

# St. Paul Lutheran Church and School

## History Part IV – 1983–2023

*You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. (Psalm 40:5)*

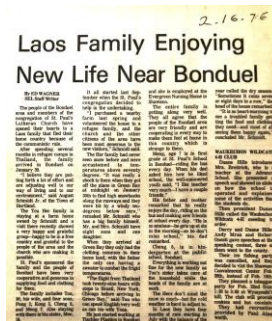
At the close of our previous chapter, just as we are today, the people of St. Paul were celebrating a church anniversary. As we look back over the centuries, we thank our gracious Lord for all He has done to help us become the congregation we are today, through *the power, O God, by which You have worked for us (Psalm 68:28)*.

One major endeavor we were unable to share in our previous chapter was St. Paul's sponsorship of a refugee family from Laos. Now after a wonderful conversation with Phil Schmidt, we can relate how God shaped the incredible events that brought this family to St. Paul. When the Viet-Nam war spread into Laos in the late 1960s, over 30,000 Hmong soldiers were recruited to fight alongside American troops against the Viet Cong. When their country fell to the Communist regime in 1975, 150,000 Hmong people were forced to flee their country. Among them were Tou Her, his wife Youa, sister Mee, and four sons, Kong 3, Meng 7, Pong 2, and Cheng 5. Because Tou had worked with the American CIA, his life and the lives of his family were in peril from capture and execution by the Communists.

The Her family, together with many others, fled their homes in the middle of the night through a heavily wooded area that was infiltrated by Communist soldiers. Remaining absolutely silent was a matter of life and death. Small children were given morphine to keep them asleep and ensure their silence. Once the families crossed the Mekong River into the safety of Thailand, they settled in a refugee camp.

On our side of the world, the plight of the Hmong people had touched the hearts of the members of St. Paul. A special committee was given the task of applying for and transporting a refugee family safely to Bonduel. Under the direction of August Schmidt and with the assistance of a Lutheran social ministry, St. Paul became sponsors for the Her family. The Schmidts had an empty farm house on land they'd recently purchased and graciously volunteered it for the new family. Members were exceedingly generous in supplying them with food and clothing.

The Hers arrived at the Green Bay airport at midnight on January 30, 1975. There were high snow banks along the runways and the temperature was 10 below zero. They had never seen snow before and were accustomed to temperatures in the 70s. They didn't mind the snow so much, but their lightweight clothing and sandals were, to say the least, inadequate for our sub-zero temperatures. Fortunately, the Schmidts came prepared with snowmobile suits for them!



Tou and his family were extremely thankful to be in a free country and deeply grateful to the people of St. Paul for supporting them and making it all possible. The entire Her family was later baptized in the Christian faith at St. Paul, with members of the committee serving as their sponsors. In 1978, Mee (who was 18 when she fled Laos) became the bride of August Schmidt's son Phil. (A little side note – Phil tells the story that Mee spoke very little English and answered everything by smiling, nodding and saying "Yes." He jokingly



This family moved here from Laos and is living at a farm home owned by August Schmidt, Jr., Town of Hartford. It is the Tou Her family. Back row, they are Tou Her, his wife, Mee, and his sister, Mee. The children in the front are Kong S. Mee S., Pong S., and Cheng S.

says that this made the wedding vows pretty easy.) August's humble summary of St. Paul's mercy and compassion for the Tou family was simply, "It is so heart-warming to see a troubled family getting the food and clothing they need – and most of all seeing them happy again." *Wondrous honor You have given To our humblest charity, In Your own mysterious sentence, "You have done it all to Me!"*

As our narrative progresses into the mid-1980s, we are entering territory undoubtedly familiar to many current members. Our homes were now equipped with the new phenomenon of cable TV. To the delight of America's teenagers, MTV debuted in 1981. Major advancements had been made in space exploration. On January 28, 1986 the space shuttle *Challenger* was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida, with the first ever civilian on board – Christa McAuliffe, a 37-year-old high school teacher from New Hampshire. Seventy-three seconds after liftoff, while the nation watched on live television, the shuttle exploded. There were no survivors. It was a moment that took the nation's breath away and will never be forgotten.

