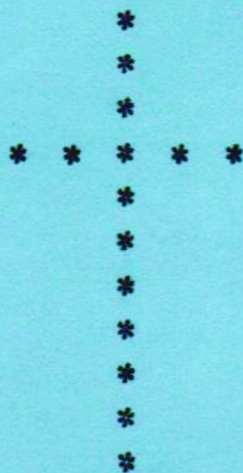


THE
HISTORY
OF
IMMANUEL
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH
WAUPACA, WISCONSIN



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
I M M A N U E L
E V A N G E L I C A L L U T H E R A N
C H U R C H
W A U P A C A , W I S C O N S I N

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The Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Waupaca, Wisconsin, is the result of a merger of *der evangelisch Lutherischen Friedens Gemeinde zu Waupaca* (Peace congregation), and the Evangelical Lutheran Salem Congregation of Waupaca, which occurred in 1930.

Salem, "known locally as the Swedish Lutheran Church in Waupaca," had originally been part of the Scandinavia Lutheran Church, Scandinavia, Wisconsin. The people left the Scandinavia Church in 1878 to form their own congregation. They located in "the Swedish settlement" in the north east part of the Town of Farmington, Waupaca County. They had resident pastors part of the time.

The Salem congregation relocated in Waupaca in September, 1922, when two lots were bought from the Levi Flaggs on W. Badger St. and a modest church was built. On May 21, 1923, John E. Erickson, Arthur D. Larson and Almo J. Larson trustees, mortgaged the church and property to obtain a \$3,000 loan from the Board of Charities of the Superior Conference, Augustana Synod. In June, 1930, the Salem congregation ap-

proached the Peace congregation, offering to sell.

The history of Peace congregation goes back to March, 1910. At that time worship services began with the Rev. Emil Ehmke, pastor of the Baldwins Mills Lutheran Church, Ohio Synod. The small flock had no church of its own. They rented a building from the Danish Methodists, located at Mill and Division Streets. Pastor Ehmke was succeeded by Pastor Ernst Giesel.

On March 29, 1914, Peace congregation called the Rev. Louis W. Baganz as their pastor. Pastor Baganz lived in Dale, Wisconsin, where he served St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church. Besides calling Pastor Baganz, Peace congregation was formally organized and adopted a constitution. By calling Pastor Baganz, the congregation began to be served by pastors of the Wisconsin Synod, although the congregation remained independent for the next 20 years.

In these early years, worship was conducted in the German language. There was a Sunday School for the children; and Catechism instruction was offered one day per week.

In 1917 Pastor Baganz pursued the Lord's call to Ridgeville, Wisconsin. St. Paul, Dale, called the Rev. F. A. Reier, who was serving Immanuel, Shirley, Wisconsin. Pastor Reier was installed at Dale in February, 1918. In conjunction with the call to Dale, Pastor Reier was to serve Peace, Waupaca, 26 miles away. At the time, Peace numbered 17 souls. Membership growth was slow. Services were conducted at 2:00 p.m. Sunday afternoons. The pastor rode the train from Dale to Waupaca.

On February 9, 1919, Peace congregation purchased the church from the Danish Methodists for \$1.00. To reach out to the people of the

community, worship services in English were initiated to supplement the German. English had been introduced earlier when Pastor Reier came. He conducted instruction in English. Still membership growth was slow but steady.

In 1927, the congregation decided to remodel. The exterior of the church was scraped and painted. A new furnace was installed and a new organ was purchased. The prices are interesting: new furnace \$150.00, new Estay organ \$210.00. The old organ was sold for \$1.50, and the pastor's salary was set at \$300.00 per year.

By 1929, the congregation had grown so that there were times when services were crowded.

In June, 1930, the trustees of Salem congregation offered to sell church and property to Peace congregation. The real estate was evaluated at \$7,500. The offer began negotiations over the next 4 months, which involved not only the purchase of property but the merger of the two congregations.

In the special meeting, July 6, 1930, Peace members took up the Salem offer. "It was agreed to purchase joint interest in the Salem Lutheran Church for \$2,500...Salem members to be exempt from paying any part of the \$2,500. As soon as (they) become members of our congregation, they will have equal ownership in our present property...Also agreed on a neutral name."

Salem congregation rejected Peace's offer to purchase.

