

Entire collection of "In the Beginning" articles from "Our St. Paul" (OSP) monthly publication. Originally written by Alice Jerome. Material from multiple sources.

I have not changed the format or a word of Alice's material. It is factual and a delightful read. Enjoy.

Roger Henke

From OSP November 2012

"In the Beginning" will be a new series of articles written in the OSP and News & Notes. We will trace the history of St. Paul Church in Belleville.

In the Beginning is a common phrase, the best known as the start of the Bible. *In the Beginning...* can be used for almost anything. Everything I know of had a beginning somewhere, be it a life, a marriage, a country, or our own church. In 2014, we will celebrate the 175th anniversary of the beginning of our church. From now until then, I, as your Archivist, will take great pleasure in telling you the story of our church.

You'll find out that our church was built on faith in God first, then on knowledge, the arts, and mission to the community. I don't think we have ever lost that combination of building a congregation on that blueprint of faith.

So I hope you will look for and enjoy and appreciate our roots and where we not only have come from but find out that we are traveling much the same road still today. Perhaps the roads change and the methods of traveling them, but the reasons and successes don't. So our road start with *In the Beginning...*

OSP December 2012

"IN THE BEGINNING". We'll start our beginning with a little history lesson. I know some people don't care for history but, in our case, it concerns some of our own heritages. These were our relatives and how we came to be. So, this will be the only article on the years in German. It leads us up to the immigration of our forefathers.

Germany got caught up in the French Revolution in 1792 when Napoleon carried the war deep inside Germany. In 1806, he banished the Holy Roman Empire, but he forced the people of the German states along the Rhine to become either French subjects or French allies. His protection to this area was called the "Confederation of the Rhine."

German patriots who hoped for the united Germany were disappointed at the peace conference held in Vienna in 1814-1815. Austria would not join with the German states to form a national union of German, Austria feared it would lose its power if it became a member of such a union.

As a result of the conference, Prussia took part of Saxony and certain lands along the Rhine, and Austria got Venice and Lombardy in northern Italy. The more than 300 independent states in the old Holy Roman empire were reduced to 38. A German Bund or Confederation was established in place of the empire. The Bund was merely a league of German rulers. Each German state had its own flag and armies, levied its own taxes and tariffs, and wrote its own constitution and laws. The bund was now controlled by an emperor or ruler, but depended on a diet, or council, of diplomatic delegates from independent rulers to keep peace and order among the states. It was during this time that the map and country borders of Europe were constantly changing.

It was in these unsettling years of 1816-1825 that German immigrants moved up the Rhine to Holland where they would board ships for America. The promised land and freedom. It was a dark period in history, having to leave behind families and possessions. All they had was what they could bring on board ship. These ships were no more than small floating stables, taking 6 weeks on water, crossing the Atlantic. One recording showed 1100 people on 3 ships left and only 597 survived when they landed in New Orleans.

The next 20 years saw wave upon wave of immigrants leaving Germany to come to America. In the middle to late 1830's came the founder of church...

OSP January 2013

"IN THE BEGINNING" in America most of the immigrants came up the Mississippi River to the thriving city of St. Louis on the west side of the Mississippi. But to the east they heard about the farming communities and the settling of more German immigrants. So across land they came to Belleville, IL. When they got here, everything was bustling and busy. There were stagecoaches that traveled east and west along the Great West Mail Route with mail and passengers. There was a Square (platz) in the middle of town. The Post Office was on the corner of Main and High Streets. In looking around, they found 14 retail stores of every variety, two drugstores, 15 doctors, 10 lawyers and quite a few clergymen. This was due to the former immigrants, a lot of them professionals and well educated in Europe. Most of them were from the St. Paul's in Frankfort of Main after a failed uprising. Because of their culture, they became known as Latin-Germans and settled in the vicinity of Belleville and Shiloh.

Then came the missionaries from the German Fatherland to serve the spiritual needs. One of these was the Rev. John Jacob Riess who became one of the fathers and founders of the Evangelical Synod of North America. He began his work in 1835 in Centerville (now Millstadt) and Turkey Hill (now the S.A.V.E. sight) and then in Belleville.

It was on March 10, 1839 that the Rev. Joh Jacob Riess was asked to preach to a group of 40 men and as many families gathered on the steps of the Court House which was granted by the county commissioners for only a few Sundays. Then other meeting places would have to be found. One of these men came forward and stated that although he was not a confessor of the evangelical faith, he did have a burning desire to serve God and His children when the occasion arose. He later donated a strip of land for a new church. After a church service, the first congregational meeting was held. Mr. Adolph Hildebrandt was appointed temporary chairman and Mr. Conrad Westermann was secretary. The Charter Members were listed in the records as:

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Adolph Hildebrandt | Adam Sattler | Ludwig Huff |
| August Hassell | Johann Kaysing | Heinrich Haublein |
| Christian Kaysing | Conrad Westermann | Jacob Krumm |
| Jacob Espenschied | Heinrich Kaysing | Carl Born |
| Emil Meisser | William Schoebel | Justinius Renth |
| Christop Veierheller | Friedrich Schoelkopf | George Brenner |
| Carl Daum | Carl Graf | Christian Lehrner |
| George Eisenmeyer | Jacob Knoebel, Jr. | Phillipp Merz |
| George Hehe | Heinrich Mohlmann | George M. Roeder |
| Bernard Liebig | Karl Knobel | H. Schlet |
| Carl Merck | Joachim Merz | George Heberer |
| Georg Eckert | August Conradi | August Stolberg |
| Johannes Winter | | |

The record also shows that two Negroes were present but their names were not listed. Some that are members of the church today may recognize or even be related to some of this people...

OSP February 2013

And so it was... The Rev. John Jacob Reiss asked that to conclude this very successful meeting, it would only be proper to now choose a name for this new congregation. At his request, the President Hildebrandt spoke these words as found in the original records of the church.

“Rev. Reiss and Members: Remembering that we all, like Abraham, had to leave our home country, and our kindred, and our father’s house and come to a strange land; and remembering that we came to America as fugitives to seek liberty and freedom of thought here and true democracy and a government least oppressive; remembering that our troubled exodus really had it’s beginning in the political meeting at St. Paul’s church of Frankfort on the Main: remembering all that, I say there can be only one name given to our new church, in memory of those who fought with us, and suffer and died for freedom’s cause. **And that one and only name, proper for our church, is “St. Paul’s Church and as St. Paul’s Church be it known forever.”**”

The church service ended in prayer and the singing of the Hymn “Now Thank We All Our God”.

But before leaving the happenings that day, President Hildebrandt spoke once more to the new church. It is in our opinion one of the finest and most fitting dedicatory words ever spoken to consecrate souls to Christ. He said, “The fondest dream of many a Christian man has come true. The ardent cries and the silent prayers of our wives and mothers have been answered. We have a pastor now, who will preach to us the Work of God as in the old Fatherland. We shall soon have a House of God, a Tabernacle, in which to worship. Our children will be taught the dear old catechism, and learn what to believe, and how to live a Christian life. Now we do feel like Evangelicals again, and the Sabbath will find us united as one in hope and doctrine, hearing the work of God, and partaking in His Holy Sacraments. No longer shall we live like the non-believers round us. My heart is filled with joy unspeakable. I can not express with words what are the emotions of my heart. You, I know, feel the same. We can only sing praise to Him, from whom all blessings flow. Our wives will receive the good news with tears of gladness. While we are here, they were at home on their knees, praying to the Father in Heaven. They are one with us in their wishes and desires as to a church. Now we are prodigals no more. In this far-away country, we felt as far away from God as did the prodigal son from his father. But now we have a church. Our soul has a home. The child has found the father. So let us give thanks unto the Lord, for He is surely good and His mercy endureth forever and ever. Amen.”

Much was given to us that day! Can we even imagine?...

OSP March 2013

The first meeting on March 10, 1839 led way to a new church and new beliefs for the new immigrants. They were serious about their faith. One month later on April 13, 1839, the new church constitution was adopted. Mr. Theo. Kraft had offered to donate a plot of ground for the building of the new church. By April 20 of the same year, Lot 17 of Kraft Addition had been donated.

In the meantime, the small congregation met in the Methodist Meeting House and when it went up for sale, it was considered. However, they now had the land and wanted their own church.

It was about this time that records show the land was not donated because there was a lien on it. In July 2002 our Archival Department found copies of the original land and plat documents from the St. Clair County Courthouse. These may have been written on linen and are now on microfilm with some damage incurred. But the fact was that Governor Kinney and Theodore Hilgard, Sr. held a mortgage on the lot and that at that time it was released. However, the donation of the property did not occur.