Though progress and change were all around us, St. Paul Lutheran Church and School, grounded in God's eternal Word, moved steadily forward with

the message that never changes – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Rev. Roland Golz was our current pastor, having arrived in 1981. Congregation membership had reached 1,417. Mr. Frank Wegner was the school principal/teacher, overseeing a student body of 170 students. By God's



grace, Mr. Wegner would serve St. Paul School for the next 24 years.

In 1984, the latest news at St. Paul School was the beginning of a preschool program, with an enrollment of 11 three-year-olds and 16 four-year-olds. Sharing the love of Jesus with these little ones and their families was and still is a vital part of St. Paul's ministry of preparing the next generation to follow their Savior.

With congregational membership at over 1,400 souls, it became evident that pastoral duties were more than one pastor could manage. In 1987 the voters agreed to call an associate pastor to assist in ministering to the families of St. Paul. Rev. Brent Klein came to us from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and was installed as St. Paul's first Associate Pastor on July 12, 1987. Pastor Klein is remembered for his enthusiastic participation in congregational life. He worked actively with the youth group, and despite the size of the

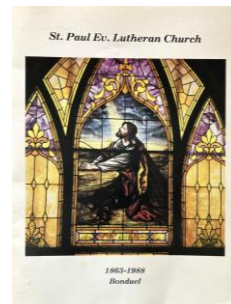


congregation, he made it a point to become acquainted with all the members of St. Paul.

The following year, 1988, St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church and School once again had cause to celebrate. Through God's abundant blessing and favor, St. Paul had been preaching and teaching Christ crucified for 125 years! Special events were held throughout the year on the second Sunday of each month. Former pastors and teachers joined the celebration and were recognized for their faithful ministry to St. Paul. Each celebration Sunday, confirmands from previous years



would join the festivities in ten-year groups. Violet Golz, wife of Pastor Golz, working with a team of congregation members, did extensive research into the St. Paul archives to compile and publish an in-depth history of St. Paul. Giving all glory to God, the following two verses from Isaiah were imprinted on the front page of the special



125th Anniversary Booklet: *"Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. (Isaiah 27:2-3 NIV)*

Another joyful milestone was reached in 1988 — the 50th anniversary of the St. Paul Quartet! In 1938 four young men in their late teens joined together



QUARTETTE—1938. Herbert, Martin, Wilmar, Clarence.

to sing God's praise and glory: Herbert Zuehlsdorf, Martin Brodhagen, Wilmer Westphal, and Clarence Zernicke. Fifty years later, through God's abundant grace and blessing, they were still singing.



QUARTETTE—1988. Herbert Zuehlsdorf, Martin Brodhagen, Wilmer Westphal, Clarence Zernicke.

The first song the St. Paul Quartet had sung was "I Love To Tell The Story." They continued to sing His story throughout the decades of their ministry. Over the years, the quartet had sung for hundreds of special events, often traveling to other cities. Audiences everywhere loved their singing and

usually called for encores. The story is told when, after a few encores, one of the wives overheard a gentleman say to another, "Don't clap or they'll sing some more." We thank God that He blessed these four men with beautiful voices and instilled in them the desire to share Christ's Gospel message through their music.

As the world moved into the final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we saw the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the end of the 45-year Cold War, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1994 Amazon.com began doing business, and four years later Google launched its new search engine. But the 90s, like every decade that preceded it, also brought tragedy. In 1993 a bomb exploded in the parking garage of the World Trade Center killing six people. Two years later, Timothy McVeigh parked a bomb-laden rental truck in front of the federal building in Oklahoma City, setting off an explosion that claimed 168 lives, including 19 children. These crimes were but a prelude to the horrific acts of terrorism that would rock the nation in just a few years.