Another meeting was held on October 12. "It was agreed to make Salem Church an offer of \$3,750... Under this offer Salem Church was not to have any equity in the property now

owned by Peace Church."

This offer was accepted. On October 26, in a special meeting, Peace congregation authorized its trustees to purchase the Salem property.

On November 5, 1930, Pastor Reier received a handwritten list of members of the Salem congregation. The list was prepared by Rev. Olson of Unity, Wisconsin, who had been serving Salem. The list gave 60 names. There are 3 pages, all written on the back of stationary bearing the letterhead of: The Arthur D. Larson Dairy Farm, Route 1, Sheridan, Wis. The two-page list of members is supplemented with a "List of Prospective Members."

On November 9, Peace congregation met and appointed a committee to collect money to buy the Salem church and property. Serving on the committee: Louis Kregal, V.L. Vedner, and Herman Kienert. The sale of the Mill and Division Street property was left in the hands of the trustees. Wednesday, November 12, was set as moving day.

In a letter from Paul Oehlert, chairman of the District Mission Board, dated November 19, we read the following:

Dear Brother Reier:

Thank you for informing me of the latest developments in Waupaca. I congratulate you. Your people have taken a step in the right direction. The day when Waupaca shall have a resident pastor is rapidly approaching. A news item from Waupaca in the Appleton paper, telling of this real estate transaction, indicates the likelihood that Rev. Reier will be called! That, I believe, would be the right thing. Better by far than to call a candidate from the seminary.

As to synodical assistance for Waupaca, I can assure you that we will do all we can. Let

me know when the time is ripe. Our next meeting of the District Board, and also of the General Board, will be early in spring.

May the Lord's blessings be upon the Wau-paca congregation and upon all your efforts there!

In what appears to be the first draft of a letter, or an address, intended for the members of Salem, we have in Pastor Reier's own hand the following, dated December 1:

To the Members of Salem Lutheran Church, Wau-paca, Wis.:

Dearly Beloved: You are assembled, as members of Salem Lutheran Church, to disband a s such, but with the intention of remaining true to the Lutheran doctrine. I, therefore, cordially invite you to become members of (Peace) Lutheran Church, and extend to you the right hand of fellowship and love, and invite you to take an active part in the government and discipline of this congregation, so that a l l things may be done decently and in order. I also invite you to join us in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and to participate i n all the rights and privileges of this new congregation. I again urge you to b e present next Sunday, December 7, and declare unto us your willingness to join us and thereby be accepted members.

Your servant in Christ,
Rev. F. Reier

The meeting set for December 7 was postponed to December 14, 1930. At this meeting 28 communicants were received.

The neutral name was not decided immediately. For a short time, the congregation went by the name *The New Peace Lutheran Church*. The baptism record of Ethel Marie Knueppel on November 27, 1930, states that she was baptized

"in New Peace Church, Waupaca, Wis."

On January 18, 1931, the congregation chose the name "Immanuel," and elected 6 trustees: V.L.Vedner, Frank Schroeder, Leo Niemuth, Arthur Sellin, Herman Kienert and A.D.Larson. On March 25, a document, *The Certificate of Organization*, was drawn up by Lawyer Wendell McHenry. The document was signed by Vedner, Schroeder, Niemuth, and Pastor Reier. The next day March 26, at 3:50 p.m., the document was delivered to the county court house. It appears in Vol. 5, Miscellaneous Records, page 309, in the Register of Deeds office.

Early in 1931, Immanuel congregation began to take steps toward obtaining a resident pastor. The matter had been discussed often, but there was no parsonage, and the congregation felt the lack of funds.

On January 19, the congregation petitioned the District Mission Board, WELS, for its advice and sought financial assistance to call its own pastor. On January 28, a letter was received from Mission Board Chairman, Oehlert. He noted his pleasure over the recent favorable developments, and gave assurances of financial assistance for a resident pastor.

A call meeting was held on February 11, 1931. The divine call was extended to Pastor Reier, to become the first resident pastor. He had served the flock "as filial charge" for 13 years already. He accepted the call, and was installed by Rev. G.E.Boettcher on April 26.

On May 6, the congregation decided to begin holding services on Sunday mornings. English was at 10:00 a.m., Sunday School at 11:00, and German at 11:10. One month later, German was reduced to two Sundays each month.