The deed was then placed under the names of the following trustees for the German Protestant Church "For and in innumeration of the sum of two hundred dollars." Trustees being, A. Hildebrandt, C. Westermann, C. Kaysing, Geo. Brenner, Christian Scholl, E. Meisser, and Jacob Espenschied. The property was part of a Plat know as Flanagan and Kraft with the signatures on the deed as: Theod. Kraft, Mary Kraft, John Flanagan and Frances Flanagan. Now the land belonged to the church.

Construction was ready to begin. An Irishman with the good name of Kirkpatrick was hired at the cost of \$413.00 and the first sound of the hammer was heard on September 7, 1839. It was built where the plaque now stands on third street near the rear of the Franklin School. It was on a hill, standing tall and proud, the ground had not been leveled yet as it is today. It was a humble beginning but much came from that little wooden hut of boards that measured 25' x 50'. It had no foundation and not even a floor, just Mother Earth, that first winter. No stained glass windows or decorations or trimmings. No stove was provided but the masses huddled together to sing its hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Although the dedication records have been lost, it is recorded in following years to have been dedicated in November of 1839.

The little church was already on its way to acclaiming recognition in many ways. It was the first church of the German tongue in Southern Illinois and the first German church formed in Belleville. Both Protestants and Catholics used the building for their devotions. It was the home of the first singing society in Belleville. And with the many books in their private collections the members brought over with them, it became the first public library in Belleville. Records have been found that show another library; however, it was at Shiloh Station for three years before moving to Belleville and eventually becoming the Belleville Public Library. The first bell (which we still have in our possession) was ordered in 1839 but didn't arrive from Philadelphia till early 1840. This little building of 1250 square feet also became the first parochial school in Belleville. It was open to members and non-members alike.

Much was needed and much was given to a small and thriving community through the faith of its members. 22 members in all. (Actually that would be families but women and children were not considered members.) These were people of great faith, determination, wealth, education and a desire to live a better life. Those were the things they brought with them and then gave back...

OSP October 2013

These new members of this new church should have been proud of all they accomplished in the spring and summer of 1839. However, what they needed now was an educator and pastor to lead them. Remember, they had appointed Rev. John Jacob Reiss as their pastor, but in August of that year he became ill and could not fulfill his duties as pastor and teacher. So on the first day of August, the Rev. William Flickinger, who was a graduate of theology at the University of Erlangen, was hired for the sum of \$150.00 a year. It is recorded that he was highly educated, of pleasing personality and address, and it was because of this man that the new little church was firmly established. The descendants of Rev. Flickinger still live in Belleville today. He and his wife are buried in the Concordia Cemetery on Concordia Church Road in Belleville. He served as pastor for three years.

In 1842, the Rev. Alexis Dony was hired as pastor. It was under his 7 year leadership that the church was finished. It boasted a foundation, a stucco covering, tower, bell, pulpit, church and school benches. If you'll bear with me, I'd like to list the cost of those items, only because I find them interesting and unbelievable.

The Council records of January 28, 1843 list the following costs of the year of 1842. Painting \$88.83; brick foundation and plaster work by Mace and Hiley \$89.40; cost of bell \$29.50; hanging of bell \$12.00; tower itself \$22.00; tin work in the tower and painting \$8.50; stove \$15.00 including shipping; 2 tables \$15.75; pulpit and chair \$70.00; floor or platform under the chancel \$10.00; 2 blackboards \$4.00; roof work \$12.00; window dressing (10 window panes installed \$1.12) \$5.00; painting of columns \$2.00; 12 benches 12 feet long by contractors Knoebel and Kumm. Our Irish friend Kilpatrick was ordered to lay the floor, erect doors and place shutters on the church. All this along with the original cost of the main building three years before (\$413.00) made the total building cost of \$878.45.

The following are the words of the church president at the January meeting: "Education of the youth and advancement of religion in general are our aims, and even though these ideals may require much labor and effort, we will continue the pursuit of these progressive aims, for which our posterity will be everlastingly grateful."

In the summer of 1849, the Village of Belleville declared a cholera epidemic. The sick were taken to medical tents on the outskirts of town to try to keep it from spreading further. 250 deaths were recorded for the epidemic and of those, 8 were members of our church.

Our little church had gone through a lot in the eleven years that brought it up to 1850. But it had done a lot and the people were determined to keep it going...

OSP May 2013

By 1850, the church had grown to 72 members (remember only the men were considered members). There were 80 students in that little "church schoolhouse". In 1852, the congregation saw the need to have a larger church. There was an auction of land nearby on Richland and B St., a lot measuring 90' x 100' and they got it for \$375.00. It was called Roedelsberger Place at that time. By January 3, 1853, the land was paid for.

The little church had come a long way from its beginning, but it hadn't been easy. There was always turmoil of one sort or another. These were highly educated people and they were often at theological differences with their pastors. They wanted pure reason in belief and life to be preached. Rev. Johann Wettle preached against it stating the "everyone be damned, who set their reason above their faith". When he wasn't willing to take back his words and other strong remarks from the pulpit of hates, misunderstanding and mistrust, he was asked to leave on January 28, 1851. The church was closed to him but not without a revolution breaking out within the church.

It seemed they couldn't keep a pastor. Jacob Balthasar Hoppe was only there one year and Rev. August Lepique started with \$200.00 a year, then went to \$150.00 and final got \$100.00 per year. However, in 1854 the congregation didn't like the new choir song books he bought because they were full of indecent and drinking songs and Rev. Lepique was ordered to pay for the books. There's no record stating if they were used then or not. In 1856, they employed a janitor and one of his jobs was to pass the Klingelbeutel (offering basket) on Sunday. One Sunday he forgot to turn in the offering of \$18.75 and offered his services to pay up. After one year, he still owed \$7.75. Makes one wonder what his salary was!

In 1857, Rev. Hoppe had returned for a second time and was told he had to collect his own salary from the members. He resigned.

These were sad days for St. Paul Church. The members couldn't agree and with no pastor there were few services held, so in May 1859, church was discontinued as was the school and the building was locked. Those members who wished, kept the church going by meeting in their homes.

In October of 1857, a school system was introduced to Belleville and the school board rented our church building for \$60.00 a year; however, on December 15, 1858, school ceased once again because of

the poor condition of the building. With trial preachers, on December 16, 1858, hymns could once again be heard in the church.

Remember that lot that the church purchased back in 1851? The congregation decided to sell the church and with the revenue, build a new church on the new lot. Times were looking good again.

A Mr. George Monken purchased the old church and then sold it to the city as part of a school site. It burned to the ground on November 18, 1864.

As a footnote: In April 1987, a member by the name of Ross French wrote an article on the only remaining piece of the old church, it being a piece of flooring that was white oak. From that piece of wood he made an altar table that is now in the Chapel by the altar. He also estimated that the tree when cut down was about 70 years old which would have sprouted from seed planted in pre-revolutionary times, the beginning of our nations' beginning. That little seed saw much in its day; the beginning of the revolutionary War and the Beginning of St. Paul Church. I might add that the first bell that we now have didn't suffer from the fire because it was hanging as a school bell in the belfry of the Lincoln Opportunity School, then the new Franklin School, and then the church leaders got the Board of Education to donate it back to the Church. It is now on display in Heritage Hall.

OSP June 2013

1859 started out with a new pastor – the Rev. A. H. Tauberth, but for only 5 months. Then came Pastor Theodore Klingsohr who took hold of the church and set it in revival mode.

The new church was built, and dedicated on Pentecost Sunday, May 12, 1861, in the brick new sanctuary that stood 40' x 60' and 22' high. At the cost of \$4271.21, it was beautiful and large – large enough to hold the 80 families with room to grow. (If you notice, the dedication date was a month after the Civil War broke out.)

Church President, Mr. John Bieser, reported to the congregation, "Let us be joyful that after a long interruption we have succeeded again in attaining a certain unity, let us be joyful to perceive that a goodly portion of old supporters have not lost their loyalty and interest in spite of all the bitter experiences; and let us do all that we can, in order not to fall apart again into chaos in front of the eyes of the city." As much as they had given to the city of Belleville in their few years, that seemed to be important. It has lasted ever since.

The Rev. Theodore Klingsohr lead the new church for two years. The first baptism performed by him was Emma Maria Stuke born March 18, 1861. She was the daughter of Joseph and Elisabeth (Opp) Stuke of Belleville. Joseph was from Switzerland and Elisabeth was from Mandel Prussia. His first marriage took place on May 24, 1861 when Fritz Baehre, born in Celle Hannover and Dorothea Deschner, born in Schafheim H. Darmstadt, exchanged their vows. The first funeral service was for Anna Marie Johannes of Belleville. She died at the tender age of 14 years and 8 months old. She died May 29, 1861, only eight days after the church was dedicated.

