

Glimpses

of
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

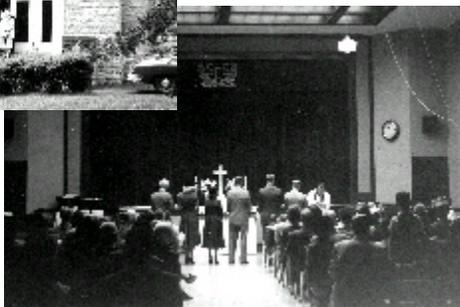
By Ivan Quandt

For more than 100 years, the congregation of St. John served its people in Philadelphia. Nearly eighty of those years were in the same location on Wharton Street. In 1917, the congregation moved to West Philadelphia and put their church building up for sale, but the building didn't sell. A few months after they moved away, the people moved right back into the Wharton Street site. However, 33 years later (in 1950) it became evident that the congregation could no longer be maintained in Philadelphia. In the middle of Pastor Leja's brief stay at St. John, and after much discussion and debate, a site in Springfield, Delaware County was selected as the new home.

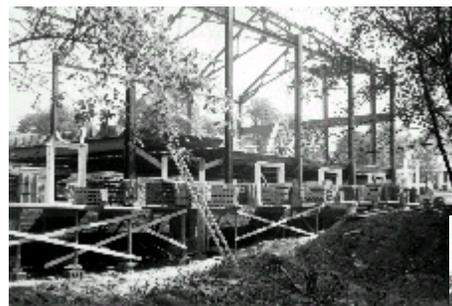
Property was purchased at Scenic and Madison Roads, the present location of the church. Although the property was purchased in 1950, the congregation progressed cautiously. It was 1951 before the decision to move was definite, but at that time the decision was almost unanimous. It was then that contracts were let to begin the construction of the new edifice. A parsonage was constructed simultaneously next to the

church building. The twin projects were funded through gifts of members, local financing, and loans from the Church Extension Fund of the English District. The old church building on Wharton Street was put up for sale, also in 1951, and was purchased the same year by the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the African Methodist - Episcopal Church.

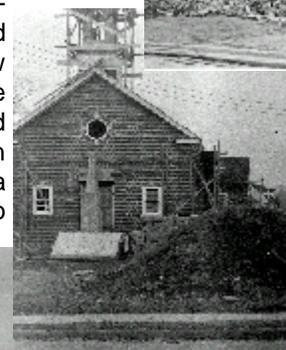
Worship Service in Central School
(Pastor Leja baptizing a baby)



Then, two glitches developed. First, there was an unexpected delay in the construction. Scarcity of steel and other building materials threw the progress far behind schedule. On the other hand, the new owners of the Wharton Street facility needed to move in on schedule. Fortunately, the congregation found that the Central



School auditorium (on Powell Rd. across from the firehouse) was not in use on Sunday mornings and could be rented, so worship services were held there until the new church building could be completed. The second problem arose when Pastor Leja accepted a teaching ministry call to



September 14, 1952, St. John Lutheran Church of Springfield dedicated its new sanctuary and installed its new pastor. The move from a school auditorium to the present house of worship was a joyous and a thankful one.

The early years in Springfield were successful and prosperous ones. This is where the story



Texas early in 1952. The final months of construction were completed during a pastoral vacancy.

There is little available information about that vacancy, but eventually the call to St. John was accepted by the Rev. Kurt E. Voss.



Setting the Cornerstone

St. John 150 Years!