National events often seem worlds away when one is busy serving the Lord in a small, north-Wisconsin village. Here at St. Paul the 1990s brought progress and pastoral changes. In 1993, when Pastor Golz accepted a call to another congregation, Pastor Klein assumed the role of administrative pastor, taking on full responsibility for this active congregation. In 1994 Rev. Leonard Wildauer was sent by the seminary to serve as our vicar and assist Pastor Klein in the parish ministry.

At the end of Pastor Wildauer's one-year vicarage, St. Paul extended a call for him to become our associate pastor. Pastor Wildauer had been a certified public accountant prior to entering the ministry. His background in accounting provided St. Paul with able financial counsel, but his strength was in his ministry to shut-ins, to members who were hospitalized, and to the aging. God used Pastor Wildauer to bring comfort and strength to many weary souls.





In 1997 Pastor Klein accepted a long-awaited position as a Navy chaplain. The congregation then extended a call to Rev. Timothy Shoup to serve as administrative pastor. Pastor Shoup arrived in 1998 and, thanks to God, is with us to this day.

Y2K. The year 2000. Not just a new century — a new millenium! *A thousand ages in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past. (Psalm 90:4)*

For the second time in its history, St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church and School crossed the threshold into a new century. Throughout all the decades of change and uncertainty, God's presence and favor had guided this congregation of devout Lutherans, and by His grace He would lead us forward.

The new century had barely begun before everything came to a catastrophic halt. September 11, 2001. America was under attack. We don't need to rehearse the horrifying events of that day. Suffice it to say, 2,977 people were killed, and the world as we knew it was changed forever. Out of the shock and grief of that tragic day came a nation resolved to stand strong and united. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:35,37)*

In an uncertain and fearful world, one thing remains steadfast — the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By God's grace, *in all these things*, St. Paul faithfully adhered to its mission "to communicate the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to our members, our neighbors, our community, and the world — and to do so in an active and joyful manner."

Ever mindful of our purpose, St. Paul embraced a new overseas mission. Through a friend, Pastor Shoup had learned of Pastor Dushan Vanko of the Slovak Lutheran Church in Butin, Romania. Ten years earlier, an earthquake had hit the village causing extensive damage to the parsonage. Pastor Vanko's congregation had no means to repair it and were in need of financial and practical help. In 2004 a delegation of St. Paul members traveled to Butin to meet with Pastor Vanko. Viola Fronkova was brought

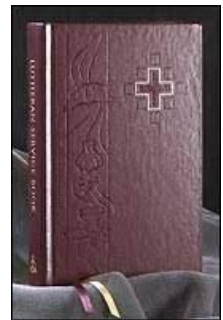


from Slovakia to serve as their interpreter. Viola was active in a number of missions in Slovakia, had served twenty years in the underground church during the Communist regime, and is the author of a series of books detailing the lives of pastors who were persecuted by the Communists.

After this initial contact, St. Paul immediately voted to support the ministries of both Pastor Vanko and Viola. It wasn't long before several members of our congregation traveled to Romania to participate in a total renovation of the parsonage. St. Paul remains in close contact with Pastor Vanko and his family and with Viola, providing both financial and prayer support for their ministries.



In 2006 the LCMS published a new hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*. Soon TLH was removed from the pew racks and replaced with LSB. Many new liturgical canticles were introduced and are heartily sung to the Lord by our congregation – *To God on High Be Glory, The Lord God Is My Strength and My Song, Thank The Lord and Sing His Praise*. New hymns quickly became favorites – *I Am Baptized Into Christ; If Christ Had Not Been Raised from Death; What Is This Bread*. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the people of St. Paul continue to praise their beautiful Savior with fervent love, full hearts and strong voices through the words and music of the new hymnal.



Since the time he arrived, Pastor Shoup had been helping St. Paul prepare for its future. A Planning Committee consisting of eighteen members began to assess our congregational facility and staffing needs. The Committee identified our need for *fellowship* space, for additional school classroom space, and for expanding the roles of *Music Director* and *Youth Director*. St. Paul would soon call their first full-time synodically trained Director of Parish Music, and the Youth Director position was expanded. Regarding facility needs, congregational meetings – usually not without emotions – circled around whether to renovate the existing church and add on to it a new fellowship hall, while also adding four classrooms onto the school, or to explore the possibility of building a new structure attached to the school.