The members expected to pay off the debt incurred with the purchase of the church and property on W. Badger St. during the course of one year, plus contribute \$700 towards the pastor's salary. A new system of church finance was introduced so that in addition to local needs mission work would also be supported.

On January 28, 1934, the congregation resolved to apply for membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

It took longer than one year to liquidate the debt. The congregation was still dependent upon the Synod to subsidize the pastor's salary and the parsonage rent. A big step out of the indebtedness came when a sizeable memorial was received in 1936 in the name of V.L. Vedner. Finally, in 1938, Immanuel was able to "burn the mortgage" and turn to the matter of building a parsonage on the vacant lot to the west of the church.

When the Reier family came to Waupaca in April, 1931, rented housing was provided. The rented homes were located at 115 Maple St., 804 S. Main St., and at 106 Franklin.

On July 26, 1937, a parsonage building fund was started. In the spring of 1939, the congregation decided to build. Bids on the parsonage were opened on May 8. Neuman Brothers, builders, got the job with a bid of \$4,795, for the 8-room parsonage. The home was completed and dedicated on September 18. With a garage and a few extras, the final figure was \$5,091.31. Serving on the Building Committee were: Emil Lucht, A.J. Larson, and Oscar Sellin.

By 1939, Pastor Reier reported a slow but steady growth in membership, an active Sunday School, and large classes of children and adults for confirmation. There were 300 souls,

190 communicants, and 43 voting members.

Pastor Reier wrote an article about the new parsonage and Immanuel congregation which was published in a church paper. Some excerpts follow:

Visitors at the nearby Chain of Lakes, spending their summer vacations at this beauty spot, are kindly invited to worship with us. Follow the signs and they will direct you to Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church of Waupaca.

Waupaca is the county seat, a city of 3,500 inhabitants. Ours is the only church affiliated with the Synodical Conference in Waupaca, though we are surrounded by a number of Synodical Conference churches. In a city of this size you would naturally find almost all other church denominations represented, including two churches of the Danish Lutheran faith. Immanuel is quite centrally located, just two blocks from Main Street, easily accessible just off the busy highways. Conditions for a rapid growth are to be found in a city devoid of factories.

The Synodical Conference published a new Hymnal in 1941. "If ordered before May 24, the introductory price is \$.81." The congregation ordered 125 Hymnals on April 20.

On January 18, 1942, Immanuel, Waupaca, became a self-supporting congregation. This meant that the congregation no longer received any subsidy from the Synod. By the end of 1943, the congregation numbered 315 souls, 215 communicants, and 52 voters.

In March, 1945, the trustees called a special meeting of the congregation to consider the purchase of Holy Ghost Lutheran Church in Waupaca, or "remodel our own church in the near future." "By unanimous vote, it is not advisable," the congregation decided.

The year 1945 also marked the end of World War II. For this occasion, the Synod in convention resolved to have a "peace and thankoffering" of \$1 million to benefit the Synod's institutions and the Church Extension Fund. Immanuel adopted a goal of \$1,056. The congregation remitted \$1,131.50.

The pastor reported in April, 1947, that St. John, Lanark, wanted to give Immanuel, Waupaca, its chancel furniture--pulpit, baptismal font, lecturn and altar. Shortly thereafter, Immanuel congregation bought the bell and pews from the Lanark church for \$300.

At the beginning of 1948, the question of remodeling the church was again raised. In April, a Building Committee was elected: Leo Niemuth, Carl Laedtke, Almo J. Larson, Edwin Zaudke and William Hannamann. The committee engaged E.A. Stubenrauch, Architect, for the project. The design was approved August 4. Bids were let in January, 1949. All bids were rejected.

In January, 1950, the congregation set a budget of \$20,000 for remodeling the church. The plans were cut back and redesigned. On February 12, the revised plans were presented to and adopted by the congregation. The bids, opened in March, totaled \$28,672. The Building Committee recommended that the congregation go ahead and build. On April 3, the congregation agreed; but construction did not begin until late July or early August, 1950.

The remodeling enlarged the seating in the nave to 240. Sixteen pews were added. The addition included furnace room and kitchen in the basement. Upstairs, the chancel, council room and sacristy were added. Other improvements were: carpeting, draperies, new parameters, replating of brassware, redecoration of

the chancel furniture. A painting of "Christ in Gethsemane" was added to the altar, but the artist did not finish in time for dedication.

