

## The History of St. Paul Lutheran Church of Royal Oak, Michigan 1873 -1998

From its humble beginnings in 1873 to the present, the history of St. Paul Lutheran Church is filled with examples of how God has blessed and led this congregation to be His people here in Royal Oak.

In 1873 Pastor A.J. Huegli of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Detroit reported to the Northern District of the Missouri Synod that an association of Missouri Synod congregations had been formed to establish a Lutheran orphanage. He added, "The association has already bought a suitable piece of property with a house on it and is about to call a superintendent who is a pastor AND CAN FOR THE PRESENT SERVE A SMALL CONGREGATION WHICH HAS BEEN GATHERED IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE ORPHANAGE UNTIL CONDITIONS ARE MORE FAVORABLE." The 20 acre property was located at University and Main Streets in Royal Oak. It is now occupied by the Jim Fresard Pontiac Dealership.

Pastor Huegli conducted

monthly and bimonthly services in German for those Lutherans in the First Congregational Church on Main Street between Third and Fourth Streets until August of 1873. On August 10 of that year, Pastor George Speckhard of Sebawaing, Michigan, was installed as Pastor of the newly established Emmanuel Lutheran Church. (The name has also been recorded as Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Royal Oak.) He also established the orphanage and assumed the duties of superintendent of the orphanage and instructor of deaf-mutes.

On October 5, 1873, the first Lutheran Communion Service was held with 21 communicants attending. Among other firsts that year were: The Baptism of Edward Kaiiser on August seventeenth, the Confirmation of Anna Kreher on November 16, the marriage of Henry Battenfeld and Laura Krause on September 7, and the funeral of Emma Blum, an infant of 11 months and four days, on August 1.

*(continued on page 2)*



1873 - 1879  
Rev. George Speckhard

1882 - 1886  
Rev. K. L. Moll

1886 - 1887  
Rev. Julius Zuberbier

1893 - 1894  
Rev. R. Truelsch

1894 - 1896  
Rev. Emil Duerr

1889 - 1893  
Rev. Herman Kionka

1887 - 1889  
Rev. Daniel C. Lochner

1894  
Built first parsonage at  
508 William St., Royal Oak  
Dedicated June 3, 1895

1886  
Dedication of wooden church  
on Williams Street

1879 - 1882  
Rev. C. H. Rohe

1874  
Purchased first building

1873  
Deaf school started

October 5, 1873  
Congregation celebrated  
First Communion service

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"



(continued from page 1)

While the number of charter members is uncertain, in 1874 Pastor Speckhard reported to the Northern District of Synod the following:

(The contributors must have been in addition to the voters because contributions were usually made by voters.) Seven orphans also attended the school and twelve deaf children were instructed separately.

Pastor Speckhard had instructed deaf children in Germany before he entered the ministry and had been instructing two deaf children in Sebewaing. He brought these children with him when he came to Royal Oak and soon he was asked to instruct other deaf children. Within 10 months he was instructing 15 deaf children. Because of the obvious need, Trinity Church decided that the orphanage should be transferred to a facility in Addison, Illinois, and the institution in Royal Oak would become a school for the deaf. In 1875 the school was moved to a "better" location on

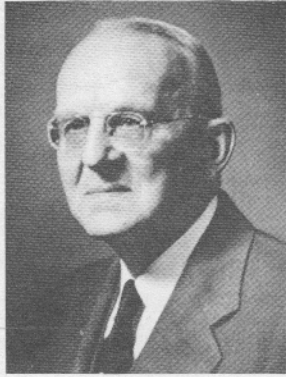
Nevada Avenue in Detroit, an area then called Norris, and became known as The Lutheran School for the Deaf.

In 1874 the congregation purchased its first building, at Main and Third Streets, from the First Baptist Church for \$800.00. The building was later used as a town and village hall. It was eventually donated to the Royal Oak Women's Club and moved to West Fourth and Pleasant Streets.

After the School for the Deaf was moved to Norris, Pastor Speckhard faithfully made the trip to Royal Oak for church services and other pastoral duties, but the congregation was split over the issue of calling a resident pastor. Most of the congregation decided to call an Evangelical pastor and leave the Lutheran Church. They formed the Emmanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church. The four remaining members, Joseph Mow, John Hagelstein, Conrad Bachmeir, and John Rockelman, reorganized and changed the name of the church to St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. At first they met in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mow until they were able to rent the Baptist Church on Main Street. Pastor Speckhard continued to serve the congregation until his sudden death on November 20, 1879.