Rev. Klingsohr left in 1861 and Rev. Edward Graf became the pastor for the next 5 years. The longest of any pastor up to this date.

Did you know that we came close to being Lutheran.? It was on October 21 that a committee asked the Evangelical Lutheran Church to unite with St. Paul. Their minister, Rev. E. Mangelsdorf, was requested to accept the pastorate of St. Paul Church and unite with them. It is recorded that this proposition failed due to the obstinacy of the Lutheran board of trustees to accept the constitution of St. Paul.

In 1862, the congregation voted to join the Free Protestant congregation of North America. By the end of 1862, we now had 168 members (women still were not allowed to vote or be counted as members) so that figure meant 168 families.

The church was still growing. A wrought iron fence was built around the church property. In 1863 a new organ was purchased at the cost of \$360.00. The old melodian, which was used in the past, was raffled off at 50 cents a chance. There is no record of who won it.

The four years of the Civil War were hard and sad times. There are no records stating what members served or died in the war, but there were some lost. The women started the "Frau Verein" (Ladies Aid Society). Their main purpose was to form the establishment of a Sunday School. The first teachers were: Mrs. Dr. Wenzel, Miss Kellermann, Miss Kempff, and Mrs. Reiss. We had singing groups in the early years but in 1864, the first choir was formed and led under the direction of Dr. Carl Nuebert.

It was felt that we needed a janitor, so one was placed on salary. He worked on Sunday for 60 cents, but he also had to pump the organ.

The war ended and soldiers came home to find their church to be up and coming in the community. Times were tough, poor and uncertain, but faith and family remained strong...

OSP July 2013

The war had taken its toll on the community. It had drained its resources and its manpower. Many families were broken with the death of a loved one. But now it was over and everything had to be put back in place. Industry hired back the men that came home and people had money to buy things once more. But the one thing that didn't cease was their faith in god. Men came home to their sweethearts and new families were formed, with most marriages in the church.

Our church sponsored a community Memorial Service on June 1, 1865 at 10:00 a.m. in memory of President Lincoln who had been assassinated. It was a healing time for many. The offering of \$30.25 was turned over to the Honorable J. H. Beverridge, Treasurer of Lincoln Monument in Springfield, Illinois.

Two new bells were purchased for the steeple in 1866 at a cost of \$106.00. They were to toll at all funerals, free for the members and non-members had to pay 50 cents. Being a conservative German, Rev. J.C. Mosebach made full use of the church lot by putting in a vegetable garden for himself and the church.

Two more lots were purchased in the Flannagan and Kraft Addition. It was a good thing that they had the foresight to think ahead. That took us to the west and north of the church.

A new bell weighing 701 pounds was purchased for \$245.35 and the old cracked one weighing 1,127 pounds was sold \$247.94 making a profit of \$2.59. They really were frugal. On July 23, 1871, the 200 members (still men only) voted to give a new name to the church: we are now the Free German Protestant St. Paul's Church.

In 1873 a new organ was purchased for \$1,150 minus \$200 for the old organ from the Friedrich Herdel Company of St. Louis.

In 1878 construction sounded again when they built a new two story building 30' x 38' on Second North St. (B Street as we know it) and it was attached to the church as the first church Sunday School and parsonage. It cost \$3,283.35 and the same year a tin roof was put on the church for \$266.96. We were spending money like we had it. Well there was \$500.00 in the treasury before this.

Everything was on the rise! Fees for christenings were now 50 cents, funeral \$1.00 and confirmands whose parents did not belong to the church had to pay \$3.00. A new church steeple was built in 1883.

During Rev. Fleischer's stay as pastor (1871-1884), he made it his practice to reward each child that marched in the Sunday School picnic parade, with a pretzel and a glass of lemonade upon reaching the picnic grounds. This was a tradition for many years (Picnic and Pretzel).

Another addition was added in 1885, an addition of 26' x 28' which enlarged the north end of the sanctuary and the interior beautified. Two rooms were also added to the parsonage and the Sunday

School was expanded. That also was the year that the convention of the Free Protestant Preachers of North America was held here. That was really an honor to host such a gathering.

In 1886, the BIG DAY finally came. All women who had paid their dues to the church were now permitted to VOTE!

Times were still getting easier. Building was becoming easier as was furniture making. The spinning wheel was becoming just a treasured memento. After 1874, taking produce and other products to St. Louis became easier because Captain Eads had built a bridge across the wide Mississippi River. Very few ferries survived after that. There were no more hunters coming home to find their homes burned to the ground by the Indians. Although the ladies still wore long, full skirts (nere an ankle should be seen) at least some of the streets and sidewalks were becoming a little less dusty and a little less muddy. Life was good and getting better!

It was announced in the newspapers on August 11, 1889 that St. Paul's Free Protestant Church, whose members claimed it was the oldest in the City, would celebrate with a 50th Anniversary at the Opera House Garden the next Sunday. Past William Weber indicated the services would be held in the open air because the church was far too small to hold the people that were expected. The trees and tarpaulins, hung 20 feet above the ground, would provide cool and pleasant shade. It is very likely the oldest of all German Congregations in Southern Illinois, for 50 years is a very long period in the history of the settlement of the Mississippi Valley. Since that statement, we now know that there were a couple of churches that were three or so years older but were very small churches.

In 1893, the water for the church was brought inside. It was a new city thing and found to be very usable and paid for by the women's Literary Society. A new organ was bought on June 16 and installed December 30, 1893 at a cost of \$2,000. It would be used until June 1936. The "Women" were starting to make a difference...

OSP August 2013

We start this history with the year of 1899. Much happened that year as the century drew to a close. For many years before (since 1864) the Ladies Literary Society made all the arrangements for the annual spring picnic and fall dance. The profits from these went to help the operating expenses of the church. The Rev. Wm. Weber had been a pastor here since 1888, but for some reason this year he decided that he would make the decisions. In his sermon of October 22, 1899, Rev. Weber said, "that is was unchristian for a congregation to raise money to cover the running expenses of the church through the sale of beer at picnics and dances. The money should be raised by membership dues, and in case the congregation does not eliminate this custom, he would resign as minister."

Mr. Deppe, the Board President at the time, told Rev. Weber that he had caused much excitement with the membership and he deemed the minister was of no use to the congregation any longer. Rev. Weber resigned immediately and it took effect on November 15, 1899. At least he was a man of his word. Patience was not his virtue though. Had he waited just two years, the church voted to have no wine at the spring picnic and the last fall dance was held in November of 1901.

So, a new century was here, a page of time turned. What would that bring to these people who were making their mark in the City of Belleville and in the communities of churches?

Rev. Erich J. Becker became our minister in November, 1900. He was to last for 5 years.

For the turn of century, the church hall and parsonage was expanded at a cost of \$2,469. The pastor now had a bigger place in which to live and the hall was equipped with an actual stage set three feet above the floor. The weekly Advocate stated on February 21, 1901 that the Oberammergau Passion Play, given at the German Evangelical Church (that was us) Sunday night, was well attended and appreciated. Many of these people remembered the Passion Play from the "old country". This was to

be the beginning of many performances held on that stage, not only by us but by the city. The Belleville Drama club also used it.

On the evening of November 10, 1901, the Anheuser-Busch Opera House (owned by Adolphus Busch) held a large concert in the concert hall on the block across the street from our front entrance (B Street). It occupied a full half block. Besides the Opera House, there was a first class saloon and a restaurant and bowling alley. There also was an outdoor arena for a summer theatre and open air dancing. Over a thousand people were said to have been in that concert that night.

The next day, the Daily Advocate and Daily News Democrat reported "In the dead stillness of the night, while the peaceful citizens and their families were wrapped in peaceful slumbers, they were awakened at about 1:35 o'clock by the clanging of the fire bells which was followed shortly after by the clattering hoofs of the horses attached to the hose reels as they dashed through the streets to the scene of the conflagration. The flames had gained too great a headway, however, to even think of saving any part of the building." **The only thing left for the firefighters to do was the saving of St. Paul Church, rectory, school hall and adjoining property.**

It was reported that the church steeple was on fire three different times and the fact that there wasn't wind to speak of, saved the church from total destruction. As a result of the fire, many repairs and improvements were needed. The loss amounted to a full \$500. One hundred eighty window glass (clear glass then) were broken and the church was badly scorched, as well as the school hall and rectory. It was then decided to put on a new front addition of 48' x 12' to the church front, two steeples, and stained glass windows. The well known architect responsible for the Gothic design of the new front was Herbert Caleb Chivers of St. Louis, MO. Mr. Chivers modeled the addition after the Cathedral on Cologne, Germany. All the stained glass windows were purchased by organizations and members of the church, *in honor of* and *in memory of* loved ones. They are still marked today for you to see. These were completed between 1902 and 1903. The cost of the donated windows on the sides of the church was from \$30 to \$75 each. The front windows of the church totaled \$300, including the cost of the St. Paul window at \$60. The last estimate of the value of all the windows today is \$750,000. We really don't know the estimate of the St. Paul window, although some say it's worth \$250,000 alone. How blessed we are to be able to look at their beauty every time we walk by or into Heritage Hall. Again, we thank those who have gone before us.

