

A Brief History of the Congregation

A group of men and women met at the home of Christian Pook, on April 10, 1908, to form a congregation, and one month later a Sunday School was organized. On June 17, 1908, the congregation was organized and named the "German Evangelical Lutheran St. Luke's Congregation" and met on the following Sundays in the old YMCA on E. 4th, the Jewish Synagogue on N. Jefferson, and on the 3rd floor of a building at Wayne and Pearl. The first year also saw the organization of a Ladies' Aid, Young People's League, and the call to the first Pastor, Rev. F. A. Meusch January 10, 1909.

On May 8, 1910, the double lot was purchased at the corner of McLain and Potomac Sts. for \$6,500.00. The Rev. Carl Schaeffer began his pastorate on October 25, 1911 with the installation service in charge of the Rev. Fred Zimmerman, who had supplied previously. On November 17, 1912, the Cornerstone was laid and the new building erected and by September 14, 1913, the new Sunday School part of the building was completed and dedicated. The Rev. Carl Bizer began his pastorate in June of 1919 and by September 9, 1923, the new Sanctuary part of the building was completed and dedicated.

The Rev. George Sonneborn began his pastoral service on November 23, 1924, and on October 18, 1925, the new parsonage at 409 Kenilworth Avenue was dedicated and valued at \$12,000. During this period the congregation met the test of financial readjustments the whole country was facing. In September of 1935 the Rev. Paul Schlueter began his ministry introducing the Weekly Bulletin, vacation Bible School, directory of church members, and dedication of the Acousticon.

On December 3, 1941, the Rev. Frederick Rest began his pastorate. A new constitution was approved, the entire building redecorated, with a new ceiling and lights in the sanctuary, new altar hangings, liquidation of the building debt October 14, 1945, organization of the men's group, purchase and dedication of a new sound motion picture projector and equipment, dedication of the Good Shepherd Window, the Maas Chimes, new hymnals, and all-directional speaker in the tower. Plans were made to remodel the sanctuary, but were not carried to completion. In March of 1949, the Rev. Paul Stange became Pastor. A major redecorating project was completed and plans were again made to remodel the sanctuary, but after one approval and then a reconsideration the project was dropped. The first son of the congregation to enter the Christian Ministry, the Rev. Donald W. Hafner, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hafner, was ordained on June 28, 1953.

On September 1, 1953, the Rev. Marion C. Harrison became Pastor. Average attendance at worship increased and along with that a renewed interest was shown in improving the property of the church. In September, 1954, a daughter of the congregation, Miss Ruth Sponsel, was united in marriage to the Rev. Paul Bendit, a recent graduate from Eden and Pastor at Wells, Minnesota, and the oldest son of Rev. and Mrs. Harrison, Marion, Jr. became the 2nd son of St. Luke's to prepare for the ministry by entering Eden Seminary. In the same year many improvements were added: a 50 watt Bell Amplifier, a high fidelity record player for tower music and other uses, new folding dining tables, fluorescent lights in the S. S. rooms. The congregation was challenged to consider some major improvements in the sanctuary, new gas furnaces, off street parking facilities and a recreation room. At the annual congregational meeting January 16, 1955, following reports by a study committee, Carl Augustus, Chairman of Trustees, Edward Yackley, President, and the Pastor, favorable action was taken to secure a loan up to \$35,000 and proceed with the three phase improvement program. It included securing bids and letting contract for new gas furnaces, since the church could use gas for space heating; securing an architect to prepare preliminary sketches for a remodeled sanctuary; and taking legal steps to secure the property on the corner of McLain and Potomac Streets, across from the church for off-street parking.



The New Sanctuary

Photo by Bob Reef



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