

FOOTPRINTS

Bethel Lutheran Church

Believe—Belong—Become

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” Psalm 119:105

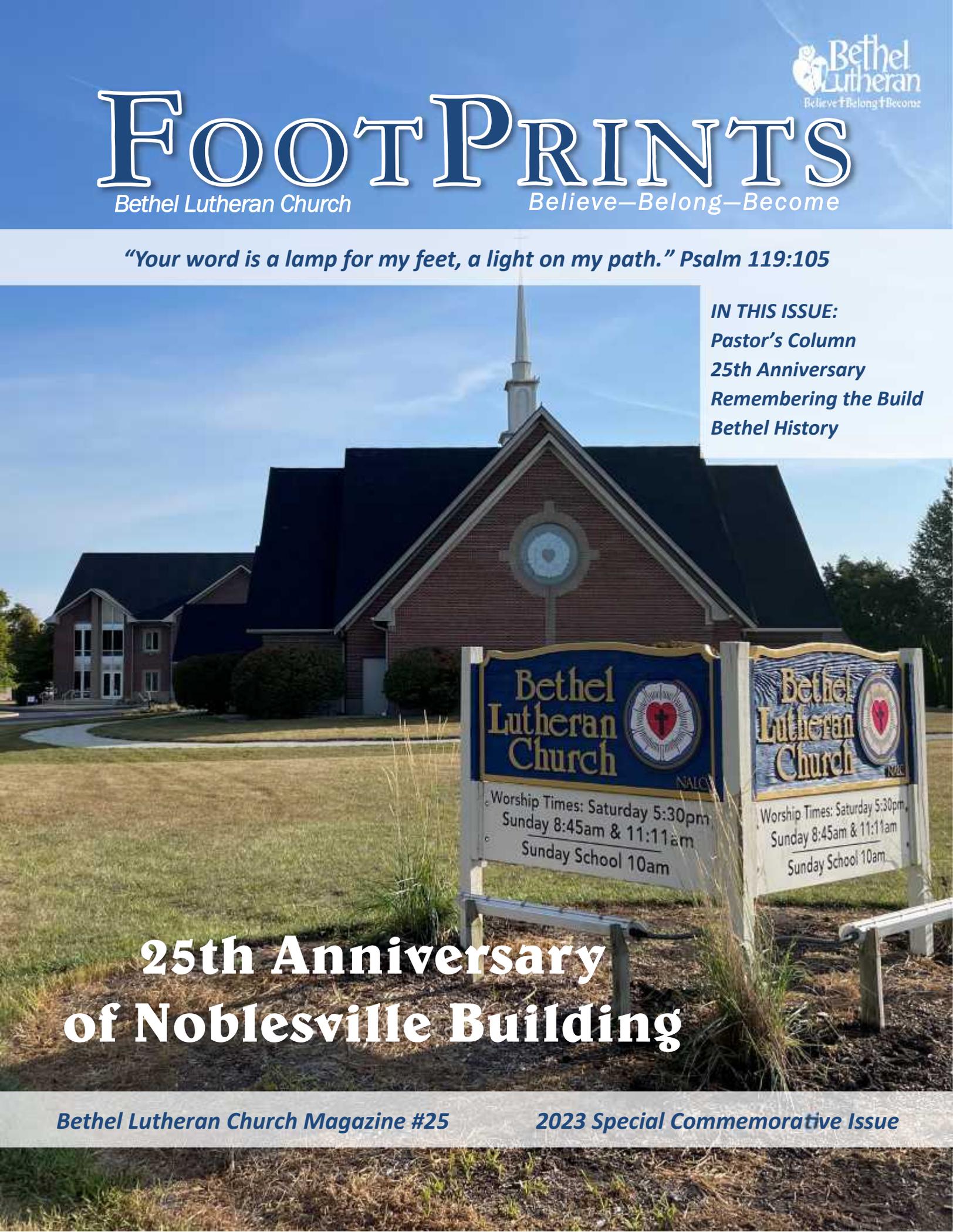
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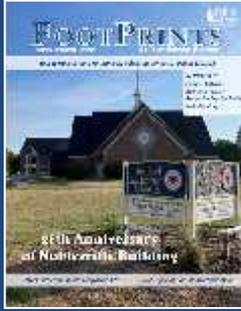
Bethel History



The background image shows the exterior of the Bethel Lutheran Church building, a large brick structure with a prominent steeple. In the foreground, two large wooden signs are visible. The sign on the left is blue with gold lettering and features the church's logo. The sign on the right is white with blue lettering and also features the church's logo. Both signs list the church's name and worship times: Saturday 5:30pm, Sunday 8:45am & 11:11am, and Sunday School 10am.

25th Anniversary of Noblesville Building

FOOTPRINTS



ON THE COVER:
Bethel Lutheran Church

FOOTPRINTS

Issue #25

With the name **FOOTPRINTS**, we honor our commitment to walk in the steps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ leaving a legacy for others to follow. At the same time, we look back and acknowledge the Bethel believers and our own personal *cloud of witnesses* who have gone before us leaving their footprints of faith for us to follow. We hope our humble efforts give Glory to God and provide enlightenment, entertainment, and knowledge to our readers. God bless you all!



Bethel's **vision** is to be a dynamic, life-changing church of fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.



Bethel's **mission** is to **engage** the curious, **encourage** the convinced, and **empower** the committed to be fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.



PoWeR SuRGe

- Pray daily
- Worship regularly
- Read Scripture daily
- Serve others
- Relate to other Christians in Faith
- Give of your financial resources



Editorial Board:

Gay Hanson (Editor in Chief), Jill Dietz, Pastor Doug Gast, Pastor Dave Hill, John Patterson & Suzy Patterson.

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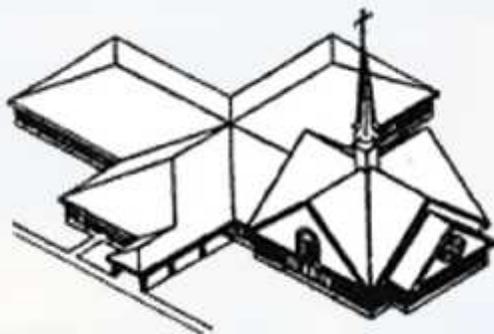
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Building Together With Christ

Giving thanks to God for the past, and looking with prayer to the future!”

*As you come to him, the living Stone –
Rejected by men but chosen by God
and precious to him – you also, like living stones,
are being built into a spiritual house
to be a holy priesthood. 1 Peter 4-5*

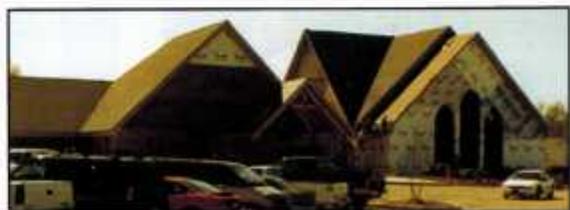


*Sunday, October 22, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.
Celebration of
the 167th Anniversary of the founding of Bethel Lutheran Church
and the 25th Anniversary of the dedication
of our church building at 20650 Cumberland Road, Noblesville, IN.*

*Guest preacher:
Bishop Dan Selbo of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC)*



Building together with Christ





25th ANNIVERSARY BETHEL BUILDING

On Reformation Day 2023, Bethel Lutheran Church will mark the 25th Anniversary of the church building at 206th and Cumberland!