OSP September 2013

A new century had begun and the church has a new outlook on life. The new front (after the fire) with its Gothic look and stained glass windows stood regal in Belleville. The Young Peoples League added the new marble baptismal font (still in use in the Chapel today).

The St. Louis Worlds Fair was held in 1904 and our church is recorded to have had a concession at the fair. However, to date, we don't know what kind. We were growing and letting the people know it.

Also, in 1904, one of the most important votes was taken in our history up to that time. In the 55 years previous, our church had 15 pastors and now another one was coming on the scene. How long he was to last remained to be seen.

He came to town as a young man, with his young wife and together made their lives in our church. He was short and small in stature and looked as though he wouldn't be able to handle a small church, much less one the size of St. Paul. However, as he stood as tall as he could in the pulpit on Sunday, September 23, 1905. Looking out over the congregation through his little round wire rimmed glasses he gave his first sermon and the church knew he was a man to be reckoned with. He was a speaker who preached what he believed and lived it and had a vision beyond imagination. In talking with his wife, one got the feeling that she stood firmly behind him and held him up. St. Paul Church welcomed the Rev. Otto Frank Pessel and his wife, Clara into the life of the church.

He set about taking inventory of the needs of the church and by 1907 he decided that since Adolphus Busch's Opera House had electric lights in 1901, it was time for the church to have them. He was a friend of the young people, so the electric lights went first into the school hall. They needed them to learn. Two years later he saw a need for a stage for drama, so the hall was enlarged and a 21' x 58' stage was included. Upstairs was the custodian's apartment.

Rev. Pessel kept the contractors busy because in 1910 he had the interior of the church and the hall renovated. The ceiling in the church was arched in an effort to improve the acoustics of the sanctuary. Not that he needed it, for this small man made himself heard very well. Rev. Pessel thought the organ and the choir deserved to be heard. Up to this point, stoves were used in the church, school, hall, and parsonage. These were taken out and a new steam plant was installed.

Then, in 1910, he came up with the idea that Belleville needed a hospital and an old folks home. Lots 210, 208, and 209 at the corner of Spring and A Street were purchased for that purpose. This is recorded in the St. Clair County Records Office, book "U-4 page 115".

On January 12, 1911, the congregation voted to change our name to Evangelical St. Paulus Congregation of Belleville. In the article written by the Daily Advocate Newspaper, it was reported that over 800 families considered St. Paul home.

In 1913, St. Paul celebrated the 100th anniversary of the liberation of the Germans from despotism of Napoleon. Some things are just hard to forget when it is part of one's family past...

OSP October 2013

Teddy Klohr was the caretaker of St. Paul from 1907 to 1945. His daughter, Gertrude Klohr Steinmeyer, wrote us a letter some years back to tell us some of her experiences in her younger years, about age 12. She stated that she had to ring the smaller bell at 9:00 am and at 10:00 am, she rang the big double bells. Well, one Sunday morning she must have had an extra Cheerio because she enthusiastically tugged the bells and the clapper tumbled out of the big bell and down the tower. Her quote was, "If you'd known how that sounded – Mankind! I almost fainted!" Then she was paid a quarter to pump the organ and keep it supplied with air. It was a Sunday evening service and Rev. Pessel was preaching on and on in his thick German accent. Just too much for a young girl to bear. She said, "I fell asleep. They tried to play that organ and it just squeaked!" She didn't say if she was fired or forgiven.

The next year, in 1914, Rev. Pessel had a motor installed in the organ and electric lighting in the church sanctuary. I guess Gertrude was out of a job then.

In 1914, the Ladies Aid Society (The Frauen Verein) celebrated their 50th Anniversary with 202 members present.

On November 1, 1914, \$248.42 was collected by the congregation and turned over to a local committee for the distressed Germans in Germany at the beginning of World War I.

1915 started with a balance of \$.04 in the coffers, but the bills were paid. It was time that we had individual communion glasses (they were afraid of the diseases that occurred) and electric was put in the parsonage.

April 16, 1918 saw a huge hailstorm hit Belleville with thousands of dollars of damage to the city. Our large art glass window in front of the church, St. Paul Window, and several smaller windows were pelted with hundreds of small holes. It cost \$300 to fix them and \$43 for the school hall.

1918 turned out to be a very bad year for Belleville and the church. In September of that year, we were told by the Board of Health in the city of Belleville, that we could hold no meetings or church services for 5 weeks due to an influenza epidemic. Rev. Pessel wrote in a letter, "We had a terrible time here with the flu. People died like flies. One, two, three, or four funeral a day. Got at last tired of burying people. They were in their prime, no older people at all. Many children orphaned. Almost everyone was sick with the flu or pneumonia.

Pressure from WWI caused us to hold only two weeks a month in German and then weeks in English. The confirmation and Sunday School classes were all in English. It was at this time that we also joined the Evangelical Synod of North America and became known as St. Paul Evangelical Church.

I had told you before how close Rev. Pessel was to his congregation. He felt for them and we have proof. During the war, he wrote to every soldier from our church. In some of the letters to different soldiers, he wrote "Sorry to say, one of our members will not come back. Henry Grossmann, a member of our Men's Aid Society was first reported missing in action and later came the report that he was killed on October 10. He was a fine fellow. And how did he hate to go. Maybe he anticipated his fate. He has no parents left, but has a very fine sweetheart and the poor girl weeps her eyes out."

To another he wrote, "In the old church, things are picking up again. During the war we suffered too. Many grew cold on account of our language and many were afraid as the fanatics, that were too great cowards to fight the Germans over there, tried to make up in fighting us here. In some states the old language is all together forbidden in church. Here we had to change language in Sunday School and in the confirmation classes and had to have 2 English services in the month." Again, he writes, "The greatest problem here is the coming prohibition. Where can the older men get work who were in the wet business all their lives? We shall have a big celebration for you when this thing is finally settled and you are back, but without beer, that is gone forever." "Soon you will greet the old U.S. again and may she never have to send again her precious boys into a foreign field." "Best Wishes and much love from your pastor and friend." Otto F. Pessel.

And so "Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" but it wasn't the same. Lives were touched and sorrow abounded, but with their leader and their faith in God, they went on. Things had changed, but life would get better. It was just more to remember in their lives...

OSP November 2013

The war was over. The boys who went came home as men. It was then that one of our members, Dr. Edmund Bechtold went to Rev. Otto Pessel in 1920 and said, "We need new hospital facilities desperately. Our boys fought the Great War so that we could build a better world. Let's build it." Within a few years the campaign led by Rev. Pessel and several other E & R Churches of Belleville devised the sale of "**BRICKS**" as a fundraiser. The bricks were actually stickers sold by volunteers for \$1.00 each and pasted onto sheets. That sale raised \$4,000.00 which was invested wisely and in 20 years, with interest, turned over to the newly chartered hospital corporation in 1947. Memorial Hospital broke ground in 1955 and has been growing ever since.

We purchased the Louise Neubarth property that sat just east of the sanctuary for \$1,900 in 1922. It was demolished and a new parsonage was built by local contractors, Teufal and Kloess. Dedication was held on March 11, 1923 and Rev. and Mrs. Clara Pessel moved into their new home, next door to the church. However, it was also demolished in 1962 when a new home at 108 Cardinal Drive was built on the east end of town.

Another big decision was made at the board meeting of February 1, 1924 when the Board resolved that the meetings hereafter be conducted and recorded in the English language (for which I am forever grateful). However, German services were still held on the first Sunday of each month with the remaining ones to be in English.

1925 was a big year in the life of our church. The church and dedicated adult leadership started Boy Scout Troop #14 to become one of the most active troops in Southwestern Illinois. In order to keep the members informed, the first edition of the "Our St. Paul" was published. To date, most of the collection can be viewed in the Archives. It truly carried the history of the members, groups, activities, leadership, and programs monthly of the church.

The original bell from 1839 was now in the hands of the public school system who purchased the first church bell for a school. But in 1925 we wanted to regain ownership of the bell, so the school board donated it back to the church. The bell had hung in the Franklin School and the Lincoln Opportunity School at one time. It was reinstalled in the steeple with the other two bells and would later be rung at the 100th Anniversary of the church. Today it holds its new but rightful place, back in Heritage Hall in a new display window for all to see.

