

Diamond Anniversary Celebration

July 9, 1939

Concordia Lutheran Church

Geneseo, Illinois



1864 - 1939

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Christian Bergen  
1901 - 1929

We respectfully dedicate this diamond anniversary booklet to the memory of the sainted pastor, Rev. Christian Bergen.



Above is shown the Concordia Lutheran church building before it was remodeled in 1937. The present remodeled church is pictured on the outside front cover of this booklet.

### Church Board Anniversary Committee and Sunday School Board



Reading from left to right: top row, R. H. Speller, Max Ahnert, George Furstenuau, Louis Wiese; middle row, Walter Nehls, Albert Taube, Carl Meimerstorf, Arnold Taube and Clifford Rahm; bottom row, Henry Gernant, Rev. H. J. Elling, Herbert Bergen, Theo. Erdman and Emil Redman. Maurice Gernant and William Rickman are missing from picture.

# Concordia

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The year 1939 is a year of many festive services. Throughout our dear Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, festive services have been held in the individual congregations in commemoration of the Saxon Immigration of 1838 and 1839. Yes, not only are such centennial celebrations held in the individual congregations, but the circuits of Synod are having their joint festivities, and also district conventions in the year 1939 are giving special thought to the blessings which have thus been brought to the succeeding generations and thus also to us. Those Saxon Immigrants were not only concerned about their own bodily and spiritual well being, but hardly had they begun to establish their own homes in Perry County, Mo., when they also thought of the command of the Lord, Mark 16, 15: "Go yet into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Being very conscious of this command of the Lord the immigrants immediately set to work in the year 1839 to erect the first college and seminary near Altenburg, Mo. Yes, not only did they make known the great works of God by the word of mouth, but they also made use of the printing press. On September 7th, 1844, the first copy of the "Lutheraner", one of the official papers of the Missouri Synod appeared. Through God's gracious guidance the "Lutheraner" came into the hands of other Lutheran pastors, one of whom declared, after having read the "Lutheraner": "Thank God there are yet more Lutherans in America!" Thus the "Lutheraner" did much to bring about the organization of the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States in the year 1847. The Prophet Isaiah 54, 2 and 3: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Yes while pilgrim fathers of our church here in America carried out these instructions of the Lord to the best of their ability; it must be noted that 25 years after the Saxon Fathers had come to America in the year 1864 the first missionary of the Missouri Synod came to Geneseo, Illinois, to preach the message of salvation to the Lutheran people at this place. This missionary was a certain Rev. Doescher, who was stationed in Hampton, Illinois. After Pastor Doescher had served these Lutheran people for several months; the Concordia Lutheran Congregation, Geneseo, Illinois, was organized July 7, 1864. The following men were the first officers of this congregation: August Eichhorn, Luthwig Hillmer, deacons; Wilhelm Rittenger, Jacob Jung, Heinrich Schmidt, trustees; Johann Ramus, secretary; Friedrich Zimmerman, Chairman.

Up to this time the Lutheran settlers of Geneseo had felt,

ate of Rev. Frohwein had been terminated, there followed a vacancy of several years. In the year 1862 a man by the name of H. Veitz appeared and insisted on being the leader of the little flock. His stay lasted only four months. Pastor Veitz was followed by a man named Mockwitz. The services of this pastor were not satisfactory, and he was therefore given his release. The reason as to why all these pastors failed to meet with success was this: They were not founded and grounded in the doctrines of the Lutheran church and did not adhere strictly in their teaching to the inspired Word of God.

However, brighter and happier days were to come for this group of Lutheran people here in Geneseo in the sixties of the last century. Zion Lutheran congregation in Hampton twp. had already been organized under the leadership of a Pastor Doescher of the Missouri Synod. Pastor Doescher served the Lutheran people in Edford Twp. with Word and Sacrament while he was stationed in Hampton. This same Pastor Doescher was requested to serve this little group of Lutheran people in Geneseo with the Word of God and the Sacraments. As a true servant of the Lord, Pastor Doescher gladly and willingly took upon himself the additional work of ministering to the people in Geneseo. For several months Pastor Doescher served the people to the best of his ability, conducting services at various places in Geneseo. One place mentioned in particular was the room above the former post office in the city. However, the pastor and also the people, who accepted his ministrations, were soon aware of the fact that under such circumstances and conditions the work of the Lord could not prosper in a way in which they would like to see it prosper. Therefore, this group of people was organized into a congregation under the guidance of Pastor Doescher. The congregation selecting the name "Concordia." This organization took place July 7, 1864.