The journey began in the mid-1990s when it became apparent that there were difficulties with the church building at 220 West Jackson Street in Cicero. The growth in the congregation created a number of space issues. The church was “land-locked” between other buildings, a main street, and an alley. There were other difficulties such as the stairs and people with mobility issues. Charlie Scherer spent many Sundays in the lounge where he could hear but not see the service because he could not manage the stairs. Parking was an issue even though the church had purchased a 60 ft. property three doors down, demolished the house, and created a parking lot. Something needed to be done!

So, Pastor Doug led a series of “cottage meetings” hosted in various homes to discuss the situation. Every member was invited to attend one meeting to hear from the church leadership and to give their input, ideas, and vision. Three options were presented and discussed: 1) add to the current building by building upward; 2) buy the homes/buildings around the current church; or 3) relocate. It quickly became evident that relocation was the best option.

A Land Acquisition Committee, chaired by Phil Wise, was formed, and they started looking at where to relocate. They looked at 17 different properties ranging from over by Indiana 31 to near Anderson, and from Noblesville to Arcadia. The 10



acres at 206th and Cumberland came up for sale for about \$10,500 an acre on a Sunday in 1994, and Bethel had a proposal ready in a week. To pay off the land, members could “buy” a 10 ft. by 10 ft. square for \$2.42. A chart was posted with the squares filled in as they were paid for. The property was paid off in less than two years, and in

November of 1995, a ceremony was held on the new property to “burn the mortgage.”

An Architectural Design Committee, chaired by Stan Renner, was formed. The Committee had three mandates from the congregation on what they wanted to keep from the Cicero building: 1) the stained glass; 2) the organ; and 3) the heavy wood effect. Deciding on an architectural design was not an easy process, but finally, in consultation with the ELCA’s architect Peter Norgren, a design was chosen. It was approved by the congregation on June 9th, 1996.



A Building/Construction Committee, co-chaired by David Copenhaver and Jeff Heir, was formed. It was made up of a combination of members of the Land Acquisition and Architectural Design Committees with a few additions. Jeff Heir was the Superintendent of Schools in Westfield at the time, and he took a year off from that job to work on the Bethel building project.

Mission Builders consented to take part in the construction. They would provide construction experience and leadership, and the Bethel congregation would help with whatever skills and manpower they could.

A capital fundraising company was hired to help raise the funds needed. They set minimum, medium, and high goals for pledges. The high goal was reached the night before the pledges were dedicated at the Sunday worship service. Many different methods of fundraising came into play from monetary donations to a day’s business profits, and by 1997, the land was dedicated and ready.

Continued on page 6

The “ground-breaking” was held in 1997, using the old plow and a huge rope that everyone present pulled. That old plow, which today sits by the main door of Bethel, has been used to “break ground” for the current Bethel building, the education addition, and the education addition to the Jackson Street church. The plow was originally owned by Jeddie Hicks.



The Mission Builders arrived in the summer with their eight trailers, and they brought excitement to the

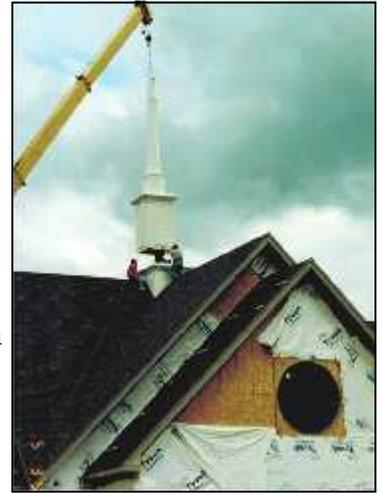
project! Led by George Monter, they worked Tuesday through Saturday. Most of the Mission Builders stayed from June through September, but Robert Peterson stayed a whole year to help by living with his daughter in Indianapolis.

The garage was constructed first, and it soon became the hub of the building site. Devotions were held every morning and lunch was provided. On Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., crews of Bethel members came to work. Even the children of the congregation helped. Pastor Doug says one of the walls in the Pantry has a lot more than its share of nails!



The participation of the Mission Builders also made some modification to the original plans easier. The sanctuary was expanded from the original plans by 12 ft. on each side. The entrance was originally designed as an open breezeway but was enclosed as it is now. The hallway was extended a further 20 feet to provide more rooms, and there was an open pass-through from the kitchen to the narthex. The three offices down the hall were designed as one room with the ability to make them into one, two, or three spaces. Where the Chapel is now was supposed to be a library/conference room and has been used as office space with movable partitions.

The day the steeple went up was a big day! It was a Sunday, and almost everyone came after worship to watch. Becks donated the use of the crane, and a gentleman with the nickname of “Rabbit” provided the expertise. It was a cloudy day with storms and rain to the east and west, but Bethel got a two-hour window of dry weather to complete the installation!



In addition to the Mission Builders, other groups came to help. A church group from Illinois came and stayed for a couple of days to plant all the trees and bushes around the parking lot.

Church furnishing also had to be considered. Items that came from the Jackson Street building include: the Holy Spirit lamp, the two stained glass windows of Jesus, the shields on the back wall (from the old church’s balcony), and the pews with rounded ends and carving. The altar, altar rail, candlesticks, and altar cross were brought from the old church and installed in the Chapel. Mary Lou Waltz organized a group to raise funds to move, restore and enlarge the organ. The bell from the original 1865 Bethel building is on display by the front entrance. It was out of Bethel’s possession for several decades but returned to Bethel in the 1980s, moved to the new property and re-dedicated as part of the 150th Anniversary celebrations.



Before the concrete was poured for the floor, Stan Renner buried a brick from the 1864 building and one from the 1930 building. The cornerstone from the Jackson Street church was brought over, opened, and the contents examined. New items

were added, and the date 1998 was put on the stone. It was installed in the corner of the narthex.

New items were either built or bought and many gave generously to complete the furnishings. The altar furniture was all made by a Mission Builder from Rockford, IL.



The Jackson Street building was sold in October 1997. Since the building project had only begun, Bethel met at the 7th Day Adventist Church in Cicero until the Fellowship Hall was built. From June to October of 1998, worship was held in the Fellowship Hall of the new building while the sanctuary was completed.



It is interesting to note that for the first 3 or 4 years of the new building, visitors and new members would often say that what brought them to Bethel was “we watched you guys build.”

The dedication worship service was held on Reformation Sunday 1998 so in 2023, Bethel will commemorate and celebrate 25 years of worship of our Lord Jesus Christ in the building at 206th and Cumberland. Glory to God and Happy Anniversary, Bethel!



Mission Builders are people from all walks of life - including contractors, builders, carpenters and others who have an interest in learning about construction techniques.

Working side-by-side with participants from the congregation, Mission Builders helps construct or improve the congregation’s facility at significant cost savings. Mission Builders strives to help broaden the congregation’s spiritual and congregational outreach to the world.