On July 29, 1926, members, Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Kohl purchased the property of Adam Gintz at 1021 West "E" St. for \$8,000. It consisted of a beautiful old home on top of a hill with 4 acres of ground surrounding it. If you remember, the church had originally bought the 2 lots on the corner where our sanctuary now sits, but this new acquisition would make a much better place. It was donated to the church on August 22, 1926 for the new "St. Paul Old Folks Home". After a \$20,000 renovation was made, a total of 13 new residents moved in. It has kept growing ever since. Just an interesting note: Mr. Adam Gintz was a wealthy man when he built that home. He and Peter Neu (also of our congregation) had formed the New and Gintz Brewery in 1851. It was sold as an incorporated company in 1873 which later became known as the Western Brewery. In 1912 it was once again purchased by Henry Louis Griesedieck and became Stag Brewery. Ten years ago in 2003, a descendant of the Neu family brought our church quilt back to us. This quilt was made by the women members of St. Paul in 1904 and was bought by Mrs. Peter Neu for her own use. It has been restored and is now in the Archives of the church.

A new organization called the Daughter of Naomi also formed to assist in the development and personal assistance of the residents.

It boggles my mind when I read how much was accomplished in six short years within our church. Although our church has formed, grown, and still exists today. I believe these six years were the most fruitful and rewarding of the church and its relation to the community. Belleville knew the presence of St. Paul E & R Church...

OSP December 2013

Rev. Pessel had been at our church for 26 years as our only pastor. After seeing growth every year, in 1931, we appointed our first Assistant Pastor of July 5, 1931. The Rev. Ludwig Christian Carl Kutz took his place beside Rev. Pessel to help. Being of slender and tall build, it made a strange picture when both were photographed together. They both held that stern look that seemed to be the thing in those days.

He too, came with a young wife, Mrs. Bertha Marie Kutz and she was to help guide the ladies in their endeavors. Her first contribution was to see to it that the confirmands had new robes. In all the previous years, the young people wore white special finery, but because of the Depression, it was getting harder for families to afford it. So Bertha gathered the ladies and they made the robes to be used every year.

The Daily Advocate printed that on December 5, 1931, our church services would again change and that Rev. Pessel would hold the 10:15 a.m. service in German in the church, while Rev. Kutz held the English services in the Hall.

The national merger of the Evangelical and the Reformed Churches took place in 1934 and St. Paul became known as St. Paul Evangelical and Reformed Church.

It was also the year that Rev. Kutz resigned because of a dispute between he and Rev. Pessel. It seemed that for years we gave fried chicken dinners that had a freewill offering. It was Kutz's belief that any dinners in the church should be free and after much discussion, he lost, so he left.

Then in 1935, thirty years after Rev. Pessel first arrived on the scene, it became the saddest year in our history to that point. This little man, that took our small church to become the largest Protestant

Church in Belleville, would no longer be with us. Both Otto and Clara had so imbedded themselves into our lives, that no one could picture it without them.

On September 29, 1935, a large reception was held to celebrate the 30th anniversary and his retirement.

If you reread the last 30 years of this history, you will realize what a busy man he had to have been. They both were 30 years older, a little more bent over, and a little more wrinkled, but the love of God and his people still shined in both their eyes. They would be terribly missed, but the future was to go on. Who and what would the new pastor be like? This seems like a good place to end this year, but we will start next year (2014) with the continuing of the passing of time for St. Paul Church.

I'd like to insert an editor's comment at this point. I was born 2 years after Rev. Pessel left, so I didn't get to know him. However, when I started as Archivist for the church, I found a very large picture of him and I put it by my desk in my third office (I've moved 4 times). One day someone came in and asked how I could work with him staring me in the face. I was surprised because even to this day, I find his little wire glasses over those piercing eyes very comforting. It was like he could look into your soul and know you. I've even sat and talked with him a time or two and I think I detected a slight hint of a smile. I can't imagine what it would have been to lose him as a Pastor.

But life went on at St. Paul...

OSP January 2014

Welcome to the new year! 2014 – the 175th Anniversary of St. Paul United Church of Christ. We start this exciting year with anticipation as we move on.

However, in our history as we have been recording it, we must move back to 1935 to continue to the present.

When we left 1935 behind, we also left behind the retirement of Rev. Otto Pessel with the title of Pastor Emeritus.

On May, 1935, the Rev. Benjamin J. Koehler was elected to become pastor of St. Paul church. He started his work at St. Paul on August 11th and was installed on September 8, 1935.

He and his wife, Mildred, were different from Otto and Clara. They both stood tall and straight and had a modern look to them. He came with the distinction of being a dynamic speaker, young and full of vitality. He would have to be to continue in this growing church. He was determined to do so and he did with his leadership and vision. Mildred was of the same mold. She considered it her job to be among the people and to work with them for the betterment of the church. And she did.

In 1935 the original bell from the 1839 church came back home to rest. (It is now on display in Heritage Hall.)

Rev. Koehler jumped in and got things done. The Church Council was enlarged from 10 to 12 members in 1936. But that was just the beginning. The church sanctuary got a complete overhaul. It was to increase seating capacity, beautify and modernize the church. A new Chancel was added and highlighted by two things. The two Keil daughters, Rose S. and Martha H. Keil, gave a fund to St. Paul Church in the memory of their mother, Mrs. Sophia M. Keil for the purchase of the stained glass window that we know as the "Rose Window". The seven foot diameter window represented the symbol of eternity. Jacoby Art Glass of St. Louis, MO made the window.

The purchase of a new organ was also donated by the Keil sisters along with Walter Keil. It was a 3 manual pipe organ with Cathedral chimes and French Harp that came from the Grand Opera House in St. Louis, MO. It was also known as the Sophia Keil Memorial Organ. It contained two chambers, one to the left and one to the right of the altar.

The cost of the work done was \$20,000 and was done by 14 different contractors coming from as far away as Grand rapids, Michigan, St. Louis, and local. With the Chancel now so beautiful and new, it was

felt that Walter P. Tisch should supply a new white marble altar that was made in Italy. The renovated church was dedicated on November 8, 1936.

Although it wasn't a project of our church, I would like to include that in 1937 the Veterans Memorial Fountain was erected in the center of town by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars of Belleville. It was in memory of all servicemen who died in WWI. Since our church had a large number of members who gave their all to the war and some of our members donated labor, I thought it appropriate that it be mentioned.

In 1939 the second oldest building in Belleville at the time on the corner of 1st and "B" St. was condemned and torn down. That was where the custodian had his house. So temporary housing was made in the church hall and was equipped. However, now we didn't have room for the Sunday School classes that were held there. So the public school board gave us permission to send our Primary, Beginner's and Kindergarten Departments to meet at the Franklin School across the street. The old house was torn down on December 18, 1939.

Since that was just a temporary arrangement, the Congregation gave, as a 100th anniversary gift to the church, the construction of Centennial Parish House, which was a 60% addition to the old school hall. It housed the Fireside Room, an office space, and a staircase to the second floor. At this time, the enrollment of the Sunday School had grown to 869 students. We were bursting at the seams!

The first four years of the Rev. Koehler presence was a busy time to be sure. They grew with and into the church and they, too, were loved. He was a very educated man and his sermons showed it. He didn't have the German accent as the others had had. He didn't speak down to the people but up to them and it came to be known that his words ruled.

Millie, as she became known to everyone, was very active in the church. Before the Fireside room was built, The Fireside Club was formed in their living room by the fireplace. She was also a gracious hostess. She joined the Women's Guild and the meetings were formal with lace tablecloths and china and silver service. She worked on the women's projects right along with them. And when their children (one girl and one boy) were born, they, too, belonged to the church. As they grew, their footsteps could be heard all over the church. They made it a happy place. They helped as well as anyone.

Times were full, fun and happy. Faith was still the strength of the family and church was important in the lives people. Times were good...

OSP February 2014

Wouldn't you know it – just when life is going well, a new challenge was added to the life of all Americans. On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked the U.S. Fleet at Pearl Harbor and just four days later Hitler declared war against the United States. The world didn't know how much that would change it and neither did the church on "B" St. in Belleville, IL. Thousands of lives were lost in a matter of hours. We now had two fronts to fight on. Our boys and men marched off to war, leaving behind women – mothers, wives, children, and sweethearts. If a country ever needed its faith, it was now.