For some time the members of the newly organized congregation had felt that the renting of a building for church purposes was connected with much difficulty and inconvenience. When therefore the congregation had been organized, the hearts of the members were filled with joy and enthusiasm. Their minds were filled with this one thought, to press forward. And in the same month, in which the organization had taken place, the 24th of July, 1864 the congregation decided to buy a plot of ground in the city of Geneseo on which to erect a building suitable for their purposes. The plot of ground which was purchased at that time, is that same location which to this day is held by Concordia Lutheran Congregation, Oakwood Ave. and East North St. The lots were bought at the price of \$287.50. Building operations were begun immediately. They erected the building, which later on served the congregation as school, and which at the present time is known to us as "Concordia Assembly Hall." The first church was built at an expenditure of \$1,308.99. With a joyful and thankful heart the members contributed toward the building of the church in the measure in which the Lord had prospered them. Even though the cost of the building was but small in our estimation in 1939, yet this was a big undertaking for those pioneer people; and a debt remained resting on the congregation amounting to \$950.99. While the building

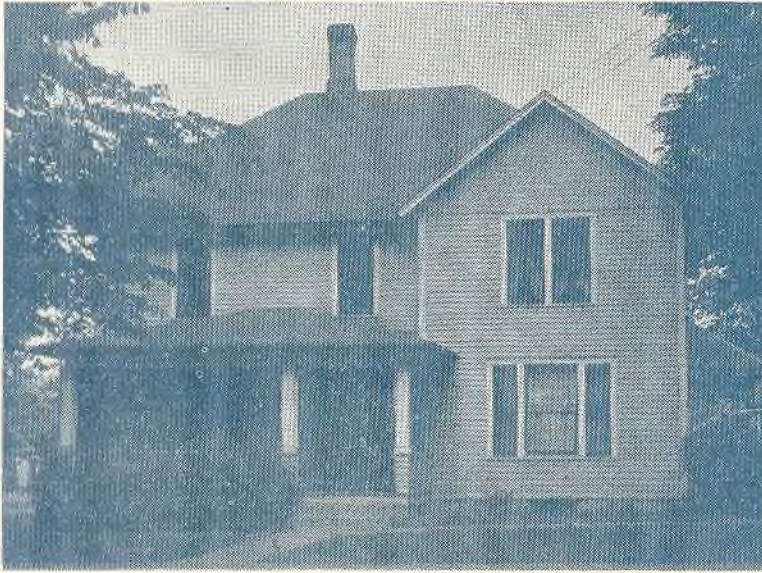
operations were still in progress, in August, 1864, the congregation called the Rev. Fuenfstueck, who at that time was the assistant to the Rev. Doescher in Hampton, Illinois.

Pastor Fuenfstueck accepted the call extended to him by Concordia Congregation and besides serving Concordia with Word and Sacrament, he also served the Lutheran People in Edford Twp. every other Sunday. Under the leadership of Pastor Fuenfstueck the constitution was adopted which was in force from 1864-1934, when the constitution appeared in its translated and revised form. While the congregation had a short time of rejoicing, thinking of having their own house of worship and also their own resident pastor, their hearts were nevertheless saddened, when their pastor left them and cast his lot with the Iowa Synod. In the year 1868 a successor was found to a Pastor Fuenfstueck in the person of E. A. Ernst, a graduate of the theological seminary at St. Louis. His stay in the congregation was also very short for in March of the following year, 1869, he followed a call extended to him from a congregation in Providence, Rhode Island.