Mission Builders who helped build Bethel:

- Jerry & Jan Abner of St. Joseph, IL
- Donald & Clarice Anderson of Harlan, IA
- Paul & Rachel Baughman of Spokane, WA
- Cecil & Marlene Bradley of Masarytown, FL
- Donald & Arlene Dinsmore of Elwood, IN
- Emmert & Shirley Juhl of Exira, IA
- George & Shirley Monter of Acton, MA
- Odean & Lois Odegard of Burnside, MN
- Robert Peterson of Knotts Island, NC
- Paul & Lucile Price of Eaton, OH
- Charles & Helen Stormo of Hayti, SD
- Clarence & Marlene Strabel of Smethport, PA



REMEMBERING THE BUILD

By Andy & Jill Dietz

These are some of the recollections that Andy and I have from the members building our current building.



Mission Builders – Most people who have joined the church in the last 10 years or so have no idea that the congregation actually BUILT the church. We had people called Mission Builders who were retired industry people – electricians, plumbers and so on, and their wives, who brought RV's and lived in our parking lot, which was laid first, with the garage. They instructed us on how to do everything, every step of the way. People painted, stained, roofed, laid flooring, laid drywall, installed things.... Every bit of it was done by us.



Kid's night – We had a special night, where the little kids around 5 years old could come and help. The Mission Builders made sure it was safe, and the kids did things like pick up nails into buckets and hammered those nails into a cross that we used for years to put our prayers on, which were later burned to be used for Ash Wednesday. That cross is still around.

Pews – A group of members from the Ft. Wayne Lions Club were driving by and saw all of the activity at Bethel. They stopped in and asked if they could help for the day, which they did. They also said that they had pews they were not using in a warehouse in Ft. Wayne and we were welcome to them. We just had to go get them. We also got pews from King of Glory in Carmel, as they were switching to chairs. So, our sanctuary has 3 different styles of pews in it, including the original ones from Jackson Street!



Stopping for lunch – the ladies of the church who weren't able to do any construction stuff, and others would provide lunch in the garage, which was the first thing built. Everyone stopped for lunch, and we all ate at the same time. Great meals!

Scriptures in the stud stage – After the studs were in, before the drywall went up, Pastor Doug told us to write our favorite scriptures on the studs, so that the building would literally be built "On the word of God." I know where we wrote our verses, and I found them a few years ago, in a box, but I no longer remember what we wrote.

Worshipping at the Seventh Day Advent Church – We had to move out of the old Bethel Church before our new church was built, so for time, we worshiped at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Cicero. I know we had Christmas there that year.

There were four things requested by members in a poll before we left the old building. Not sure of the order of importance, but the items that we wanted to bring along or reproduce, were the Altar that's now in the chapel, the organ, the stained-glass windows and the big beams.



Lu Olp had a big hand in designing the Narthex floor and picking other furnishings.

The Eternity Candle – is the original one from Jackson Street.



Worshipping in the Fellowship Hall – our new Fellowship Hall was completed before the Sanctuary so we spent some time worshipping in there. We'd put chairs out every Sunday and fold them back up after the service. We only had one service for that time.

The stained-glass windows and the stained glass medallions are from Jackson Street and are the center pieces. The outer pieces had to be matched and it took us a while to find the right guy to do that job.



Holding the robes for Ransom – I was the Choir Director, and we ordered new choir robes while we were still in the Fellowship Hall. One Sunday, I held one up for ransom, telling the congregation that Pastor Doug (with his permission) was going to sing every time he could get the chance, until I had the money to finish paying for the robes. I had enough money by the end of that service! Phyllis Anderson ironed every one of those robes all on her own for our dedication, which was the first time we sang wearing them in the new completed sanctuary.

Refurbishing the Pipe Organ – Mary Lou Waltz was the front runner of this. She built an organ out of cardboard with paper tubes for the pipes. As money came in to fund the refurbishing, she'd paint a tube. When all tubes were painted, we got the organ done. The organ in the sanctuary is the original one from Jackson Street, refurbished, updated, and with new pipes. (I don't know if we brought any old pipes or not.)



REMEMBERING THE BUILD

By John & Glenda Grimes

When Sunday attendance for 3 straight weeks was over 200, the congregation voted to look into relocation.

Years prior, we had planned to put a second story on the education wing but were told wasn't possible. The property was not big enough to add more building.



After looking at 17 different pieces of property, in January 1994, the Council voted to take option on 10A at 206th & Cumberland.

The Congregation was asked what it wanted in the new building, The main items were:

-) Looks like a church
-) Take windows
 - Over altar on north wall
 - In balcony on south wall
 - Medallions in side windows
-) Holy Week shields from the balcony
-) Organ
-) Altar
-) Sign boards either side of altar
-) Pews

March 1995, Mylar Church Building was hired for planning, designing, and construction of the new church. Rick Hatcher, Mike Reed and Dave Copenhaver were appointed to the building committee.

We paid off the land in October 1996. We dedicated the site and burned the mortgage on November 3, 1996.

After concern and discontent with Mylar; Architectural Committee went to Chicago to meet with

ELCA Architect Peter Norgren. Liked his ideas and designs.

5 or 6 couples – Mission Builders from ELCA came with RVs. Neighbors had been informed of plans to park on lot. A group of members from the congregation visited the neighbors and explained what was happening. They neighbors were hesitant but understood that the RVs would be there maybe only 6 months.

Mission Builders were introduced to congregation before we moved from Jackson St.

On last Sunday, October 26, 1997, church items were taken at end of service by several members in ceremony for safekeeping.



Garage on new property was built first for storage of tools and meals while starting to build. Women of Mission Builders and ladies of church fixed lunch each day. Sue Alexander organized meals for the Mission Builders at night in the homes of congregation members.

Member of congregation loaned shovels, brooms, wheelbarrows, ladders, etc. for working.

Some members worked days, some evenings, some on Saturday. Sundays and Mondays were always days off.

After some construction up, the kids were allowed to come sweep, pick up trash on site, and other tasks as their share.

After church at 220 was sold to local businessman, worship on Sundays at 7th Day Adventist north of Cicero; offices remained in education wing.

REMEMBERING THE BUILD

By Gary Melby

The old plow was used in ground breaking – 2 ropes were attached to front and members including kids pulled plow. This same plow was used to break ground for education wing in Cicero – maybe even on sanctuary.

Fellowship area was constructed first and soon as possible worship was held there using chairs and bare concrete.

Large windows had been removed, were cleaned, reinforced and enlarged. Medallions were taken and included in larger windows.

Plans were to enlarge sanctuary later, but attendance was growing so we decided to enlarge now rather than trying to remove large windows at a later time.

Most of trees in and surrounding parking lot were brought in by a member using semi and flat bed borrowed from Beck's Hybrids. One load came from Illinois; other LaPorte, IN. Once planted, it was up to secretary to water them.

Our members did most of work – even roofing. The steeple was placed with help from crane borrowed from Beck's Hybrids. They were doing some construction on their plant. 3 or 4 members were on the roof helping to position it.

Members had their own fundraising projects – one member donated a portion of her store receipts on a specific day to the building fund.