Everyone that was left at home did their best for the war. Women went to work on the assembly lines making ships and guns while their children made Victory Gardens at home. (I know – I made my little Victory Garden when I was in Kindergarten and won first prize from the school. I still have my certificate to this day.) There are many of you who remember those times with the rationing stamps every month to buy small amounts of gas, sugar, meat, and tires. War bonds were bought at school and the foil on the gum wrappers were peeled off and put into balls and turned in to the government. Nylons couldn't be found in the stores because parachutes were made of Nylon. When the sirens went off, we pulled down our window shades and turned off the lights. Then the banners with the big red stars on them went in the windows of almost every house and we prayed that they wouldn't be taken down until after

the war. If you saw the telegram man come up your walk, you knew that your loved one was either missing or dead. The star then came down.

If ever there was time that everyone needed their faith it was then. St. Paul Church had a total of 367 of their members that joined the military. Sixteen of those brave men paid the ultimate price. In the Archives we have the names of all those who joined and those who never returned to attend church again. For the price they paid, I think it would be fitting to name them. Some of you may even know or remember:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pvt. Oliver L. Bange | M/Sgt. Arthur Baum |
| Seaman 1/C James P. Bevirt | Cpl. Harold Diller |
| M.M.1/C Paul W. Fernan | Sgt. Anthony Green Jr. |
| Pvt. Clarence I. Knobeloch | G. Mate 1/C J.M. Franklin Hartman |
| S/Sgt Harold Klein | Pfc. Wilber Lehr |
| Cpl. Edward A. Meidinger | M/Sgt. Glenn Meyer |
| Pfc. Junior Meyer | Pfc. Earl M. Steiner |
| Sgt. Edward J. Taylor | Pfc. John Clifford Woodrome |

The next time you walk in the chapel, look up and to your right and you will see a stained glass window of the "The Ascension". You will find below it the name of Pvt. Oliver Bange. Oliver was killed in action on November 20, 1943. He was 21 years old and a Marine who was a veteran of the campaign on Guadalcanal, but was killed on Tarawa. He was the first of our church to give his life. His family gave the window in memory of him. May he rest in peace knowing that he will never be forgotten.

People came to church to worship, hope, cry, and to remember. Rev. Koehler was a strong man of a strong faith and helped his congregation through it. He held and prayed with the people and they grew stronger in body and mind.

Again, we have all these people to thank for our past. We are coming to the time when we'll be able to remember who, what, where, and when. For me it will be exciting to write of the time when I grew up in the church. The church that was given to me by all the people who went before me and you...

OSP March 2014

In 1944 the war still wasn't over, but we were starting to see signs that it soon would be. Rev. Koehler hoped so too. In this it was recorded that 114 children and adults were baptized, 52 children and 19 adults were confirmed, 69 couples were married and 150 people received Christian burial services – some of those being veterans. I was in Sunday School then and looking back, I don't know how Rev. Koehler did it all.

It wasn't until 1946 that the church fathers decided that it was time to get another pastor. So in July of that year, they hired the Rev. Robert J. Herman as the first Minister of Education and the only Minister of Music the church had. It was a relief for Rev. Koehler, but with Rev. Herman on board, the church grew even more. Rev. Herman was a young, single, pastor and as all the young ladies in the church realized how good looking he was, he maintained quite a following. Any girl from age eight and up was in love with him. This writer and all my friends were too!

The attendance grew to the point that the people had no where to sit. So the church opened up the west wall of the church and put in folding doors between the church and Centennial Hall. These doors could be opened up as needed so the room extended all the way across Centennial Hall through the Fireside Room. It was in this part that most of the Sunday School rooms were located. Sunday School was changed from being held during the 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. service to 9:15 – 10:15 a.m. The early

service was from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. On July 11, 1948 the first broadcast of the worship service of St. Paul E & R Church of Belleville, IL went out over the airways of Radio Station WIBV.

We made it through the 40's and started into the 1950's. Everything was busy and moving along when another unbelievable act happened. It was the Lenten Service on the evening of March 9, 1951. Rev. Koehler was preaching from the pulpit. I was sitting right under the pulpit when I heard this eloquent speaker slur a word and then repeat the word. That just never happened before. I looked up just in time to see Rev. Koehler disappear from the pulpit. The ushers came running and an ambulance was called. Our beloved pastor had just had a stroke! We prayed for him for the rest of the service.

Rev. Koehler had a severe stroke on his right side. Some of the best doctors near and far tried to help, and after many months of recovery he was able to return to the pulpit. However, he was never able to gain full use of his right leg and arm. He trudged on with determination and the full respect from his congregation.

Life happens even in God's House, but he then gives us the strength to overcome and continue on. It seems that is what St. Paul Church has always been able to do. We pray that it may always be so...

OSP April 2014

We got Rev. Koehler back and got a new organ in 1952. It was a three manual organ from the Moller Organ Company of Hagertown, Md. It would have cost \$20,000 but parts that were usable were removed from the Sophia M. Keil Memorial organ and included in the new organ for a total cost of \$10,000. During the interim we can thank Gaerdner Funeral home for lending us their Hammond All-Electric Organ. A recital was held by Organist, Paul Godt, to dedicate the organ on Sunday, March 9, 1952 at 8 p.m.

Rev. Robert J. Herman felt a need for a community chorus so together with Miss Jane Hansleben, they founded the Belleville Chorale. It was a huge success and became the nucleus of the Belleville Philharmonic Chorale which stills continues today as a community asset.

Rev. Koehler began his pastorate in 1935 and by 1954 the church grew at an enormous pace to a point that the membership quadrupled. We were the leading church in the area. It was on the horizon that a new church was needed. So Lyman Weisenstein presented plans for a larger church and school. However, it would be another four years before building would start on the new church. The last worship service to be conducted in German was also held that year, with a Good Friday communion service held in the morning. The end of another era.

1955 saw the anniversary of the 30th year of the publication of the news publication "our St. Paul's" better known as our OSP. 2300 copies were placed in the mail every month. I might add that we have almost every copy in the archives. Exciting things happened in 1956, when a student assistant from Eden Seminary was hired. Lorenz L. Eichenlaub brought a new prospective of the modern day pastor. He was young, good looking, and took the youth by storm. My first remembrance of him was a youth hay ride that was held and he was the chaperone! I stood looking at the hay wagon and there stood a living scarecrow, stuffed with straw and blowing bubbles with gum. Talk about a shock. That was one. We would never have thought or pictured that of a minister. But we loved him. He graduated from Eden in 1957 and became assistant pastor until January 18, 1958 when he left to go to Grace UCC of St. Louis, MO.

There was another change of services in the fall of 1956 when we went to three services every Sunday morning. The services were at 8:00, 9:10 and 10:30 a.m. The Sunday School introduced two sessions each Sunday at 9:10 and 10:30 a.m.

After 2 years of planning, the congregation voted to approve the plans for the new church. It called for a budget of \$662,126.00 which was passed and the ground-breaking took place on October 7, 1956 for the new church and educational building.

Another first for us and for the community was the original religious drama, "I Knew Jesus", written and produced by Rev. Robert Herman and Miss Hansleban. The men of the church were the disciples on the evening of the debut, April 14, 1957. It was very emotional, with costumes and make-up and ran like a Broadway show for many Lenten seasons. If you have the OSP for April 1957 you can find out who the cast and crew were. It was also a sad year because Rev. Herman answered a call to the First Congregational Church of Muskegon, MI and left to take care of his parents there.

At the end of the year his annual report gave us the figures of the church. There were 307 members of the Cradle Roll (that's babies) and the total enrollment of the church school now stood at 1552 students. The average attendance for each Sunday of the year 699. For the same year Rev. Koehler reported that there were 179 children and adults baptized, 71 young people and 11 adults confirmed, 62 couples united in holy matrimony and 157 people received Christian burial services. It doesn't seem possible but I was there along with many of you reading this, and know it was true. We grew to be the second largest Sunday School in the whole denomination.

It was a great responsibility leading that many souls to Christ and it was done well under the watchful eye of our pastors and the consecrated people that volunteered and supported our church. It was a wonderful time and we thought it would last forever. That's hope springing anew. Could it and would it stay the same in years to come? Only the future would tell us that.

But with hope and faith we went forward...

OSP May 2014

For many years the church was called the St. Paul Evangelical and Reformed Church, but another change took place and on June 29, 1958, a new cornerstone was laid in the name of the St. Paul United Church of Christ. This was a merger of the Congregationalists and the E & R's, and so it remains today, the longest that we have gone with the same name.

A dream for Belleville and our church finally came true on May 19, 1958 when the first patient was admitted to the Memorial Hospital of Belleville, IL. The members of the Memorial Hospital Builders Club were: Rev. B. J. Koehler, President; Oliver C. Joseph, Vice President; W. A. Schickendanz, Secretary and Finance Director; and Walter A. Keil, Treasurer.

