



Wilhelm (William) Weber
Pastor 1888 – 1899

In October of 1888, Weber was chosen as pastor and installed with a salary of six hundred dollars a year.

He was educated at Bonn and Strassburg Universities in Germany. Later, in the United States, he gained a Doctorate in Philosophy at Yale University.

Well respected and esteemed here, he could converse in both English and German.

The congregation celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of St. Paul's with a concert at the Opera House across the street and the City Garden hosted the picnic.

However, the congregation membership declined while he was here. Tithes and offerings decreased from a high of one thousand three hundred dollars annually at his start to five hundred a year at the end of his tenure.

Reasons for this could range from lack of public interest in St. Paul's since no building expansion happened to the quantity of secular entertainments hosted by the church which siphoned off member money which could have went to weekly offerings on Sunday.

However, the overall perception of the congregation was that Weber had a mistaken conception of his ministry in America. Of course, he preached his sermons, performed his ministerial duties. and taught in the Sunday school and confirmation classes. But, he believed that doing just that, he had fulfilled all his duties and in the remaining time he gave private instruction and prepared the sons of wealthy people for universities in this country. He also wrote articles for newspapers and published one himself.

As a result, the congregation complained that he never worried about them or visited the sick, unless he was called.

When the Evangelical Synod built a church in West Belleville and his number of ministrations subsequently decreased, Weber realized his error and attempted to reform his last year here.

He formed a youth group, had English language evening worship service every two weeks, and preached against the many amusements thereby advocating the congregation to increase church contributions

In a sermon on October 22, 1899, Weber stated, "... that it was unchristian for a congregation to raise money to cover its running expenses through the sale of beer at picnics and dances. This money should be raised by membership dues, and in case the congregation does not eliminate this custom, he would resign as minister."

Mr. Deppe, president of the congregation, told Weber that his sermon had caused considerable excitement among the membership and he deemed the minister was of no use to the congregation any longer. Weber immediately resigned, to be effective November 15, 1899.

Information Sources:

1909 70th Jubilee Booklet of St. Paul's by Reverend Otto F. Pessel. Translation from the German by Lynn C. Koehler of our congregation, 1973

The History segment of the St. Paul UCC 175th Anniversary insert to the Belleville News-Democrat newspaper of Sunday January 12, 2014. Material researched and prepared by Alice Jerome, Archivist of St. Paul's Church.

Other church records in the Archives.

Belleville Weekly Advocate newspaper, November 10, 1899.