One of our members designed and built the sanctuary lights.

The large round window was donated by church members in honor of family members.

The Chapel was donated by a member in memory of her husband.

Organ dedication – Glenda Crunard, hired in 1999, and Sharon Watson played duets. Ironical that now Sharon is our organist 25 years later.

The Eternity Candle came from the old church. It was made by a former member in memory of grandparents and in honor of his parents.

Dedication of new building was October 25, 1998.

Education wing was added later.

There are 2 things I remember the best.

Writing on the studs before we covered them. A favorite scripture, or church happening, or just your name, it was a very somber occasion.

Not fun at the time but we can all laugh now, shingling the roof. The builders needed more shingles. I was going to get some... not an easy task. Lost my footing on our steep roof and I burned the pockets off the back of my jeans. Funny now, not funny then!

Last – the Mission Builders. What wonderful, saintly people. At the end of the day they liked to enjoy a “grape soda.”



REMEMBERING THE BUILD

By Stan Renner

As I remember, sometime in 1993, the church council created three committees tasked with the possibility of relocating Bethel Lutheran Church. These were: the land acquisition committee chaired by Phil Wise, the Finance committee chaired by Stacy Miller, and the architectural design committee chaired by Stan Renner.

This last committee's original members were Stan Renner and members Dave Baden, Becky Davies, Nancy Martz, Lu Olp, and Janet Webber. Non-voting members included council representatives Ginger Wooster and Pastor Doug Gast. As time went on, some members left due to time commitments and others were added.



Jackson Street church sanctuary

This committee made field trips to view several recently erected churches. One debate centered around the issue of building a sanctuary-centered building or a multi-purpose building. The vast majority of the committee, recognizing that our current building had a beautiful sanctuary, agreed the new building would need to re-create a beautiful sanctuary.

After one unsuccessful attempt to create a design with a church building firm, the committee reached out to the ELCA for guidance. The ELCA arranged a meeting with the ELCA architect in Chicago. I well remember his quote to our committee, "We Lutherans are about worship in a beautiful setting." He then went to a white board in front of the room and made a design that

became the basis for our new building. The committee was in agreement that we would use this design moving forward.



After this, the committee would evolve into a new committee for the actual building of the church. This new committee would be chaired by Jeff Heier and David Copenhaver. The original committee remained on this building committee, dealing with interior design decisions. Stan Renner and Dave Baden arranged for the removal and restoration of the two large stained glass windows to be included in the new building. Stan also arranged for the removal of the cornerstone to its new location in the narthex. Nancy Martz, Lu Olp, and Stan Renner worked with interior designers for many elements in our new sanctuary. Mary Lou Waltz and Lu Olp headed a committee to relocate and expand the pipe organ. Dave Baden enlarged and redesigned the eternal lamp for the size of the new sanctuary. Many other donations and memorial were made.

It was not easy for many in our congregation to leave our existing building, but, taking several items from the old building made the move a little easier. Re-locating the altar and parts of the communion rail to the new Kepner Chapel was a significant event for long-time members. The chapel was made possible by a significant gift from Anna Kepner widow of Talmadge Kepner, a long-time Bethel member.



REMEMBERING THE BUILD

By Vicki Cooper

My memories of building our new church are all happy even though I have to admit that when it was first mentioned of moving to a new location, I was hoping it wouldn't happen. I was baptized in our church on Jackson Street as an infant so I grew up at Bethel, Cicero ~ Sunday School, junior & senior choirs, catechism, acolyting, Junior and Senior Luther League, helping Dad when he was custodian, married there, baptizing both of our daughters there, saw several pastors come and go, teaching Sunday School, etc. However, when I looked at it realistically, we were landlocked on Jackson Street, & we were outgrowing our facility, I was okay with moving. The fact that the property chosen was across the street from a former part of early Bethel made it even easier to accept. I was among several who shed tears when we held our last service at Cicero on 10/26/97.

I was always grateful that the Cicero Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) let us use their lovely sanctuary for our Sunday services. We didn't have to find a gym or auditorium or empty storefront to rent for worship.

Breaking ground in June, 1997, was exciting, but it looked like a monumental task. Each time we stopped to help or just to check on progress, the changes were amazing. I'm sure there were setbacks, but if so, I don't remember them. The Mission Builders were a blessing. We were glad to have their leadership for 4 or 5 months. One of the Mission Builders, Don Dinsmore, had worked with my dad years ago.

As I watched & prayed for the new building to take shape, I had another concern. In late summer, early fall of 1997, our daughter Kira was engaged to Todd VonBlon, & they set a wedding date of 7/25/98. So . . . how and where do we plan a wedding?! Didn't want to get married at the SDA church, even if they allowed it & it could be beautiful there. Would new Bethel be ready for a wedding on July 25th?!

We watched and prayed for an answer every time we were at the new building. Lo & behold, our first service at new Bethel was held on June 7, 1998, one year after breaking ground — in the Fellowship Hall because the sanctuary was not ready yet. Thank you, Lord! We could make some plans now for a wedding on July 25th at Bethel. The first couple of services in the Fellowship Hall found us sitting on folding chairs and not necessarily arranged in the same way, but that didn't matter. On Sunday, July 5th, we came in for services & found pews & carpet in the Fellowship Hall! So our plans for a July wedding took shape and were completed. Rehearsal was a great event in itself with the meal served in the narthex after rehearsal & fixed in our new kitchen! Kira & Todd weren't the first couple to be married in the new building ~ maybe second.



7/24/1998 - Wedding rehearsal in the Fellowship Hall
(after pews were moved in)



Altar dressed up for wedding.



Pastor Doug, Pastor Weeg, and Todd
awaiting the bride.

BETHEL BEGINNINGS: 1856-1929

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in a broom shop in Cicero on October 12, 1856. The Rev. Ambrose H. Scherer, pastor of Mt. Pleasant Church near Arcadia, met with 8 charter members to organize the congregation. The 8 charter members were: Michael Brown, David Garber, David Kistler, Charlotte Kepner, Francis Kepner, Samuel Kepner, John Applegate, and Jacob Kepner.

From 1856 to 1864, the school house in Cicero was used for a meeting place. The first church building was completed in 1864 at a cost of \$1,427.85. It measured 32' x 48' and was located at the corner of Cass and Pearl Streets in Cicero.

In 1875, the congregation installed a reed organ in the church building, later replaced by a piano, and eventually in 1947 by a Wicks pipe organ.



Interior of the church at Cass and Pearl Streets. Picture dates from 1896-1908 (45-star flag).

Historical Highlights

1856 – Mt. Pleasant's Pastor Ambrose H. Scherer met with 8 persons in a broom shop in Cicero and organized a Lutheran congregation in Cicero, naming it Bethel Lutheran. They met for services in a school in Cicero.

1862 – Ten families were assessed \$4.40 each to obtain funds to purchase a lot in Cicero for \$44.40. A resolution was passed to build a brick building.

1864 – The building cost \$1,427.85. This left a surplus in the building fund of \$56.15. This building still stands at the corner of Cass and Pearl Streets.

1873 – Bethel purchased a parsonage on Buckeye Street and repaired it for a total cost of \$850.00.

