

A History of Zion Lutheran Church

By Marie Walter

Our congregation was first conceived on February 17, 1895 in a meeting at the Tilden Public School by several of the Iva community Lutherans who attended St. Peter's Lutheran Church or a congregation in Merrill. Among the founding fathers were: Henry Scharf, Albert Schultz, Gustave Stenzel, August Schultz, Franz Zastrow, August Tessin, Bernhardt Kade, Michael Blank, William Dankwardt, Frederick Beyersdorf, August Bohn, G. Bernbach, John Bluemer, W. Koeppen, Karl Kratz, W. Pomeraning, and John Weiskirch.

As a result of this meeting property was purchased and a frame building was built at a total cost of \$500. Hence our first church was named Zion German Evangelical Lutheran Church and dedicated September 1, 1895 with a German service in the morning and an English service in the afternoon. This building was also used as a school with classes beginning that same fall under the tutorage of J. C. Winterstein. It was also decided at one of the early meetings that we would share the Richland Lutheran Cemetery with St. Peter Lutheran Church.



The first church building



Karl Mueller
1896 — 1912

The first called pastor was Pastor Karl Mueller who was installed on February 6, 1896. He also served as teacher for a total salary of \$275 per year.

The first parsonage was built in 1897 with the congregation doing the construction. In 1907 it was resolved to build a new church for a proposed cost of \$3000. It was a frame building with heating facilities. In May 1908 the corner stone was laid and dedication was held September 20, 1908. The new church was of Gothic style, 69' X36' with an 86' tower and seated 300. The final cost exceeded \$6000.

In 1911 Ernst Eichinger was hired as teacher to provide Pastor Mueller more time for ministerial duties. Pastor Mueller remained pastor until April 1912 when he accepted another call. Later that year Pastor J. G. Nuechterlein became our new pastor. He served our congregation until 1916. In 1913 Mr. Eichinger resigned and Ernst Bickel became the new teacher. That same year it was decided to build a new 11 room parsonage at a cost of \$2000. The old parsonage was then used for the teacher's home.



Church built in 1907-08.

In 1916 Pastor C. W. Volz was installed and a permanent English service was instituted on Sunday afternoons. In 1917 the United States got involved in the war with Germany. Until this time this congregation had been called the German Lutheran Church. Now, that became unpopular and the word "German" was dropped and it became known as Iva Lutheran Church. Also in 1917 a Hinners pipe organ was purchased for \$813. Pastor Volz resigned in 1918.



Rev. Otto Richert

Reverend Otto Richert was called to replace Pastor Volz. Reverend Richert stayed until his death 35 years later in November of 1953.

In 1919 an addition was made to the teacher's house. September 1920 the congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary. At that time our congregation consisted of 400 souls; 275 communicant members, 75 voting members and 40 school children. In 1921 we joined the Missouri Synod. A confirmation room was added on to the school in 1925 and in 1926 a two story addition was added to the teacherage. In 1927 more property was purchased for a playground area.

By 1930 the depression was starting to be felt and money harder to come by. Some families made their commitments by giving food to help feed the families of the pastor and the teacher. By April 1931 English services were more popular and English hymnals were purchased. In 1934 the Walther League was formed and in 1935 the church property was electrified; we became a Consumers Power patron. In 1938 the Ladies Society was organized and the bell that hangs in our church today was purchased for \$150. Mr. Ernst Bickel had been a teacher at Iva for 25 years and a celebration was held in his honor. In 1942 Teacher Bickel accidentally came in contact with a high voltage line and went to his heavenly home seven weeks later. Mr. Martin Merz was called to replace Mr. Bickel and remained our teacher and principal for 43 years retiring in 1985.



**Teacher
Ernst Bickel**

Iva Zion celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1945. At that time there were 525 souls; nearly 400 communicant members, 110 voting members and 35 school children. A public address system was bought that year and the Men's Club was formed.



Zion Lutheran School

In the summer of 1948 a new school was built, a second teacher was hired and a school bus was purchased. After Reverend



Otto Richert's death in 1953, his son, Reverend Paul Richert was called and installed in 1954. Paul, as he was best known, moved on accepting a call in 1960.

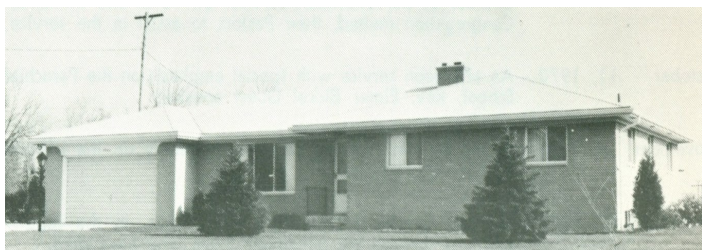


Church built in 1958.

In May of 1955 it was decided to build a new church and the old one was moved aside to make room for it. The new church was dedicated March 1958. It has a seating capacity for 900, a cry room, kitchen, office, bathrooms and a Wickes pipe organ.

In 1960 Reverend Theodore Zetzer came to Zion. He resigned in 1962.

Reverend Leonard Newman then came to Zion, leaving in 1965 accepting a call to serve St. Paul in Sanford, Mi.



Parsonage and teacherage built in 1966.



Rev. Elmer Schiefer

In 1965 more property was acquired and the last payment on the new church was made. In 1966 a new parsonage and teacherage were built at a cost of \$60,000 and Rev. Elmer Schiefer became our new pastor.

The 75th anniversary of Iva Zion was held September 1970. We numbered 1002 members; 703 communicants, 140 Sunday School children and 102 day school children.

In 1971 a Parent Teacher League was formed. Over the years teachers were added as was a kindergarten and a state licensed pre-school.

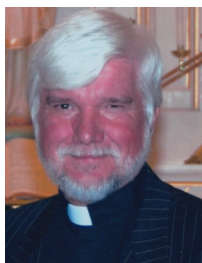
In 1991 Pastor Schiefer retired after 25 years of service at Zion.

In 1992 Pastor Anthony "Tony" Sobocinski came to us from Ontario, Canada. During the summer of 1994 the school was renovated. Folding walls were placed in the overflow room for additional classrooms and plans for a Family Life Center were initiated. It was decided to have two services, one traditional and one contemporary.



Rev. Anthony Sobocinski

As of January 1995 we number 753 members; 619 communicant, 44 school children and 40 Sunday School children. A 100 year anniversary celebration was held throughout the 100th year with special services scheduled each month with guest speakers, dinners and other activities planned. Major renovation also took place during the centennial year. A new kitchen was built as well as renovations to the classrooms to include a new library and a daycare. Pastor Sobocinski accepted a call to Canada in 1996.



Rev. Ken Johnson

Pastor Ken Johnson accepted a call to serve Zion in 1996. In 1997 Pastor Johnson accepted a call to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. During Zion's vacancy, Reverend Paul Richert returned for a short time to serve Zion.

In August of 2000 Reverend Paul Hauser was called from Bethlehem, Saginaw. His wife, Deborah, was also contracted to serve as a teacher for the school. In the year 2002 Zion has 716 members; 525 communicant, 12 school children and 14 Sunday School children.



Rev. Paul Hauser