



**THE CONGREGATION SPILLED** out the doors (above) of St. John's Lutheran's new brick church in Logan township. The church was built in 1931 after a New Year's Day fire that year (below), burned the church's first frame church building.

# St. John's Lutheran Church to celebrate 125 years

By MARY LOU OLSON and CAROLYN KELLEY-PLOTS

St. John's Lutheran Church of Oberlin will mark its 125th anniversary with a special commemoration at 10:30 a.m. Sunday.

The main speaker will be the Rev. Keith Kohlmeier, president of the Kansas District of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

A dinner will be held in the church's fellowship hall following the service. Afternoon activities will include a video of the history of the church, games at the church for the children and a tour of the three rural St. John's Lutheran Church cemeteries, followed by a cookout in the country.

## CHURCH HISTORY

In 1879, the Rev. C. Meyer of Kankakee, Ill., was sent to work as missionary-at-large in the territory of northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska. He and his family settled on a homestead two miles east of Herndon. The first services of what became St. John's Lutheran Church were held in a sod church half a mile northeast of Mr. Meyer's home.

During those first few years, this small group started a parochial school. The group abandoned the sod church, but services were held in a rural school house and in the homes of church members.

St. John's was formally organized Oct. 10, 1886, with a constitution drawn up by Mr. Meyer. Charter members were Paul Meyer, Henry Thaete, Henry C. Euhus, John Riepel, Henry May, Henry Stier and Ernest Leyrer. The official address was Traer. On June 1, 1887, five new members, Fred Helmkamp, William Stilmann, H. Schmidt, John Lueke and Rudolph Paschke, were added. Five more members joined later.

In January 1889, the congregation passed a resolution to build a sod church on five acres of land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Meyer in Logan Township. This building served the congregation for 15 years. In 1904, it was replaced by a frame church just south of the original building, and in 1906 a parsonage was added.

Members and other Lutherans living in the Herndon area formally organized a church in February 1902 with 12 members. The

Rev. C. Pluedemann was pastor of that church, also located in Logan Township. Both congregations were served by the same visiting pastor or a student pastor until a formal call was made on May 17, 1903. The Rev. F. Schoppe was assigned to both churches in 1905, and the following year he and his family moved to the new parsonage completed by St. John's near Traer. Succeeding pastors followed this same arrangement until 1921.

The Herndon congregation constructed a new frame building in 1916. A merger of the two was completed in 1925 and the church was relocated on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Lueke in Logan Township.

A new frame church, school building and two-story parsonage was dedicated in October 1925. Six years later, on Jan. 1, 1931, the frame church burned. A new brick building replaced it in 1931 at a cost of \$12,000. A new Wurlitzer organ was installed then. That building was demolished in about 1955.

## MOVE TO OBERLIN

Times changed. So did transportation and the congregation's mode of living. On March 21, 1954, the church decided to relocate to Oberlin. Groundbreaking services were held June 19, 1955. The cornerstone was laid on Dec. 18, 1955. The total cost was \$122,000. The school and parsonage were also moved to the new location at 510 N. Wilson.

The new church was dedicated April 29, 1956. Since then, an educational building has been built on the church site. The old school building was sold and moved back to Logan Township, near its original site. It is now the home of church members Ralph and Norma Unger.

## CHURCH PASTORS

The following pastors have served St. John's: C. Meyer, H. Krantz, H. Grefe, Student Schwagemeyer, J.M. Maisch, G. Storm, C. Landgraf, Student A.W. Cordes, F. Schoppe, C.P. Pebler, C.W. Tedrahn, A. Habekost, F. Schoppe, F.A. Wegener, E.C. Schmidt, Wm. Schultz, Ed Licht, Walter Stoepelwerth, Elton H. Temme, Kenneth Kaufmann, Morris Kirchhof, Paul Kahldahl, Chad Eckels, Richard Langness, and Kevin Schnakenberg, a vacancy pastor.

Those from the congregation who have served in some capacity include Mary Zander, Marcia Schreiber, parish workers; Ruth and Joan Muirhead and Joanne Larson, social workers; Suzanne Larson, deaconess; and Dorothy Wegener, Lois Wegener, Rhoda Wegener, Viola Friedemann, Mildred Helmkamp, Lois May, Lillian May, Nathalie Berndt, Shirley Unger, Dorothy Reith, Edith Hoehner, Janet Leitner, Donald Carlson, Shirley Frerichs, Norma Frerichs, Linda Jording and Karen Waterman, teachers.

## FIVE PASTORS

Five men from the Oberlin area have followed a calling to become Missouri Synod pastors during the church's history.

The late Rev. Wilbur May, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ted May, and a brother of Walter May, Oberlin, graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo., in 1947. After training for a year, he was a missionary in India for 12 years. He served as a Lutheran pastor at San Bruno, Calif., and at Grace Lutheran Church, Gridley, Calif.

The late Rev. Hubert May, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herman May, also attended seminary in St. Louis, graduating in 1945. He served pastorates at Downs, El Dorado, St. Louis and Oxford, Mich. He was a brother of Reinhard May and Karolyn Muirhead of Oberlin.

The Rev. Don Frerichs, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Wert Frerichs., served congregations in Comby, Minn.; Pasco, Wash.; and Portland, Ore. Mr. Frerichs is retired but serves as interim circuit counselor of Northwest District Circuit 2 congregations.

The Rev. Scott Goltl, son of Lairy and Beth Goltl of Oberlin, is pastor of Maple Campus and Ascension Lutheran churches in Wichita.

The most recent man to be ordained is the Rev. Quintin Cundiff, son of Greg and Janice Cundiff, and a grandson of Martin and Evelyn May, all of Oberlin. He graduated from Concordia this year and serves as pastor of Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Church in Reedsport, Ore., and Christ Lutheran Church, Coos Bay, Ore. These are two of the Circuit 2 congregations served by the Mr. Frerichs.



**ST. JOHN'S TODAY** (left) as it faces North Wilson Avenue. In 1925 (above), Herndon and Traer congregations merged into one. — Photos provided by Norma Unger