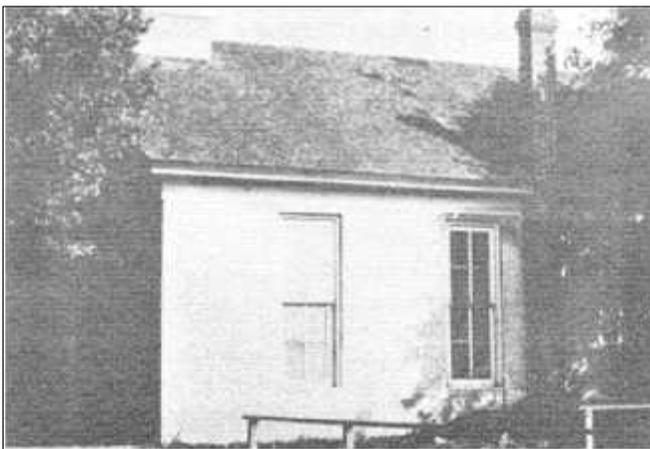
1875 – By a ballot of 25-9, the congregation voted to purchase a reed organ for the church.

1898 – Bethel ladies and young people earned \$275.00 to buy new pews. These pews were used until 1964, when they were sold for \$500.00.

1913 – Pastor M.L. Smith was the first pastor to own an automobile.

1917 – Three men on Church Council (Martin Luther Bishop, Otto K. Jensen, and Harry Scherer) went into the service during World War I. Their places were filled by three ladies of the congregation. This is of particular interest because women did not gain the right to vote until 1920.

1929 – Jacob G. Kepner, oldest living lifelong member of Bethel congregation, tossed out the first shovel of earth in groundbreaking for the second Bethel building.



The original church at Cass & Pearl Streets – built 1864.

In 1873, a parsonage was bought, repaired, and furnished with a pastor's study at a total cost of \$850. This was replaced in 1929 with the purchase of a property on S. Harrison Street.



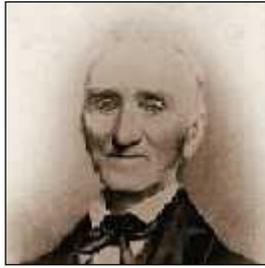
Rev. Ambrose Henkle Scherer was born in North Carolina on November 22, 1822. When he was 15, his parents moved to Hendricks County, Indiana. While working in the woods, he felt he had a direct call, "Ambrose, I need thee in My vineyard." He walked to Olney, Illinois, to study with his uncle, a graduate of Gettysburg College.

He was licensed to preach in 1852 and was pastor of the neighboring Mt. Pleasant church when he started the church in Cicero. He organized a total of 17 Lutheran churches in central Indiana. Rev. Scherer died in 1892. He is buried in Sharpsville Cemetery, Tipton County, Indiana.

MT. PLEASANT: 1837-1936

Mt. Pleasant

The Rev. Abraham Reck and the Rev. John Garver, residents of Indianapolis, traveled to Hamilton County by horseback, visiting people in Jackson and White River Townships and preaching to groups in private homes. The devoted efforts of these two men culminated in the organization of the Mt. Pleasant Lutheran congregation in November of 1837 with 15 members. The Council consisted of two elders, two deacons, and the pastor, the Rev. John Garver, who received \$20 per year for his services.



Mt. Pleasant—1909

During the first year, five new members were gained. With continued growth, the second year saw the erection of the first little frame church building, dedicated in May of 1839. It was built one mile east and a quarter of a mile south of Arcadia, on a lot donated by Peter Achenbach. Many of the early church members were German, therefore, it was this language that prevailed in the services.

In the course of the next twenty years, there was a rapid growth of membership, several pastoral changes, and the withdrawal of several of the German families. Those families left to form their own church, which later became Arcadia's Emmanuel Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod. Despite this loss, Mt. Pleasant's membership had increased by the 1860's to the degree that the "little church" was no longer adequate. A larger building was constructed in 1862 and used until 1936, when the congregation merged with Bethel.



Mt. Pleasant Cemetery 2017

Historical Highlights

1837 – Mt. Pleasant congregation was organized with Rev. John Garver serving as pastor. The 15 members met in a school on David Knapp's farm. Pastor Garver received \$20 per year for his services.

1838 – Mt. Pleasant confirmed a class of 8 catechumens and administered communion to 28 members.

1838 – Peter Achenbach donated land for a church. This was a small crude building with low ceilings and rough-hewn floors.

1852 – Congregation split with many German members joining the newly organized Missouri Synod and erecting a building 1/4 mile south of Mt. Pleasant. This was the beginning of Emmanuel Lutheran Church located in Arcadia.

1862 – Mt. Pleasant's building became too small. The congregation purchased lumber cut for a barn for \$150. Because of this, the completed building stood higher than most churches. It is interesting to note that years later, after Mt. Pleasant ceased as a congregation, the building was moved across the road and was converted into a barn. It was destroyed by fire in the 1970s.

1936 – Congregation joined the Bethel congregation.

From 1837-1936, Communion was given 4 times a year — once a quarter.

OLIVE BRANCH: 1895-1932

Olive Branch

In the 1850s and 1860s, several Pennsylvania Germans and a few families directly from Germany settled in an area 4 miles southeast of Cicero. This community centered around two focal points: the Baton Rouge School, located at the intersection of 206th Street and Cumberland Road, and the Zimmer Cemetery, 1 ½ miles east of the school.

When roads were passable, the pioneers worshipped in homes and the schoolhouse. They were served by pastors from Bethel and Mt. Pleasant, usually on Sunday afternoons. After existing as an informal congregation for almost 40 years, it was decided to erect a building of their own. An argument arose as to the best location for the church building. Some wanted it built near the Zimmer Cemetery and some near the Baton Rouge School. A site near the school was selected. The dispute caused a few families to join Bethel 40 years before the rest of the Olive Branch congregation. In 1895, a frame building was erected diagonally across from the Baton Rouge School. The congregation was named Olive Branch.

In 1909, Olive Branch organized as a congregation separate from Bethel, yet sharing pastors. The following year, some members of Bethel, who lived closer to Olive Branch, left Bethel and joined Olive Branch. The church had a membership of 60 in 1915.



Olive Branch Lutheran Church—1916

The coming of the automobile made the 4 miles between Cicero and Olive Branch “shrink.” This pulled the congregations closer together. More and more, the activities of the church were part of and connected to Bethel. In the 1920s, the churches had common pastors, Missionary Societies, and Dorcas Societies. In many cases, the two churches were not only connected by a common faith and the same pastor, but also by family relationships. The church merged with Bethel in 1932.



Otis Roberts, Kid Kepner, Walter Barker, Leonard Eck, Ralph Kellam, Ora Kepner in front of Olive Branch.

Historical Highlights

1895 – A committee from Bethel and Pastor Marion Mohler formally developed this group into a congregation naming it Olive Branch, but still connected to Bethel, the mother congregation.

1895 – A building committee was organized. A frame building was erected diagonally across from the Baton Rouge school at the intersection of 206th Street and Cumberland Road.