Dedication of the remodeled church was on Sunday, June 3, 1951, with services and speakers as follows: 10:00 a.m. Prof. A. P. Sitz, Wauwatertown; 2:30 p.m. Pastor H. E. Wicke, Weyauwega; 8:00 p.m. Pastor R. E. Zieseemer, Appleton.

In March, 1952, the Ladies' Aid donated an organ to the church, a new Wurlitzer, from Meyer-Seeger of Appleton. The cost was \$2,717 for the organ with a tone cabinet which housed the speakers.

On July 11, 1954, Immanuel congregation celebrated Pastor Reier's 40th anniversary of ordination. Rev. Paul Oehlert, Kaukauna, preached; Rev. W. Pankow, New London, was liturgist; and Rev. H. Wicke, Weyauwega, headed the program that was held in the church basement. The congregation presented a TV set to the pastor as a gift.

Another project was undertaken in 1954. Antique stained glass windows were added in the nave and the window in the west entrance. Seventeen sets of windows, with 34 symbols, were installed February 18-23. Work was done by Novello Art Glass Studio, Winona, Minn. Money for the project came from individuals and societies of the congregation.

Less than 4 months after the windows were installed--on June 4, 1957--Pastor Reier suffered a fatal heart attack. He had just returned home after teaching a class at church. From the obituary printed in the church records, we read:

After serving the Lord at Immanuel, Waupaca, for 39 years, 26 of them as resident pastor,

the Lord promoted Pastor Reier to the more blessed service in the heavenly home... The Lord granted him 43 years of service in the ministry, and an age of 68 years, 7 months and 29 days..."

Funeral services were conducted on June 7, 1957, at 2:00 p.m. Pastor Herbert Kirchner, Baraboo, was liturgist; Pastor Harold Wicke, Weyauwega, preached on Philippians 1:21. Pastor Walter Pankow took charge of the committal at Dale Union Cemetery.

The vacancy lasted 4 months. Pastor Harold Wicke served as interim pastor. The Rev. Paul Kuske, the third one called, who was serving St. Paul, North Freedom, Wis., became the second Immanuel pastor. He was installed by Pastor Wicke on October 20, 1957.

Pastor Kuske's ministry might be characterized as seeking to revitalize the spiritual life of the congregation and of its organizations: Sunday School, Ladies' Aid, Men's Club, Young Peoples' League. Members were encouraged to subscribe to *The Northwestern Lutheran* and *Meditations*. *The Junior Northwestern* was distributed to the Sunday School children. A Finance Committee of four men was introduced. Confirmed boys in the congregation began to serve as church ushers. A regular Sunday service bulletin appeared. The pastor also focused attention on the mission work of the church-at-large.

On November 2, 1958, the stained glass windows were dedicated, and the congregation acknowledged Mr. Art Sellin's 29 years of service to the church and his Savior as a Sunday School teacher.

During the next three years, a number of items were purchased to beautify the church and

be of service to the congregation: altar books, clock, communion rail tray, credence tables, drinking fountain, Sunday School curtains, projector, folding chairs, movie screen, folding chairs, record player and film-strip projector, duplicator, Sunday School dividers, adding machine. Also, by the annual meeting in January, 1959, the debt from the 1951 addition was paid.

In 1961, the Brown house and property south of the church were purchased. The next year, the area around the house was leveled. On several occasions, discussions focused on remodeling the church and enlarging the class areas for Sunday School. In 1962, the Church Council was authorized to have sketches of a proposed remodeling drawn. The congregation paid for the drawings, but there was no further action.

In the fall of 1962, Pastor Kuske received a call from St. John Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn. A special congregation meeting was conducted November 18, at which time the pastor requested and received a peaceful release. Membership at the time was 659 souls, 460 communicants and 64 voters. Pastor Kuske preached his farewell sermon on December 2, 1962.

Pastor J.C. Dahlke, District President, Weyauwega, met with the congregation on November 26, to assist in obtaining a supply pastor. Pastor W. Pankow, New London, was called to be the vacancy pastor. Pastor Gullixson, Amherst Junction (ELS), conducted instruction classes, and young people's organization.

During the vacancy, remodeling plans for the church entrance were begun. A five-man Building Committee was appointed: David Conradt, L.C. Virchow, Ray Larson, Marvin Pagel, Edwin Zaudke. The contract for remodeling was awarded to Don's Construction, Waupaca, \$10,240.