Most everyone agreed we needed to do something, but what? Costs for renovating the existing church far exceeded expectations and would leave a multi-level building. The congregation formed a Building Committee to design a new sanctuary, fellowship hall, office space, and classrooms, and to seek cost estimates for the congregation to consider. One fear was whether we could afford to build a church worthy of replacing the existing sanctuary. One member exclaimed, "If we're going to design a church, it's going to look like a church and not a Morton building with a cross on top!" So began the six-year process that ultimately led to the glorious sanctuary and school that St. Paul is blessed to call home.

Ground was broken on June 25, 2006 and work began the very next day. In every step of the year-long construction process, God's hand was clearly evident. From the hundreds of decisions that had to be made to the timing of every element of the project, God was unmistakably at work.

Contractors and many subcontractors were St. Paul members. Countless members volunteered their professional services and labor toward the project. The dedicated people of this congregation, with God's help and blessing, had worked together to raise their own buildings in the two previous centuries. The new 21<sup>st</sup> century church was to be no different.



Sacred furnishings that had beautified the old church were carefully brought into the new sanctuary — the altar, pulpit, lectern, baptismal font, and stained-glass windows. The church bells were refurbished and lifted



into the new bell tower. The pipe organ — substantially expanded from 11 ranks to 32, with approximately 2,000 pipes — was installed in the balcony. The beautiful paintings of Christ the Good Shepherd and the Resurrected Savior were duplicated on the front wall of the sanctuary.

These sacred furnishings of the 1916 church now adorn the new sanctuary, creating a place of worship that carries forward our past and reflects God's holiness, a sanctuary where God meets His people in Word and Sacrament to bless them with forgiveness, renewed faith, and eternal salvation.



*Christ is our cornerstone, On Him alone we build;*

*With His true saints alone The courts of heav'n are filled.*

*On His great love our hopes we place Of present grace And joys above.*

When Pastor Wildauer accepted a call to another parish in 2008, the search began for a new associate pastor. The District President noted at the time that he had not worked with any other congregation that so thoroughly invested themselves in the process. The Lord brought Rev. Mark Palmer to us from Hibbing MN, and he was installed in November 2009. What the Lord provided in Pastor Palmer is a pastor who in addition to working with the primary pastoral duties of preaching, teaching, and visiting the sick and shut-ins, also focuses on many additional ways to help our congregation bring Christ and His Word of salvation to members and non-members alike – Evangelism, Young at Heart, Bible Bowl, Sunday School, Public School confirmation, live-stream technology, Armed Forces Ministry, College Student Ministry, and Snacks & Yacks – all are Word of God related components of our overall ministry at St. Paul.



In 2013 St Paul Ev. Lutheran Church and School was blessed to celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To mark the occasion, St. Paul member Marian Kupsky, working with a group of volunteer researchers, authored and published a



brief history of St. Paul. Year-long festivities were planned, beginning with a festive opening service in January, with the sermon given by Rev. Duane Lueck, president of the LCMS-North Wisconsin District. Monthly events included inviting former pastors to preach, as well as two “sons of St. Paul” who

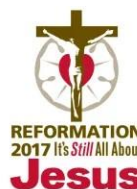
had become pastors, Rev. David Boettcher and Rev. Nicholas Buchholz. School alumni and former teachers were invited for a special event in June. There were hymn fests, concerts, a Walk In The Past through our cemetery, and a visit from our friends Rev. and Mrs. Dusan Vanko and Viola Fronkova, coming all the way from Central Europe!