1895 – John Yansel donated his sawmill to cut the 15,000 feet of lumber for the building.

1909 – Olive Branch was granted the privilege of organizing as an independent congregation, yet part of the Cicero Lutheran Parish.

1910 – Thirty members of Bethel withdrew their membership and joined the Olive Branch congregation located in their immediate locality.

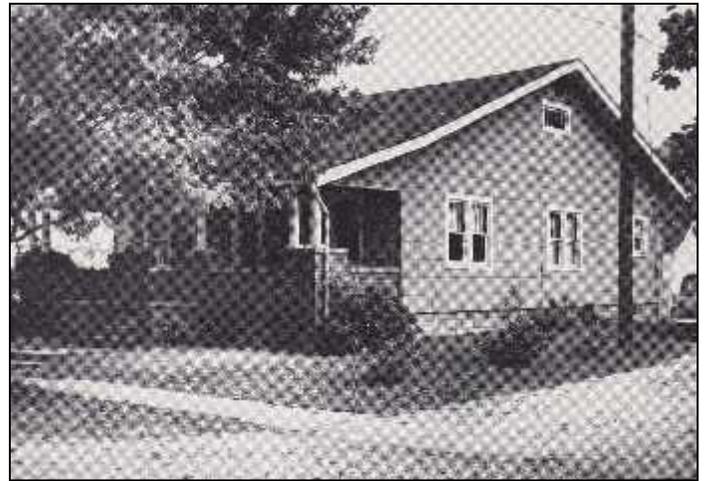
1932 – Olive Branch voted to join Bethel’s congregation by a ballot of 19 yes, 4 no, and 4 abstaining. Olive Branch ceased to exist as a separate congregation.



GROWTH AND MERGER: 1895-1937



1902 Calendar showing church connections



39 S. Harrison Street Parsonage

purchase a parsonage. It followed very naturally that within the decade both Olive Branch (1932) and Mt. Pleasant (1937) merged with Bethel to form one united congregation. While the closing of two churches could have been a sad event, for most it was an opportunity to unite their faith and their families in a beautiful new building.



Bethel building—dedicated October 1930

During the 1920s, it became apparent that a new church building was needed to meet the demands of a growing Bethel congregation. In 1925, a plot of land on East Jackson Street was purchased for \$1,400 and then began the long road toward raising sufficient funds for the proposed \$20,000 edifice. After much long, hard work and despite the national depression which began in 1929, the struggle paid off...the dream became a reality!! Dedication for the beautiful new facility, was held in October of 1930.

By this time, the three separate congregations were already cooperating in many ways. A common church council existed among the Mt. Pleasant, Bethel, and Olive Branch Churches. In fact, in 1929, the three churches acted together to



First shovel thrown by Jacob Kepner

The Service Circle was a group of women organized in 1929 to help pay off the debt of the new church building. They set monthly dues at the rate of five cents a member, and the membership ranged over the years from approximately 50 to 55 members. In order for these women to pay their pledge to the building fund, they served suppers and banquets, sold food at auction sales, had markets, did quilting, and sold a variety of small items. When its goal had been reached, in 1943, the Service Circle disbanded, deserving great credit for their efforts in paying off the church debt.

BETHEL IN THE 1930s

The 1930s was a very active time at Bethel with much going on in addition to regular worship.

In the early 30s, Pastor Homer Lindsay served as the Choir Director of a relatively large choir which sang from the balcony. Because the choir loft was so full for one notable performance of a cantata, Pastor Lindsay directed from a platform suspended outside the balcony railing!



During this time period, the Adventists occasionally joined with Bethel in giving musical programs. This combined group made beautiful music and provided an opportunity for fellowship with other denominations. The choir has been very active over the years and has contributed much to the worship life of the congregation.

The Luther League was very active in the 1930s. They met on Sunday prior to the evening church services; a business meeting and party were held once a month at a member's home. In October of 1935, the State Luther League Convention was held in Cicero. Bethel was always represented at district meetings which were held as far east as Richmond and in places such as Ovid and Crossroads. The women of the host church served a meal to all at no charge. It has been mentioned that at one of the



meetings, the boys put an auto bomb on Rev. Don Elder's car. It sounded like a cannon!

In the early 30s while Pastor Lindsay was here, there was a very active basketball league in which Bethel participated. The Bethel team traveled as far as Wittenberg College in Springfield, Ohio, to play their freshman team. The team played often in Indianapolis. There was also an active softball league.



One of the most vivid memories of this period was the yearly trek to church camp. Leaving after worship service on Sunday by car pool or sometimes by school bus, the group motored to

Oakwood Park on Lake Wawasee. For a week each summer the local Lutheran youth gathered with other Lutheran youth from all over the state. They rented a two-story cabin near the big Auditorium; additional rooms were available in the Oakwood Hotel. Some of the cabin names were "We Like It," "Paws (Paw prints) and Rest," and "Dew Drop In."

Sunday evening vespers at the Auditorium marked the beginning of the camp. Morning devotions began each day, followed by classes until about noon. After returning to the cabin for lunch, quiet hour, and study time, most of the afternoon was left free. Free time was spent boating, swimming, sunning, and going to Syracuse. Other choices were nature hikes, choir practice, parties with other cabins, and preparing skits for stunt night. A yearly ritual was for the older boys to try to take the clapper from the bell that was rung before sessions. Monday night was banquet night at the Hotel. Each evening campers assembled for vespers with one evening service held outdoors overlooking the lake. Also, there was one sunrise service.

Parents and church members would donate food for the week. The Nightenhelser kids would take a sugar-cured ham. On the days they fixed the ham, the savory aroma attracted campers from miles around!



Two mothers or other ladies from the church would go along to do the cooking. The kids took turns at K.P. – washing dishes, going to the grocery, checking for mail, setting tables, and filling water glasses at meal times.

BETHEL IN THE 1940s & 1950s

Sunday School and other activities

The Sunday School was very active with an average attendance of from 125 to 135. The largest number recalled is 162. Sunday School was from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. the year round. Opening services were held in the nave for the older youth and adults. Then everyone went to class, returning to the nave for the closing service. For several years (until the mid-60s) the Church School also met on Thursday nights along with choir practice.

During the mid-50s through the 50s, the children joined together in the basement area for a brief opening service prior to going to individual class areas. The little ones always had the corner room while other classes met in the kitchen, on the stage (with the curtain pulled), the balcony, various corners of the basement (each with a sand box), and on occasion, even in the cloak room. On a few special occasions, the children were invited to join the “big folks” upstairs for the opening service.



Bible School Class of the 1940s

There were special Saturday afternoon parties... Easter, Halloween, and Christmas...and sometimes an extra one thrown in. Little Easter bunny cakes, tiny birthday cakes, and Christmas trees made of popcorn brought smiles to many little faces. Also recalled by many is a round, white, wooden birthday cake. During the brief opening service, a birthday child would be honored with lighted candles in the wooden cake while being serenaded with the birthday song. Children having a birthday would contribute to the offering pennies for each year of age.

Christmas Eve programs were presented by the children. At the close of the program, the Young Married People's Class distributed oranges, apples, and bags of assorted hard candies to everyone.