It is only natural that such frequent changes in the pastorate would be a hindrance in the healthy growth of the congregation. Yet, the congregation was not discouraged. In the name of the Lord it again undertook the task of calling a pastor. This time the call was extended to the Candidate F. Horn also a graduate of the seminary in St. Louis. Untiringly he labored in the congregation. His zeal seemed to be without limit. Thus it happened according to the unsearchable counsel of God that Pastor Horn in his eagerness to serve the congregation undermined his health. Sickness forced him to take an extended vacation, in which he and also the congregation had hoped he would regain his former health. With the consent of the congregation he undertook a trip to Germany. However, he was not to return to Concordia. God had determined to take His servant home to Himself in heaven. While in Germany, Pastor Horn suffered a hemorrhage on the 22nd of September, 1874, and died the same day. The news of his death cast a gloom over the congregation. To show their love and respect for their departed pastor, even in a small measure, the members decided to have Rev. J. P. Guenther of Edford, conduct a memorial service.

A long vacancy now followed in the congregation. The Rev. J. P. Guenther served Concordia during this vacancy. In 1875, evidently in the fall of the year, the congregation secured the services of a new pastor in the person of Candidate P. Hansen, a graduate of the St. Louis Seminary. It was under the leadership of Pastor Hansen in the year 1877 that the first church building proved itself too small and inadequate for the ever growing congregation. It was therefore resolved by the congregation in 1877 to build a new edifice. The plans for the new church were furnished by Rev. Stephan of Iowa. The plans called for a building 70 feet long and 40 feet wide exclusive of the sacristy and altar niche. The first church was now moved to the corner of the church property on East North St. and Russell ave., and the new church was erected on Oakwood and East North St. The old church was henceforth to be used as the parochial school. The new building was erected at a cost of \$4,899.11. After an

## Parsonage



energetic campaign of collecting it was found that not enough money had been collected to pay for the entire building, so the trustees were forced to borrow the remaining amount at the rate of 10 per cent per annum. While the congregation was in the midst of erecting the present church building, a time when a congregation is very much in need of the counsel of a pastor, Pastor Hansen received and accepted a call to a congregation in Worden, Illinois, in September, 1877. However, before building operations were completed, the congregation had another pastor in the person of Rev. Mangelsdorf, who had recently recovered from a nervous breakdown, and who on that account had been without a charge for some time. He was, therefore, in a position to immediately accept the call and take charge of Concordia. Under the pastorate of Rev. Mangelsdorf the new church was dedicated to the service of the Triune God, Feb. 3, 1878. All the sister-congregations were invited to join Concordia in thanking and praising God on this day of dedication.

Up to this time the congregation did not possess a parsonage. It was called upon to rent a house for the pastor, wherever such renting opportunities presented themselves. That this was connected with many inconveniences is readily understood. Extra expense and inconvenience for pastor and congregation. In 1879 an opportunity presented itself whereby the congregation could come into possession of a suitable location and house in very good repair. It was located just south of the church and adjoined the church property. This property was bought at the price of



\$715.00. Pastor Mangelsdorf was the first minister to live in this parsonage. In the course of years the congregation did not hesitate to build additions, make improvements, and in a general way keep this property in good repair.

The congregational life is not unlike that of a family. A congregation may have days and years of blessed contentment and progress and suddenly gloom and sorrow may come over it. This was the experience of Concordia, when in 1882 a storm of cyclonic proportions swept over the city of Geneseo and did much damage to the church building. The steeple was torn from its base and thrown upon the roof of the church. However, truly loving their house of worship, the members immediately set to work to repair the damage done to the church building, and to build a new steeple at the cost of \$534.35.

Rev. Mangelsdorf served Concordia from 1877-1883, when he accepted a call to the congregation in Venedig, Illinois.

Rev. Heinemann of Kewanee, Illinois, was now called to be the pastor of Concordia congregation. He accepted the call and served the congregation 1883-1892. It was during the pastorate of Rev. Heinemann that the congregation was not spared with differences and troubles, yet by the grace of God and under the able leadership of the pastor these troubles were also overcome; and in spite of all trials and tribulations the congregation continued to grow in strength and membership. After eight years of faithful service Pastor Heinemann received and accepted a call from the congregation in Belvidere, Illinois in 1892.