The new fire of energy kept burning in 1958 when a new Sanctuary/Education Building Committee consisting of George Muehlhauser, Chairman, and Leroy Pinkel, Arthur Peters, Leroy Schaufler, and Ray Davenport, set to work to purchase seven buildings around the church which would be razed. These were the buildings that the church had used as Sunday School rooms because there wasn't enough room in the church. I remember those days when we'd traipse across the back yards of these houses and have Sunday School in these homes, which were neither heated or air conditioned. Yet we came! The plaster was falling off the walls, the floors weren't the safest, and one light bulb hung in most of the rooms. Still we came! We went in our finery across the yards of either mud or snow and never complained because we were going to Sunday School – but a new building was needed!

The building started with the contracts going out to Walter Tisch Monument Works of Belleville, who made the marble altar and sealed inside the first shovel of dirt from the ground-breaking. It cost \$2,500. All the pews and furniture, at a cost of \$13,093, went to the Carondelet Manufacturing Co. of St. Louis. The most interesting contract was with Emil Frei Company of St. Louis to fabricate the stained glass window. Only mouth-blown antique glass was used. The designer was Rodney Winfield whose work is all over the U.S. He did the east wall of the Sheldon concert Hall and the Temple Israel in St. Louis, Mo, but the best known work is the "Space Window" that contains a basalt lunar rock from the Sea of Tranquility in the Washington National Cathedral. I was told that we also have the same "eye" in one of our windows. Spend an afternoon sometime and see if you can find it!

The whole sanctuary had to be supported by a series of concrete pilings due to the discovery of an abandoned quarry after the construction was started. The stainless steel steeple was built 35 feet tall, weighing over one ton, and built and installed by Joseph Bauer of Belleville Sheet Metal Works. It had to be put into place perfectly for the smallest dent in it would have been like a sore thumb.

We got another new pastor in 1958. The Rev. Theodore N. Tiemeyer of New Albany, IN was called to serve and he assumed his duties on September 16th. Since Dr. Rev. and Mrs. Koehler were living in the parsonage at the time, they decided to buy a home at 50 Carnation Drive in Chenot Place and moved in September. That left the parsonage at 111 W. "B" for Rev. and Mrs. Tiemeyer. Rev. Koehler, at that time, became Pastor Emeritus of St. Paul Church.

Classes were held in the new educational building on Sunday, April 5, 1959. The confirmation class consisted of 52 boys and 55 girls.

We had a new church but there was a lot of things that had to be bought to fill it. The faithful members of the church came through with the things that were needed. New hymnals were bought. A memorial by Mr. and Mrs. Carl Klein covered the \$5,000 cost of the stained glass windows in the chancel. They were installed on September 20th. The lower stained glass windows in the narthex were a memorial given by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Kimball for Mrs. Inez E Hammer Miller. The Sophie M. Keil Memorial organ that was in the old church since 1936, was repaired, rebuilt, and placed in the new church. It's tonal combinations represented violins, flutes, trumpet, harps, cathedral chimes, and so much more. It was to have a longer life and be enjoyed more. The smallest pipe compares to a nut and the largest is 16 feet high and 12 inches square.

It was Mother's Day, May 10, 1959. Some churches celebrate Mother's Day or the Festival of the Christian Home, but this day found us celebrating the first day in our new church. The keys were turned over by Lyman Weisenstein and Dr. Rev. B. J. Koehler lead the service.

Some of the previous years were filled with activity and expectation but to this date, these two years had to be the busiest. So much happened and all of it is still with us today. What more could be done? Could there possibly be anything else to be done? If I know this church, we are by no means done. There'll always be a new project, idea, or hope to search. That's the way it is with people of faith – always working form more to the glory of God...

OSP June 2014

I have debated on this month's writing but have decide to stray from the usual and tell of the life of a man and wife instead of the church. Although in this instance, they are both joined together and always will be in the history of this church. Those who knew them are blessed and those who didn't have the chance, might learn something of the man Dr. Rev. B. J. Koehler and his wife Millie (Mildred).

He wasn't the longest pastor we ever had. That was Rev. Pessel at 30 years. And although he was a man of religion and faith and he was successful in stabilizing and growing our church, it took the dynamics of Rev. Koehler to grab hold and make it grow when it was thought that the church had reached its top. So this writing is dedicated to them, as unbelievable as they were.

Rev. Koehler Receives D.D. Our St. Paul's – August 1954

"Upon recommendation of the Board of the Faculty and the Authority of the Board of Directors of Elmhurst College the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on Benjamin J. Koehler in recognition of distinguished services rendered as Administrator, Preacher and Pastor.

It is my privilege to present the Reverend Mr. Benjamin J. Koehler as a candidate for the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Mr. Koehler is a graduate of Elmhurst College of the Class of 1924. He received his Bachelor of Divinity from Eden Theological Seminary and two additional years of graduate work at the University of California.

He has held pastorate in San Bruno and Oakland, California and is at present, the minister of St. Paul's Church in Belleville IL.

For ten years, Mr. Koehler served as director and leader of the Leadership Training Schools of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. He has also served as Secretary of the California Synod, President of the South Illinois Synod, President of the Belleville Hospital Assoc. and Chairman of his Synod's Committee of Church and Ministry. At present he is a member of the state Board of the Illinois Federation of Churches and a member of the Board of Directors of Elmhurst College.

The Board of Directors and the Faculty of Elmhurst College recognize the distinguished services rendered by Pastor Koehler as "Administrator, Preacher and Pastor."

(signed) Edward W. Brueseke

Our church gave him a self-winding, Shock Master Elgin watch, and the Doctorate robe. It was presented by Rev. Robert Herman, and yet, this humble man wrote to the congregation: Your gifts completely overwhelmed me, as did the Doctorate. I feel so completely unworthy and undeserving, but shall endeavor to live up to the high expectations of this honor. My sincere thanks go to one and all."

Rev. B.J. Koehler.

As though this was not enough to accomplish while here at St. Paul, he also served as Vice President of the Metropolitan church Federation of Greater St. Louis, a member of the Executive Board of the Illinois Federation of churches and a member of the board of the St. Paul's Home for the Aging.

This was only a portion of this life. As his civic duty to the community, he was a member of the Belleville Playground and Recreation Board, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and the Downtown Optimist club. As a Mason, he was a member of the St. Clair Lodge No. 24, Hi-Twelve Club and the Order of the White Shrine of Jerusalem.

He put himself in the position to be with and know a lot of people and like the shepherd, the people followed him to St. Paul. With his impeccable sermons, and his caring ways, he accepted them. So for 25 years the church grew!!

On August 26, 1962, after attending services he was stricken with another stroke on his way home. He died at Memorial Hospital on Sept. 24, 1962. The funeral was held from his beloved church to the Lake View Memorial Gardens Mausoleum.

And it is so, that on April 28, 1963, the members of the church, through donations to the Koehler Memorial fund, installed a set of carillon bells, dedicated in his memory. The instrument is known as an "Americana" Carillon. It consists of 50 miniature bell units, of bronze metal, which are struck by hammers, producing exact bell tones almost inaudible to the human ear. When amplified over one million times by means of electronic equipment, produces true bell music with all the depth and richness of traditional cast bell of massive proportions. The instrument provides the tonal quality equivalent of over 100,000 pounds of cast bells tuned to the finest standards. It plays from the keyboard of the organ console and could be heard within the building alone, solo with the organ and from the tower.

Also included as a Schulmerich "Auto-Bell" roll player. It is controlled by a calendared clock which can be set to play the carillon at any time of the day. It was set to play each day at 12 noon and 5 p.m. Also Sundays at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. from the tower for the community to hear.

The carillon bells are still there today, however, they no longer work wouldn't it be a wonderful gift to five back to the church and the community, that wonderful work of art of our 175th Anniversary.

And so, this column must come to an end, as did the era of Rev. Koehler. A man who loved and dedicated himself to his God and the people of this church. I invite you to read back through all this

man did and how big the church was, and then add on the duties of a husband and a father, not only to his immediate family, but to these 2000 plus families that he felt were his too. He married them, baptized their children, confirmed them and in the end buried them. Then, he started over with the next generation.

Those of us who knew him will never forget him for all he did. And, those of you who didn't know him, just ask us who did, and we'll all be able to tell your heartwarming stories of this man blessed by God.

Next month I would like to finish the story. The other half of this story called Millie...

OSP July 2014

IN THE BEGINNING....

As I promised, I'm going to continue this month with the life story of an unbelievable woman. Millie (as we came to know her) came to St. Paul Church with her husband in August 1935. When they arrived at the eight room parsonage at St. Paul, their daughter was six years old and little Douglas (Doug) was three. They immediately won the hearts of the congregation.