After his death, Pastor C.H. Rohe of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Detroit served as pastor until he and his congregation left the Missouri Synod in 1882. Pastor K.L. Moll of Detroit then served until 1886 when an agreement was reached with St. Paul's of Clarenceville to share the services of Pastor Julius Zuberbier, a recent graduate of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

(continued on page 14)



1916 - 1951  
Rev. Otto Frincke

1917  
St. Paul Lutheran Young  
People's Society formed

and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

1916  
Day School established

1918  
New church building  
dedicated January 20, 1918

1933  
Youth joined international  
Walther League





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During Pastor Zuberbeir's pastorate, a small wooden chapel, just 20' x 36' and resting on wooden posts, was erected on Williams Street. Later a 7' x 10' vestibule was added. Members, under the leadership of August Karstedt, felled the trees and took them to a sawmill in Clawson owned by Adolf Granges who sawed the logs for \$3.50 per thousand and donated extra lumber. A non-member, Mr. Kremmel, donated \$50.00. In spite of all the economics and blessings, a mortgage remained which was discharged in April of 1892. The exact date of dedication in 1886 is not known. This chapel served as a church and school until December 2, 1917, when the last Sunday morning service was held in it.

When Pastor Zuberbier accepted a call to Hadley, Michigan, in 1887, Pastor Daniel C. Lochner was called from Annapolis, Maryland. He, like Pastor Zuberbier, was installed in Clarenceville and lived there while shepherding both congregations. Pastor Lochner was the son of Rev. Frederick Lochner, a founder of the Missouri Synod, and it was during his pastorate

in 1888 that the congregation became a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Due to poor health, Pastor Lochner had to leave Michigan in 1889. His great-grandson, Daniel E. Lochner, is the present pastor.

Pastor Herman Kionka was then called to serve the Clarenceville and Royal Oak congregations and served until 1893.

Pastor R. Truelsch served until Pastor Emil Duerr was installed on November 11, 1894. At this time the shared pastorates with Clarenceville were ended, and the congregation built its first parsonage at 508 Williams in Royal Oak. It was dedicated on June 3, 1895.



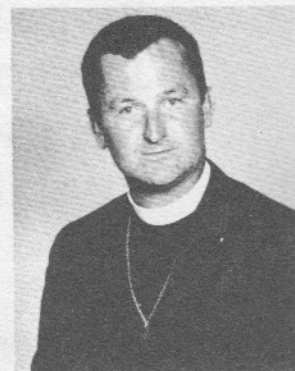
1946 - 1962  
Rev. Herbert Bartz



1953 - 1960  
Rev. Richard L. Schlect



1962 - 1969  
Rev. Erhard H. Bekemeyer



1966 - 1969  
Rev. David W. Peyer

1943  
Burned mortgage for  
"new church"

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

September 1959  
School addition dedicated

1963 - 1978  
Mr. Lawrence Gefeke  
School Principal

1951  
New school building  
dedicated September 9, 1951

1945  
First Vicar

1942  
Parsonage purchased  
in Pleasant Ridge



Pastor Duerr and his family were the first to occupy the house. When he left in 1896, it was rented until 1916 when Pastor Otto Frincke arrived and lived in it until a new parsonage was purchased in Pleasant Ridge in 1942. The parsonage remained at Fifth and Williams until it was moved to make room for the new church. In 1950 it was moved to Lincoln and Rembrandt where it was remodeled into a duplex and used as a parsonage and teacherage. It was sold in 1953.

After Pastor Duerr accepted a call to Wayside, Wisconsin in the summer of 1896, the congregation had no resident pastor until 1916. Pastor William Burmeister of Detroit served from 1897 until his death in 1908. He was succeeded by Pastor T. Hauser of Pontiac from

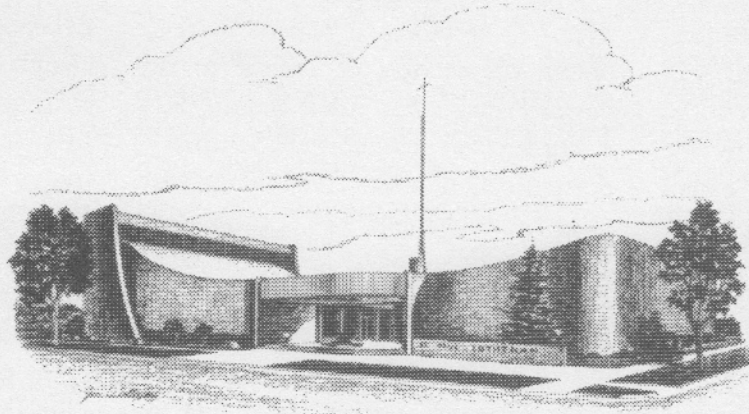
1908 to 1910, and by Pastor Frederick Dreyer of Detroit from 1910 until the spring of 1916.