From October, 1892, until April, 1893, the congregation was without a resident pastor. During this time a number of calls had been extended to various pastors, but none of them found it possible to accept the call to Concordia in Geneseo. However, in April, 1893, a call was extended to Pastor A. C. Doerffler, who accepted the call and took up his labors at Concordia. At the time of Rev. Doerffler's pastorate a heavy debt rested upon the congregation. Earnest efforts were now set forth to liquidate this debt, and as usual this attempt was crowned with success. The debt, which threatened to hinder the progress of the congregation, was removed. Now Concordia was again in a position to launch forward. The reed organ which until the year 1899 had been used to accompany the singing of the congregation, was placed in the school, and in its place a large new pipe organ was placed in the church at a cost of \$1,030.00. The dedication of this instrument, which is used and in good order to this present day, brought much joy and happiness to the members of the congregation. In May, 1901, Rev. Doerffler received and accepted a call to Wine Hill, Illinois. In June of the same year, 1901, Rev. C. Bergen, who until then had been the pastor of the congregation in Chandlerville, Illinois, was called. He accepted the call to Concordia and served faithfully for 28 years.

Under the leadership of Rev. Bergen, Concordia congregation continued to grow and flourish. Many additional improvements were made. In 1901 the heating stoves in the church were replaced by hot air furnaces. In 1902 gas lights took the place of the kerosene lamps. In 1903 the parsonage was enlarged, the old part of the building was remodeled, and a hot air furnace

took the place of the stoves. The congregation had gone to an expense of \$1664.00. In 1908 the church was redecorated in oil colors at an expense of \$1116.00. It was also under the pastorate of Rev. Bergen that the congregation observed the 50th anniversary of its organization. The festive services were held July 12, 1914. Neighboring congregations were invited to thank and praise the Lord with Concordia for His blessings. The ladies served the meals for the visitors in their usual able manner.

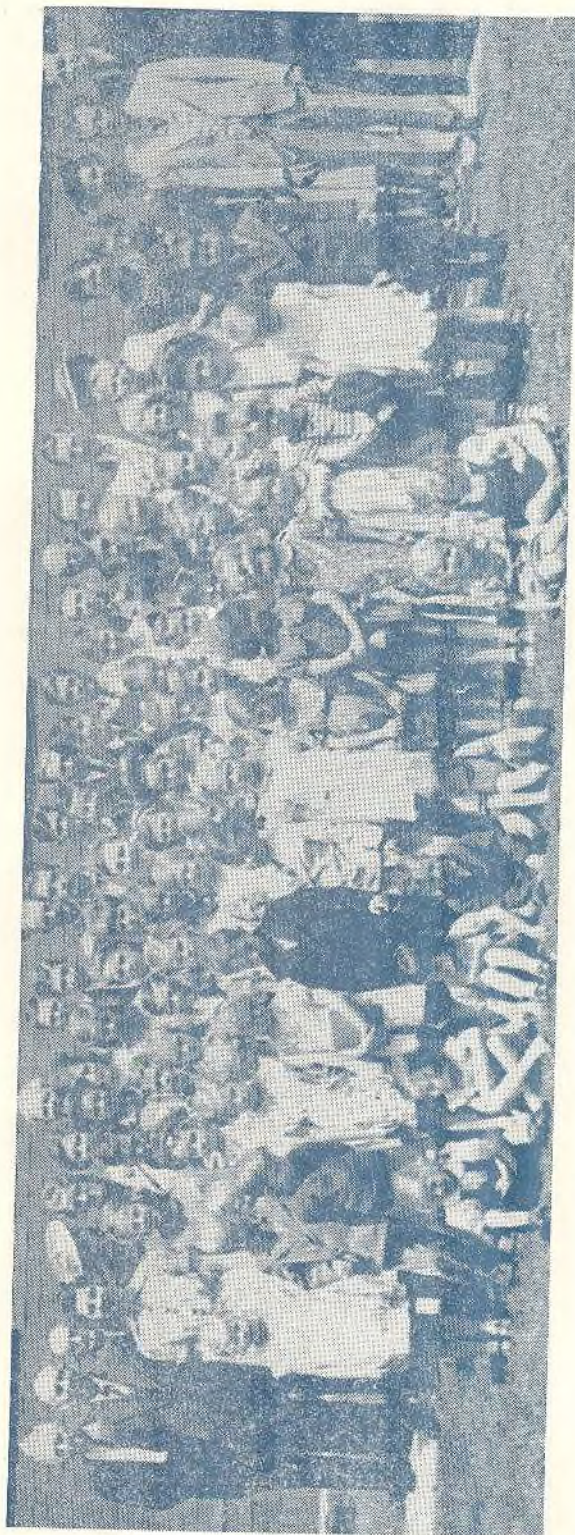
During the early history of the congregation all the services and religious instructions were carried on through the medium of the German language. However, as far back as 1905 tht Rev. Bergen put forth efforts to introduce English services in the evening. At that time the congregation was of the opinion that there was no call for English. July 7, 1907, the language question was again taken up, and the pastor was granted permission to now and then have an English evening service. By the year 1908 it seemed as though the English services had come to stay, for it was at this time that 25 English hymnals were purchased. In 1918 the pastor was granted permission to have one English morning service a month. In 1920 the congregation bought an additional 150 English hymnals, and on January 30, 1921, the members decided to have English services every other Sunday morning. Thus Rev. Bergen had charge of the congregation during a very critical period, the time when the language question received much consideration. yet it was taken care of in a very diplomatic way. The blessing of introducing English services at that time is very evident today.

