pastor Liefeld  
On the 10th Anniversary of Pastor Liefeld's  
Service to St. John