In 1934, there wasn't any class of the young married couples at Bethel. In 1935, the Young Married People's Class was organized with dues of five cents each month. Money wasn't so plentiful then and



Junior Choir from the early 1950s

people couldn't go out like they do today. So everyone looked forward to the Tuesday night meeting and social. There was a pitch-in supper, devotions, and a business meeting. Then everyone visited or played games. The class grew fast and soon had too many to meet in the homes, so the meetings were moved to the church basement. The Christmas oyster supper was a yearly event. (It remained popular for many years.)

The class divided into two groups on the north and south sides of Cicero. Whenever anyone in one group needed help, the other members of that group pitched in. A closeness in the class was achieved by this service aspect of the group.

The five cents dues didn't add up very fast so it was decided to do something to make money. The class served suppers to the Lions Club, dinners at auction sales, election board and funeral meals, and penny suppers. They also cleaned the church once a year along with many other projects. It was a lot of hard work but there was a great deal of fun and fellowship in the process.

During the Cicero Fall Festival, the church had a concession stand where sandwiches, homemade doughnuts, and soft drinks were sold. The profits were used to fund the activities and projects of various church groups over the years.

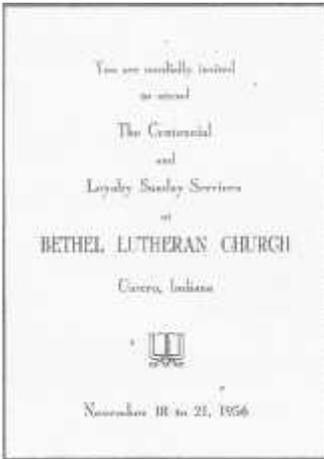
Another money making event was the ice cream social held on the Sowerwine's lawn (located where the Hamilton County Bank parking lot is today.) It is reported that twenty-five gallons of ice cream were made!

1930 – the Cicero church building was finished at a cost of \$20,000.

Church furniture was purchased at a cost of \$52 for the pulpit, \$151.20 for the altar, and \$30 for the lectern.

R.B. Schaffer Furniture and Undertaking supplied 8 dozen chairs at a cost of \$12.00 per dozen.

BETHEL: 1956 to 1981



The next milestone in Bethel's history was the Centennial Celebration in November of 1956. In addition to the traditional anniversary worship services and other festivities, a commemorative booklet was printed. That first century of progress provided a strong foundation for the further building, both spiritual and material, that identifies the next 25-year span.

The sanctuary had undergone significant changes as well. The previous 25 years had seen a church with bare floors, creaky pews, a brown linoleum aisle runner, and dull green walls transformed into a truly beautiful house of worship with its own charm and grace. The church interior was painted in 1963 and again in 1977. The new pews, carpeting, communion rail, and choir lofts were installed in 1964. The pews were refinished and reupholstered in 1978.



Bethel Choir at 100th Anniversary

Church membership had been building through the years...gaining some new ones, losing some old ones, but overall a steady increase. At the end of 1980, the baptized membership stood at 246 and confirmed membership was 196.

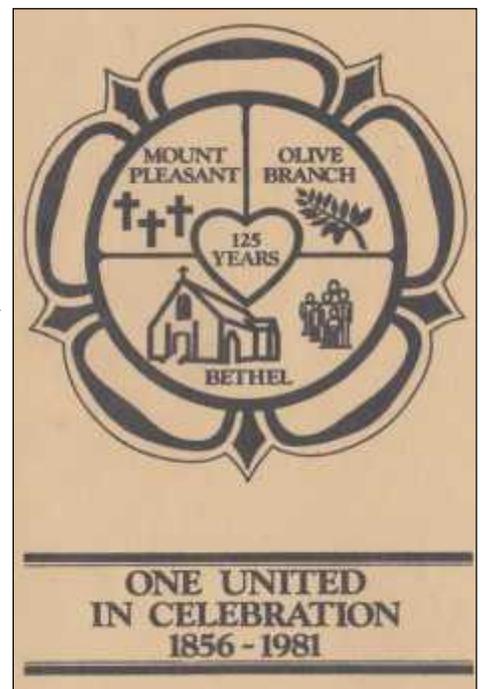
In the late '50s, it became apparent that the small brick building on Jackson St. was becoming inadequate. A study of needs was begun by the more than 100 members, under the guidance of Pastor White. Untold hours of meetings and hard work engulfed the congregation in the months to come, but their perseverance resulted in the Christian Education Annex, built in 1966 at a cost of \$52,600. At the



Educational Wing mortgage burning November, 1970

ground breaking ceremonies for the new unit, Rev. Gerald North guided a walking plow while church council members pulled it. The parsonage also underwent some much needed improvement during this time period. A family room was added in 1958 and a garage and breezeway were built in 1963.

So numerous are the memories of Bethel, it is difficult to recount them all. At the time of the 125th Anniversary in October 1981, having reflected on Bethel's past, one fact stood out - namely, that as each new goal was reached, another appeared on the horizon, and so it must always be. So it is today!



125th Anniversary Program

BETHEL: 1981-1993

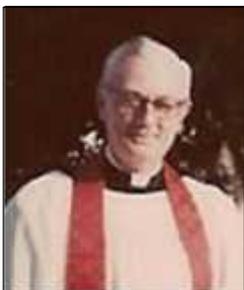
By the mid-1980s, Bethel was on the point of becoming one of the largest and most active congregations in the Indiana/Kentucky Synod. In 1981, Pastor David Christenson, his wife Jane, and boys Peter and Joel came to Bethel to begin an 8-year pastorate. Due to the changing community in Cicero and the need for many overdue improvements to the church parsonage, Pastor Christenson chose early in his pastorate to purchase his own home. This led to the sale of the church parsonage on Harrison St. in Cicero in early 1982.



Pastor David Christenson

However, as some things go by the way side, others make a comeback. In the early 1980s, Bethel created a monthly newsletter which was titled *The Bethel Banner*. While the name may have sounded new to many of the members, the name was actually used back in the 1930s for a more limited newsletter. Bethel's *Banner* became a source of news, meditation, and information to members and friends far and wide.

Bethel members of all ages participated in many different fellowship events during these times. Events included the LCA Global Mission Events and the first Bethel Luau held at the farm of Phil and Joanna Wise. The luau included all the trimmings found at a typical Hawaii luau including the roasted pig, poi, and a traditional hula dance performed by some of Bethel's finest MEN! The dance, according to the August 1986 issue of the *Banner*, told of the planting of corn. What a sight! The mid-1980s saw the reestablishment of the children's choir under a new name "Kids of the Kingdom" led by Diane Matson. The choir not only performed during services but became a traveling show, performing at the homes of some of Bethel's older members. The 1980s also saw the disbanding of the *Married's and Single's* group and the formation of the *Bethel Bunch*. *Bethel Bunch* hosted both adult and family events throughout the year. One of the highlights of the year for all members was the annual wiener roast held at Bob and Jean Geren's farm.