1924 and 1925 were years of much activity in Concordia Lutheran under the leadership of Rev. Bergen. In 1924 the beautiful memorial windows replaced the old ones at a cost of \$2468.55. In 1925 the church was remodeled. The exterior was given a coat of stocco, a new front entrance was built, and the interior was redecorated in oil colors at an expense of \$7518.76.

In the late twenties the health of Pastor Bergen began to fail, and when there was still hope for his recovery, the Rev. Carl Hilgendorf of Edford Twp. very faithfully assisted Rev. Bergen. In the early part of 1929 Rev. Bergen spent several months in the hospital in Springfield, Illinois, hoping to regain his strength to again assume leadership of the congregation, however after several months, he was convinced that he would not be able to again take over the responsibility of leadership of Concordia. He therefore tendered his resignation, which was reluctantly accepted by the congregation on May 12, 1929. Pastor Bergen returned from the hospital to Geneseo to spend the evening of his life in the midst of the congregation which he had served for so many years. At this time Rev. Hilgendorf was called as vacancy pastor and the congregation began to call another pastor. Three times the members called in vain. July 17, 1929, the call was extended to the Rev. H. J. Elling of Parkers Prairie, Minn. Pastor Elling accepted the call and arrived in Geneseo, September 4, 1929, and was installed by the Rev. Carl Hilgendorf on September 8.

The health of Rev. Bergen continued to fail until the Lord took him home, January 15, 1930. The christian burial took place January 18 from that church in which he had so often

Concordia Sunday School



**Concordia Ladies' Aid**



preached the message of salvation. His successor, Rev. H. J. Elling and the Rev. John Schnack, Secor, Illinois, preaching the funeral sermons.

The need of having more English services was evermore felt in the congregation. A happy solution was therefore found to supply this need in 1930, when the double-header services were introduced. This plan has been continued to the time of the 75th anniversary of the congregation, and will be continued as long as it seems necessary.

In the year 1937 the congregation again undertook extensive alternations and repairs on the church building. it was known for some time the steeple was weak, and the fear was expressed that it might not withstand a very strong wind; besides that the steeple was sorely in need of extensive repairs. It was therefore decided to take the steeple down and replace it by a tower. The stocco was also removed from the building, and the exterior was finished with brickote. A much needed rest room was also added to this time. This work was done at an expense of \$5640.00. When this extensive work on the church was finished, the pastor conducted a rededication service Sunday morning, Dec. 12, 1937. Oh. What a sad week it was which followed. Fire threatened to reduce the entire church building to ashes on Thursday morning December 16. When the fire was extinguished, after several hours of work by the efficient fire department of the city, about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the roof was burned away. This necessitated the putting on of an entirely new roof on the church. This fire loss was completely covered by insurance. Work was begun immediately to repair the building thus damaged by fire.