A highlight was the commissioning of a hymn. Rev. Stephen Starke, prolific hymn-writer in the LCMS, accepted our request resulting in the seven-stanza offering *Give Ear, O Zion, to God's Call*. Pastor Starke told us he would write for the occasion of our 150th, not to reflect upon our local history, but to proclaim the grace and power of Christ in our day in a manner suitable for every congregation to sing. A musical setting for the hymn for choir, brass, pipe organ, and congregational singing was composed by a CUW professor and introduced for the 150th Anniversary service. LCMS President Matthew Harrison was our guest preacher.

The year-long celebration of St. Paul's 150th anniversary was a time of returning and rejoicing. St. Paul had prospered for 150 years through the grace and favor of God our Father, the cleansing blood of his Son our Savior, and the power of the Holy Spirit to call, enlighten, sanctify and keep us in the true faith. To God be all glory!

*Give ear, O Zion, to God's call, And hearken, chosen nation:  
God comes with righteousness for all, With mercy and salvation;  
God comes with comfort for your gloom,  
Until your desert places bloom With thankful songs of gladness.*

The second decade of the 21st century, brought yet another celebration – the 500<sup>TH</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. In 500 years, the message of the Reformation has not changed. It is still all about Jesus! It's about faithfully preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, teaching God's Word in its purity and truth, and administering the Holy Sacraments in accordance with Christ's institution. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."* (Eph. 2:8,9) With Martin Luther, we at St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church and School still say, "Here we stand, we cannot do otherwise. God help us. Amen."



Our account of St. Paul's life story has reached the present day. We asked Pastor Shoup to share his thoughts about our ministry today at St. Paul, and he offered,

“Our pastors thank the Lord for the many people at St. Paul for whom nothing is more important than their faith in God and in His mercy in His Son, Jesus. It’s humbling and very encouraging both. I’d love to name names, and the list would be long. They know that God’s Word of salvation together with Baptism and the Lord’s Supper is ultimate. Heaven and hell matter to them, and they truly desire for their children, grandchildren and friends to be with the Lord forever.”

“Right now we see the expanding need for bringing the Word into our homes, for the Lord to keep our faith strong and to pour Jesus into our children. There is a radical American cultural shift going on – an intentional, government-supported turning away from God’s promises and away from His creation of marriage, family, and life. To help broaden our building up one another in Christ – to strengthen the saved and to save the lost – our congregation is committed to expanding our staff.”

He is referring to our most recent hiring of a Financial Reporting Manager which allows our office manager to fully support our church and school. Our congregation also elected to call a part-time Director of Church Ministry early in 2024 to assist our pastors with communication, event coordinating, Bible classes, and visitation. Pastor continued,

“We desire also to help our families newer to the Christian faith to see the joy and peace that comes in knowing and believing who Jesus is for us. Using digital and live-streaming tools will also deepen our efforts in doing what St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church has done since its founding one hundred sixty years ago: Proclaim the answer to this world’s most important question – How is one saved? By grace alone, through faith alone, based on Scripture alone, in Christ alone.”

And now, praise be to God, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church and School is celebrating its 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary! In this brief history, we have looked at St. Paul’s *past* with gratitude and fondness toward those who have gone before us – our faithful forefathers, pastors, teachers, and the many saints who God used so mightily here at St. Paul Church and School. We look at St. Paul *today* and see a congregation that loves their Savior with heart and soul, people who cherish their church and school, saints whose lives were shaped by the precious Word and Sacraments they received within these walls.

Now as we look in faith toward our *future*, we stand assured that we are God's forgiven people, called and empowered by His Spirit to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with each other, with the world around us, and especially with each new generation ... *that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. (Acts 26:18)*

*God's Word is our great heritage And shall be ours forever;  
To spread its light from age to age Shall be our chief endeavor,  
Lord grant, while worlds endure, We keep its teachings pure  
Throughout all generations.*

Bibliography: *History of St. Paul Church* (1988), Violet Golz, Editor; *St. Paul Lutheran Church and School - A Brief History* (2013), Marian Kupsky, Editor; *Lutheran Service Book* (CPH 2006): Hymn 851 v.3; Hymn 909 v.1; Hymn 582; *History Part IV - 1983-2023* (2023), Willa Rusch, Editor.