By 1916, the Royal Oak area, as well as the congregation, had grown to a point where it was again deemed necessary to call a resident pastor. Pastor Otto Frincke was installed on September 17, 1916.

Soon after his installation on October 9, 1916, the present day school was established with eleven taught all eight grades five days a week. Also during 1916, the Sunday School was organized, a mixed choir was established, the Ladies Aid Society was formed, and the congregational minutes were first written in English.

In 1917, the St. Paul's Lutheran Young People's Society was formed. The Society joined the International.

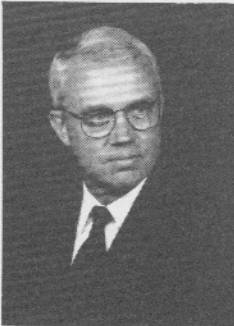
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1968  
Youth formed as Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF)

1973  
New church building dedicated January 28, 1973

1988 - Present  
Mr. Eric Pittman  
School Principal

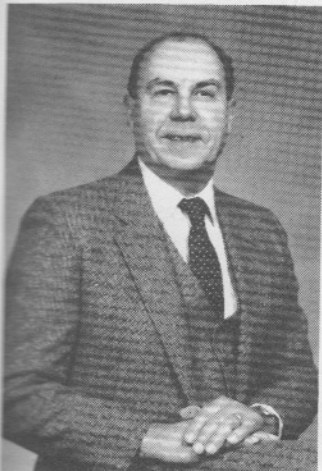


1997 - Present  
Rev. Daniel E. Lochner

*and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20*

1970 - 1996  
Rev. Ronald H. Guettler

1978 - 1987  
Mr. Ronald O. Koch  
School Principal



1987  
October - retired debt on new church building

1991  
New office addition and renovations

1996  
June - retirement celebration for Rev. Ronald H. Guettler



Walther League in 1933 and changed its name to the Walther League of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. On January 5, 1968, the association with the Walther League was dropped, and the group became known as the Lutheran Youth Fellowship (L.Y.F.).

As God continued to richly bless the congregation, it soon became apparent that, even with two services each Sunday, a German and an English service, the little chapel was inadequate, and a new building was needed. On April 1, 1917, the congregation voted to accept the plans presented by the architect, Louis Klei. Work began immediately. The chapel and parsonage were moved elsewhere on the property and ground was broken. The cornerstone was laid on August 12, 1917, and the church was dedicated on January 20, 1918. On November 20, 1918, a one-manual pipe organ, a gift of Trinity Lutheran Church of Monroe, (and only the second organ in Royal Oak) was dedicated. The total cost of the building was about \$35,000.00. Of this amount, \$32,900.00 was borrowed from the Church Extension Fund of the Michigan District of the Missouri Synod. In addition, by 1918, the enrollment in the school had reached the point that a full time principal and teacher was needed, and William Schulenburg was called as the first of many dedicated teachers.

The congregation continued to grow and, by 1924, numbered almost 300 souls. In July of that year, the congregation was able to function without the subsidy it had received from the Michigan District of Synod since 1916.

The Depression years were difficult ones for St. Paul's, and payments to the Church Extension Fund were often not as large as had been expected, and at times ceased entirely, although inter-

est payments continued to be made.

The Lord continued to watch over His people, and by January 17, 1943, the congregation was able to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the new church by burning the mortgage. After the burning, the congregation arose and sang together "Now Thank We All Our God."

When the congregation numbered over 700 members, it was resolved to obtain the services of a vicar to aid Pastor Frincke. Mr. Adolf Brand, then a student at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, served as the first vicar from October, 1945, to August, 1946. In the spring of 1945, the members decided to call an assistant pastor. A call was extended to Pastor Herbert Bartz who accepted and was installed on August 25, 1945. He was later called to be the pastor when Pastor Frincke retired in 1951.

The congregation then extended a call to Pastor Richard L. Schlecht to serve as the assistant pastor.

Meanwhile, enrollment in the school continued to grow, and on July 2, 1950, ground was broken for a new school building. Dedicated on September 9, 1951, the new structure contained four classrooms, a library, and offices on the first floor, and a gymnasium and kitchen on the second. By 1954, an enrollment of 212 students made it necessary to add more rooms to the existing building. A six room addition was constructed and dedicated in September of 1959. On September 30, 1959, Pastor Frincke, its first teacher, was called to his heavenly home.

In 1960, Pastor Schlecht, the assistant pastor, accepted a call to St. John Lutheran Church in Rochester, Michigan. The congregation extended a call to Miss Jacqueline Haug to serve as a Deaconess. She served until 1963

when she left to become the Dean of Women at Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Two other women have served the congregation as Deaconesses. Miss Faye Weames served from 1963 to 1965, and Miss Rebecca McGrew served from 1965 to 1966.