The following are the members of the church board at the time of the 75th anniversary:: Herbert Bergen, Chairman; R. H. Speller, Vice-Chairman; Albert Taube, Theo. Erdman, George Furstenau, Deacons; Henry Gernant, Emil Redman, William Rickman, Trustees; Carl H. Meimerstor, Treasurer; Walter Nehls, Secretary; Maurice Gernant, Clifford Rahn, Collectors.

The following are members of the anniversary committee: Herbert Bergen, George Furstenau, Albert J. Taube, Louis Wiese, Carl Meimerstorf, Max Ahnert, and Rev. H. J. Elling.

### PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

While it is no more, yet it must be admitted that it played a very important part in the history and the development of Concordia Lutheran congregation. This school came into existence under the pastorate of Rev. Ernst about 1868. It was continued and supported by the members of the congregation until the year 1918. Thus Concordia had a parochial school for 50 years. The sole aim and purpose of this school was to indoctrinate the children of the congregation very thoroughly and to instruct them in secular things under christian influence. Under the pastorate of Rev. Mangelsdorf the school had as many as 89 scholars. What blessings this school brought to Concordia only eternity will tell.

A large number of teachers and pastors served in the school during the 50 years. Some of the names are yet well-known among the members of the congregation. The following

**Concordia Ladies' League**



are the names of the people, who served in the school: Rev. Ernst, Rev. Horn, Teacher Warnecke, Student Mende, Teacher J. F. Lindorfer, Student Grumm. Rev. Hansen, Teacher Zoell, Teacher Anger, Rev. Mangelsdorf, Rev. Heinemann, Miss Mathilde Heinemann, Miss Anna Windisch, Miss Elizabeth and, Miss Clara Fischer, Student H. Dahl, Student N. F. Jensen, Rev. Doerffler, Teacher J. Pallmer, Rev. Doerffler, Teacher Richard Held, Teacher E. M. Kirsch. Teacher August Haack, Teacher Hermann Dornseif, Teacher G. W. Karsten and the last teacher was Teacher Brothagen. It is also known that time and again the Rev. Bergen took charge of the school.

It seems as though it became evermore difficult to continue the school until it was finally temporarily closed in the year 1918. Too bad! It was a real workshop of the Holy Ghost among the youth of our church.

### CONCORDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL

Concordia Sunday School was organized April 7, 1918. From the very beginning the Sunday School was conducted though the medium of the English language. During the 20 years of the existence of the Sunday School a large number of members of the congregation have given their time and energy as teachers to the school to instruct our dear children in the "one thing needful". Oh! What blessed work it is to help little children find Jesus as their one and only savior, who also redeemed them with His holy precious blood, and His innocent suffering and death. Your reward will be in heaven. The word of the Lord also applies to you in a special measure: Matthew 25, 21: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord". Concordia is truly grateful to you for the services, which you have rendered in the interest of the Sunday School.

The following are the Sunday School teachers at the time of 75th anniversary: Rev. H. J. Elling, Albert J. Taube, Arnold Taube, Lucille Gotthardt, Alwin Reschke, Helen Ristau, Berniece Neuman, Dorothy Frank, Edith Van Auken, Adele Schreiber, Ruth Elling, Evelyn Gotthardt. The Sunday School Board: Rev. H. J. Elling, George Furstenau, and Arnold Taube.

Concordia congregation has at all times realized its obligations according to the command of the Savior, Mark 16, 15: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Cognizant of this command the congregation already in the year 1874 became a member of the Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States. Thus together with their fellow-christians far and near they are doing that work which an individual congregation could not do. Namely, to carry the gospel of salvation to the North, South, East, and

### SOCIETIES

The congregation has for years had two ladies societies. The Concordia Ladies Aid was organized under the leadership of Rev. Christian Bergen in 1904 with 42 members. The meetings of this society are to this day conducted in the German language

## Concordia Walther League



In the course of years the membership in this organization has grown smaller due to many deaths in its ranks. The Concordia Ladies League was organized under the leadership of Rev. Chr. Bergen also, in the year 1919 with a membership of 9. In the course of years this society has experienced a very healthy growth in its membership so that at the time of the 75th anniversary the society has 72 members. The meetings of this organization have at all times been conducted in the English language.