The congregation began calling a pastor. On March 4, 1963, the Rev. A.J. Engel, the third one called, accepted. Pastor was serving Immanuel, Medford. He was installed May 26, by Pastor Pankow.

Work on the entrance proceeded. The Ollie Brown building was sold to the highest bidder for \$250. The church exterior was painted and a new outdoor bulletin was built. Dedication of the remodeled entrance and additions was on November 10, 1963, with two services at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

During Pastor Engel's pastorate church discipline received attention. A number of projects were undertaken: a safe was bought (1964), new light fixtures in the nave and the parsonage garage enlarged (1965), the balcony was extended and new carpeting in church installed (1966), also tablet chairs and an addressograph purchased.

1966 began a 2-year, Synod-wide, *Missio Dei* thankoffering. \$12,000 was received from Immanuel, Waupaca.

In 1967, the congregation bought the Riske property on Franklin St. and rented it for a time.

On January 24, 1968, Pastor and Mrs. Engel presented a \$500 memorial in the name of their son, David, who was killed in an auto accident. He had been enrolled in Northwestern College, studying for the ministry. This memorial initiated the New Church Building Fund.

The congregation celebrated Pastor Engel's 40th anniversary of his ordination on July 14, 1968. A gift of "Mr. and Mrs. Chairs" was presented, and, later, a tape recording of the special worship service.

In 1968, a Long Range Planning Committee was appointed: Roy Wendt, L.C. Virchow, John Barry, Carl Laedtke, and Marvin Pagel. A 5-year goal of \$50,000 was set and members contacted.

Pastor Engel received several calls while he was serving Immanuel--in 1968 to Gary, South Dakota; in June, 1969, to East Bloomfield; and in July, 1969, to Minnesota.

In 1970, the Riske home was razed and the basement filled to provide parking for church.

Toward the end of 1970, failing health compelled Pastor Engel to retire from the ministry. During the vacancy, Pastor Theophil Hoffmann assisted. Mr. Steve Barry, a graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., helped with instruction class and the choir.

The congregation began calling for a new pastor in December, 1970. Pastor James Diener who was serving St. Luke, Little Chute, Wis. was the third one called. He accepted the call to become the fourth resident pastor of Immanuel, Waupaca. Pastor Diener was installed on July 11, 1971, by Pastor Donald Nimmer. The installation sermon was given by Pastor Marlyn Schroeder, Appleton.

Pastor A.J. Engel was called to his eternal rest on August 7, 1971, after having served in the ministry for 42 years.

Since 1971, Immanuel congregation acquired office machines to assist the pastor in his work: new mimeograph, folding machine, electric typewriter, copying machine, and a spirit duplicator. In 1972, a monthly newsletter appeared, mailed to each household in the church. It's called *The Lamplighter*. Also in 1972, a New School Building Fund was begun with special gifts and offerings.

On March 11, 1973, the congregation began to broadcast the Sunday 8:00 a.m. service on radio--WDUX-FM, 92.7. The broadcast is "live" and is called *The Immanuel Lutheran Hour of Worship*. It is sponsored by individuals and families and organizations of the church. It has been well received, especially by our shut in members.

In 1971, the congregation replaced the Long Range Planning Committee with a Building Committee, and authorized it to engage an architect. Boettcher & Ginnow, Architects Inc. of Neenah was retained, February 15, 1972.

An extensive feasibility study was made by the Building Committee. The committee recommended buying the Louis Stillman property and buildings for \$29,000. The congregation approved the purchase, November 8; and authorized a one-year pledge for the building program. Over \$33,000 was received. In 1974, plans for a new church were approved. Ground was broken on October 20, 1974. The Cornerstone was laid on June 1.

Dedication services were on August 17, with morning services at 8:00 and 10:00, Pastor Diener preaching; and afternoon service at 3:00 p.m. Pastor Martin Jahnke, Fond du Lac, preaching. Special music was provided by the combined voices of the Immanuel Choir and members of the Valley Lutheran Chorale of Appleton, directed by Mr. Ray Artz.

The men who served on the Building Committee: Lester Breier, Irvin Kozlovsky, Carl Laedtke, Marvin Pagel, Erwin Rehbein, Clayton Suhs, Harold Wagner, Donald Waller, Roy Wendt. Approximate cost of the building and furnishings: \$290,000.

To God Alone the Glory!