Pastor Bartz left the congregation in 1962 to accept a call to St. Mark Lutheran Church in California. He was succeeded by Pastor Erhard Bekemeyer of Illinois who was installed on July 8, 1963. He was assisted by the deaconess until 1966. In 1966, the congregation extended a call to his son-in-law, Pastor David W. Peyer. They served together until 1969 when Pastor Bekemeyer accepted a call to Battle Creek, and Pastor Peyer accepted a call to California. A call was then extended to Pastor Ronald H. Guettler of Flint, Michigan. He accepted the call and was installed on March 1, 1970.

After the dedication of the school addition in 1959, the congregation was able to refocus on the need for a larger church building. In 1963, the planning committee was reactivated and began to search for a suitable location. Vacant land was scarce, and the committee was unable to move forward until a sufficient piece of land became available across the street from the church and school. The congregation purchased the site, and Pastor Guettler and Vicar Jerome Dykstra broke ground on October 10, 1971. The cornerstone was laid on April 23, 1972, and the building was dedicated on January 23, 1973.

On October 6, 1973, the congregation celebrated its one hundredth anniversary with a centennial banquet at the Warren Chateau. Dr. Oswald Hoffman of the Lutheran Hour was the guest speaker. On October 7, 1973, the thankful congregation gathered in the church of an anniversary Communion Service.



A lasting tradition, the annual Tre-Ore Service, was begun on April 12, 1974, with pastor Guettler and guest pastors speaking on Christ's last words from the cross. The twenty minute segments allow worshippers to attend and leave as their work schedules permit.

The year 1978 was very eventful for St. Paul. On January 29, a grateful congregation celebrated its fifth anniversary in the new church. In July, Mr Lawrence Gefeke retired after 35 years of teaching. He had come to St. Paul in 1963 and served as principal and eighth grade teacher. He was succeeded by Mr. Ronald O. Koch.

By August 2, 1979, plans were finalized for the demolition of the old church building at the corner of Fifth and Williams, the site of the present parking lot. Since the old building also held the boiler for the school, it couldn't be torn down until a new heating plant was in place. The new structure behind the school office was dedicated in January of 1980.

The St. Paul Women's Guild celebrated its sixty-fifth anniversary in 1981. The Guild had been organized on December 10, 1916, as the Ladies Aid Society. In 1955 the Society became the Women's Guild and has faithfully contributed time, talents and money to the congregation and other charitable agencies.

In 1987 the congregation experienced both great sorrow and joy. In May, Mr. Ronald Koch, who had served as principal and teacher, was called to his heavenly home. In October the congregation was able to retire the debt on the new church building. In February of 1988, the congregation had a three-fold celebration. It celebrated the retirement of the

debt, the 115th anniversary of the congregation, and the fifteenth year in the new building with a service of thanksgiving and mortgage burning. Pastor Richard Schlect, a former pastor of the congregation, was the quest speaker. In September of 1988, Mr. Eric Pittman was installed as principal of the school.

In 1990, it was apparent once again that there was a pressing need for more space, in the school as well as in the church. When Our Savior of the Deaf congregation, with Clark Bailey as pastor, moved back to St. Paul in March of that year, the additions and renovations could not be put off any longer. The congregation began a program called "Building Together For Christ." The program was to raise funds to renovate the school and build a new office space in the church. The work was begun in June, 1991.

In 1995 the congregation began another program in conjunction with the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod called "Declare the Joy." This program was designed to help both St. Paul congregation and the District retire outstanding debt.

In June of 1996, Pastor Guettler retired after 26 years of ministry at St. Paul. Throughout this ministry he served as a supervisor for 26 vicars. Upon his retirement, Pastor Fred Traugott of Troy, Michigan, served as interim pastor until Pastor Daniel E. Lochner accepted a call to serve St. Paul. He was installed on March 2, 1997.

As the congregation participated in the vicarage program under Pastor Guettler, the congregation was able once again to receive a vicar under the supervision of Pastor Lochner. On July

6th, Mr. Jeffrey Geske from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, was inducted.

In the fall of 1997, the congregation entered into the program called "Together In Mission." The program assigns a missionary of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to a congregation. St. Paul began to support Rev. Michael Paul who is serving in Macau. In October the congregation celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The guest speaker for the day was Dr. Henry Rowold from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. The theme for the celebration was "Sent Forth by God's Blessing."

It is with thankful hearts that we look back at the many blessings the Lord has bestowed on this congregation. We look to the future secure in the knowledge that He will continue to guide us and watch over us as we strive to do His will and proclaim His Love in Royal Oak, Michigan. ■

*"To Him be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end."  
Ephesians 3:21*