It must be said to the credit of these organizations that they have at all times kept in mind the purpose for which they were organized: namely, to ever be engaged in works of charity, and in beautifying and in making improvements either as an individual society or jointly with the other society, or both giving financial aid to the congregation in various projects. Thus the C. L. L. has regularly supported a number of charitable institutions such as Wheatridge, Colo., Bethesda, Watertown, Wis. the Orphanage, Addison, Illinois, formerly of Peoria, Ill. These same institutions were also supported by the Concordia Ladies Aid. Donations were also made for the Lutheran Hour and for station K. F. U. O. The C. L. L. bought an organ for a mission in South America. Both societies have spent much money for the beautifying and improving of the congregational property. The large memorial window in the church was paid for by the C. L. L. The large window in the tower was a contribution of the Con-



**The Present Pastor**



**Rev. H. J. Elling**

1929 -

cordia Ladies Aid. Again the two societies were united in buying the new carpet in the church. The societies also gave assistance in installing electric lights in the church, and time and again contributed toward the liquidating of an accumulated debt in the congregation. Yes, it would lead us too far, were we to mention all the projects in which these societies took an active part. As a congregation we say to you kind ladies, "thank you". May God continue to bless you in this work of love. Present officers of the C. L. L. are the following: President, Mrs. Margaret Gernant; Vice-President, Mrs. Ella Saupe; Secretary, Mrs. Viola Chrisop; Treasurer, Mrs. Hilda Kowitz. Officers of the Concordia Ladies Aid are as follows: President, Mrs. Julius Klewin; Vice-President, Mrs. H. J. Elling; Secretary, Mrs. Chr. Bergen; Treasurer, Mrs. Emil Redman.

### CONCORDIA WALTHER LEAGUE

For years a Young People's Society has also been in existence in the congregation. From the very beginning of its organization it has been the aim and purpose of this organization not only to keep the young people with the church, but also to arouse interest in the work of the church in the hearts of the young people. Feb. 20, 1932, this organization, known as the Concordia Young People's Society, became a member of the International Walther League. As a member of the international organization the League has always endeavored to carry out the suggested program of the International. One of the outstanding features is the Topic Study in connection with the monthly business meeting. Once a month the organization also meets for a purely social evening. The Concordia Walther League now has a membership of 37. The league takes an active part in the Zone Rallies, sends delegates to the District conventions, and has taken part in the District and International Talent Quests. They also help support the young people's Monument, the Wheatridge Sanitarium, Wheatridge, Colo., they have also supported Radio Station K. F. U. O., and hold a membership with the Lutheran University, Valparaiso, Indiana. As an organization they have also time and again come to the assistance of the congregation in its projects. Officers of the League: President Mr. Alfred Taube, Vice President: Alwin Reschke, Secretary: Priscilla Casteel, Treasurer: Stanley Speller.

Official acts in the different pastors during the 75 years are as follows:

	Bap- tisms	Confirm- mations	Mar- riages	Bur- ials	Com- muni- ons
Rev. Fuenfstueck	98	No	24	33	595
Rev. Ernst	33	Figures	11	8	101
Rev. Horn	253		36	65	1126
Rev. Hansen	106		13	24	800
Rev. Mangelsdorf	169	200	26	37	1826
Rev. Heinemann	254	107	54	55	3712
Rev. Doerffler	199	131	49	69	4564
Rev. Bergen	344	326	127	126	7013
Rev. Elling	136	102	50	100	4679

The congregation now numbers 366 Communicants and 512 Baptized Members.

## IN CONCLUSION

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." Psalm 115, 1.

"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." Psalm 90, 17.

Abide, O faithful Savior  
Among us with Thy love,  
Grant steadfastness, and help us  
To reach our home above.