Pastor Weeg

In 1988, Bethel, along with other LCA congregations accepted the new merger of the LCA, ALC and the AELC forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Bethel closed the 1980s with the arrival of Pastor Howard Weeg and his wife Helen. Pastor Weeg served as our interim minister beginning in January 1989 and accepted a call of longer duration later that

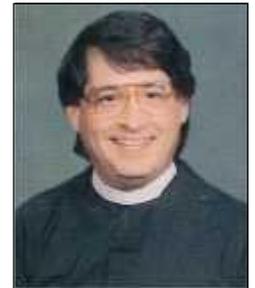
summer. Under Pastor Weeg's loving care, Bethel began the process of introspection and discussion of God's plan for Bethel. Little did the members know that God's plan was about to work in a very mysterious way. In August of 1990, Pastor Doug Gast, his wife Terri and their four children paid the congregation a visit during the annual "Church in the Park" Sunday.



Pastor Doug Gast

This surprise visit led to a formal call going out to Pastor Doug and Terri on December 31, 1990. Due to commitments at his Chicago suburban congregation, Pastor Doug's pastorate did not begin officially until May 1, 1991. Getting off the ground running, Pastor Doug began to meet with members and express his vision and where he believed God was calling Bethel. Pastor Doug's work and vision became

contagious to not only the congregation but the entire Cicero/Noblesville community. Soon Bethel began to see growth at record levels. One of Pastor Doug's focal points was youth, and in 1993, Bethel's youth participated in the first canoe trip to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota. In Pastor Doug's absence, he asked a friend and fellow seminarian, KC Henricks to fill the pulpit for the Sunday of the canoe trip. KC's "pinch hitting" for Doug soon led to his addition to Bethel's staff as Assistant to the Pastor. KC served Bethel for 13 years.



Pastor KC Henricks

With the rapid growth in the early 1990's, the congregation began to look at the needs for space. In early to mid-1993, the Church Council held a series of "Crossroads" meetings to discuss Bethel's facility, parking, and program needs. These meetings led to a formal Congregational Meeting held on September 26, 1993. The meeting followed a pitch-in luncheon and was led by Jim Waltz, Council President and Chuck Schroeder, Assistant to the IN/KY Bishop. A motion was made to begin discussions on relocating the congregation from 220 West Jackson Street to an area north of Noblesville. The motion called for the formation of three ministry teams: Architectural Design, Capital Fundraising, and Site Selection & Acquisition. While controversial, the motion passed 73 to 19. The congregation's decision was approved by the IN/KY Synod on November 13, 1993 with the stipulation that the church focus on the geographic area "north of Noblesville and south of the development around Morse Reservoir."

Noblesville Bethel was on its way!

BETHEL in the 1990s

In August of 1990, Pastor Doug Gast, his wife Terri and their four children paid the congregation a visit during the annual “Church in the Park” Sunday. This surprise visit led to a formal call going out to Pastor Doug and Terri on December 31, 1990, and he began his pastorate at Bethel on May 1, 1991.



Gast Family on steps of Bethel Church '91

Pastor Doug “hit the ground running” and in addition to his duties as pastor began to meet with members to express his vision and where he believed God was calling Bethel. His work and vision became contagious to not only the congregation but the entire Cicero/Noblesville community. Soon Bethel began to see growth at record levels.

One of Pastor Doug’s focal points was youth, and in 1993, Bethel’s youth participated in the first canoe trip to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota. This tradition continues today with Youth Director Joe Rudy leading the trip, which occurs every other year.

With the rapid growth in the early 1990’s, the Congregation began to look at the needs for space. In early to mid-1993, the Church Council held a series of “Crossroads” meetings to discuss Bethel’s facility, parking, and program needs. These meetings led to a formal Congregational Meeting held on September 26, 1993, where a motion was made to begin discussions on relocating the congregation from 220 West Jackson Street to an area north of Noblesville. The motion also called for the formation of three ministry teams: Architectural Design, Capital Fundraising, and Site Selection & Acquisition. While controversial, the motion passed 73 to 19, and the relocation of Bethel had begun.

After looking at various parcels of land, it was decided to buy at the corner of 206th and Cumberland. Ironically, this land was across the street from where Olive Branch Church (one of three churches that merged in the 1930s) had been. With the help of a capital campaign that included Bethel members of all ages, 10 acres of land was purchased in 1994.

Fundraising continued and discussions were held on the design of the church building. There was no consensus on this until the architectural design committee and Pastor Doug traveled to Chicago to meet with ELCA’s Architectural Services. Their architect was able to take the desires of the various people and groups and blend them into the design that was accepted and built. Pastor Doug recalls the trip back from that meeting as being full of joy and excitement.



In 1997, the land was dedicated and ground was broken to begin building the new church building. A Group of Mission Builders arrived and headed up the construction with the help of many members of the congregation.

In October of 1997, the congregation was able to sell the Cicero church building, but that meant the congregation needed somewhere to worship. From October to March of 1998, they met at the 7th Day Adventist Church in Cicero. Once the Fellowship Hall was complete enough, worship services and Sunday school were held there, and it was used until the sanctuary was ready.

The new Bethel Lutheran Church building was dedicated on Reformation Day of 1998.

Following the opening of the new church building, Bethel began to grow significantly in numbers. Some people even came because they had watched the new church being built!

Bethel began the new millennium with a new building and a growing, vital congregation!



BETHEL in the 2000s



The Columbarium and outdoor patio were added.



Improvements have continued for the last 25 years.

In 2007, the Christian Education Wing was added to Bethel.

A bus was acquired for use, and a shelter was built to prolong its life.

More recently, the opportunity arose to acquire the adjacent farm property, and Marilyn's Place is making great use of it serving the community.



In 2012, Bethel joined the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). Pastors and members have been active at the national level as well as in the Heartland Mission District. Pastor Doug is currently the Dean of the Mission District and a member of the NALC's Great Commission Society Committee. Pastor Dave is a clergy member of the Heartland Mission District Council, and Bethel has hosted the Heartland Mission District Convocation several times.



Eagle Projects have improved the property. Raised Gardens; the Shelter; Fire Pit; Peace Trail; benches, trees, and Stations of the Cross plaques were placed along the Trail; a Meditation Circle with the stone cross from the Jackson Street church building; and a new fence for the playground have been added. The Peace Trail has gotten a lot of use from the neighborhood community as well as the members of Bethel.



Bethel' AV systems have gone from one person sitting behind the band to an Audio Visual system that produces a hi-def live stream and video recordings for 2 services every Sunday as we continue to reach out beyond Bethel.

Healing Services were started in 2017. Every year since joining the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), the Bethel congregation has reached out to help people, organizations, and Mission Partners illustrating that Bethel is a Mission-Driven congregation always striving to be Christ-Centered and actively following Jesus wherever He leads!



WEEKEND WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SATURDAY

5:30 p.m. – Casual Worship

SUNDAY

8:45 a.m. – Classic Worship

10:00 a.m. – Christian Education Hour

11:11 a.m. – Praise Worship

Communion will be celebrated at all services.

OTHER WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

Healing Service—7:00 p.m.

except in December when it is 1st Thursday

Bethel Lutheran Church

20650 Cumberland Road

Noblesville, IN 46062

317.773.4315

www.BethelLutheranChurch.com



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