Millie was born and raised in St. Louis along with two brothers. She was the daughter of the late Louis and Louise Juergens who were engaged in business. She was active in church, youth groups and many programs of the church. It was there that she met this young student pastor, Ben Koehler, who had come to Bethany church. He finished his education at Eden Seminary and they were married. From St. Louis they traveled to San Bruno, California into a mission situation that had to be lifted off the ground. I wish I knew how high he lifted that church! From there they went to Oakland, California and enjoyed a wonderful ministry. Then came the call to St. Paul in Belleville.

"Belleville was where this family was to grow, be educated and mature. Under the guiding hand and inspiration of Mildred, these things were achieved," wrote Dr. Eichenlaub.

You read about the accomplishments of her husband but she too had her list. She was known first as a loving wife, devoted mother, conscientious citizen of Belleville and a successful partner with Ben in the ministry of St. Paul.

"Not only was she co-owner with her husband in the ministry for the Lord, but she was an excellent mother," wrote Dr. Eichenlaub. She was active in the PTA, the Girl Scouts, the Cub Scouts, and the Boy Scouts. She was a scout along with them. She was an active member in the Women's Club of Belleville, the Eastern Star and other organizations in the community. She was engaged in the activities at the new Memorial Hospital as a Pink Lady and worked with the Candy Strippers Program. At St. Paul's she was a teacher in the adult and 4th grade classes, was a member of the Women's Guild, Women's Evening Guild, Daughters of Naomi, and Child Study Guild. She also served the people of the congregation when asked, when Rev. Koehler wasn't available. This happened often if you'll remember the statistics of that time, with the many baptisms, marriages, and funerals in one week. Plus all hospital calls and home visits. She was there to back him up and no one felt like they were forgotten in their time of need. Add to this managing an eight room parsonage (which was always clean and welcoming), making meals for her family and anyone in the church that needed one, all of the chores, nurse, chaperone, a shoulder for her children to cry on, a warm kiss and hug when needed (and sometimes when not) and always to answer the phone. But most of all she was the backbone of her husband. The one he leaned on, especially from 1951 when he suffered his first stroke until his death in 1962. She was there for him. Today our children have their "superheroes" but back then we all had Millie!

She stayed at her home in Belleville till 1965 when she moved to Sarasota, Florida to be near her older brother. Dr. Eichenlaub wrote, "She plans to visit in Belleville frequently and so we do not bid her farewell but rather "Auf Wiedersehen" – till we meet again. Mother Koehler, we pay tribute to you as a

person, as a pastor's wife and mother, as a member of our church and as an inspiration. May God's protecting council guide you."

Millie did come back to Belleville several times. We don't have the date and neither does St. Paul Home, but at some time she was a resident of St. Paul Home. We don't know at this writing what date she passed, but she was buried on May 22, 1985 in the Garden Mausoleum at Lakeview Memorial Gardens in Fairview Height.

Mrs. Caroljean Peters, President of the Church, wrote the following tribute to Millie. "we, as members of St. Paul Church, were saddened to learn that Mildred Koehler had passed while a resident of St. Paul Home. Millie was a wonderful, joyous person, filled with god's grace and imparted that grace to all who knew her throughout her many active years at St. Paul Church, Belleville. Her influence upon the members of this church, as well as the community, long will be remembered and considered a true blessing.

As the passage of time took its toll on this gracious lady, it did not diminish the love, respect, and admiration of those of us who knew her. We cared for her, just as we cared for her husband, the church's long-time spiritual leader, the Rev. Dr. B. J. Koehler. Because the two of them, Ben and Millie, worked so closely together in their devotion to Christ and His ministry, St. Paul Church grew to an astoundingly large and dedicated membership, which has been maintained through the faithful efforts of many other pastors and their spouses.

The thought and prayers of all members of the St. Paul church ask that God will bless Millie's daughter and son-in-law, Doris and Gene Johnson, and son and daughter-in-law, Doug and Betty Koehler, and their respective families as they carry on the rich heritage of Ben and Millie Koehler.

St. Paul Church, too, is the recipient of this inspirational heritage, and many of its members are stronger, more faithful Christians for having been touched by the beautiful life of Mildred Koehler.

Together, we can express our gratitude to God and to say 'thank you' for having sent Millie to share our paths along life's way."

I'm not going to try to add more because it's all been said by various people in her life. I knew then and I believe that in some small they gave me that background I needed to love and serve my church. Thank you Ben and Millie from the bottom of my heart. You both will live on forever...

OSP August 2014

IN THE BEGINNING...

And so the history continues. Due to Dr. Koehler's years of ill health, in 1958 he was appointed as Pastor Emeritus and we hired the Rev. Theodore and Mrs. Catherine Tiemeyer in an unanimous vote of the 950 members present on May 18, 1958. After a three month notice to his current church, Rev. Tiemeyer was installed as pastor of St. Paul Church on Sunday, October 5, 1958.

Theodore and Catherine now lived in the parsonage since Ben and Millie Koehler had bought their own home in Belleville. The Tiemeyer's now came to a big new church. For the year of 1959 the total attendance was 51,540 in the church services, to date these figures are yet an all-time high. Rev. Tiemeyer's only full year here would be 1959. We have no idea from the Archives on why he left but his letter of resignation was accepted by the church on February 28, 1960, one and half years after he came.

So, once again we were in need of a minister. Looking back at our early history, I wonder if it crossed the minds of the members that perhaps we were in for a spell of many ministers over a short period of time. That was yet to be seen.

I would like to copy a part of the letter to the congregation from the October 1960 OSP, in the words of Pastor Dr. Paul J. Schlueter and his wife, Anne, "I convert the opportunity of sitting down with you in that chair next to yours and sharing with you the many things that are upon your mind and heart. It will take much time. But I trust that you will have patience with us; for, believe me, it is our sincere desire to know you and to serve you. For the present, please understand that I am there with you and listen to my part of the conversation.

You belong to a great church. Some have pointed out that is it big. Well, not without reason. Much work and prayer have gone into its making. It has sheltered the hopes, the dreams, the trials, the sorrows, the fears, as well as the triumphs of many people over the many years. It has met human need with the power of God and extended its ministry into many avenues of Christian service. It has developed Christian character that has strengthened home life and the life of the community. It has offered fellowship for the lonely, comfort to the sorrowing, the strength of Christ to the lame. It has begun in Christian homes with vows made at their altars, inspired youth and strengthened the hearts of those standing by the grave. Yes, it is big; but it has been great for Christ. I would want you to feel proud of your church. But I would want you to realize also that you are a vital part of it. I need you and you need me. We need each other, and I believe that Christ is waiting for the church like this to rise to its full possibilities and be truly His instrument of salvation."

I wonder if his wish to sit down with every one of his parishioners came true. He was a great speaker and his wife, Anne, was a teacher of children, in the church as well as the community. We don't have much on Dr. Schlueter in our Archives, however, in looking at other information in the years he was here, he kept the church full, active, and respected. It was almost four years later that they accepted a calling to Trinity Church in Wooster, Ohio. He resigned on May 31, 1964.

From July 1956 to January 1959 Rev. Lorenzo Louis Eichenlaub was our Associate Pastor. He was a dynamic person with a can-do spirit. He kept St. Paul on the map in a big way. He was out among the people and they followed him. While he was here, we built our new sanctuary, and he kept it full. He belonged to and was a part of St. Clair County Pastors' Circle, Committee for Social Action, IL So. Conf., St. Louis Chapter of Elmhurst College Alumni Assoc., Board of Dir. of Deaconess Hospital, St. Louis UCC Ministerium, President of Eden Theological Seminary, Committee on National Missions Missouri Conf., Nominating Committee UC, Elmhurst Second Century Fund Drive, and the Church and Ministry Committee. Also the IL Children's Home and Aid Society, United Fund of Belleville, and Moderator of the IL Sl. Conf. As if that wasn't enough, he played just as an important role in our community. He was on the Board of Directors of St. Paul Home for the Aged, Belleville Downtown Optimist Club, Ervin Lodge A.F. and A.M., Belleville Hi-Twelve Club and on the Board at Eden and Memorial Hospital. He also held another first. In 1970 he was the first Protestant minister to preach in St. Peter's Cathedral in Belleville at the Thanksgiving Day Community Service. It has been 131 years we let them worship in our humble little church in 1830, but we were there to record and remember this occasion.

During this time at our church he was also presented many awards, such as the Golden Deeds from the Exchange Club, and the Service Award from the Hi-Twelve. The award I would say he appreciated the most was "Best Boss of the Year". Our very own Mrs. Marian Hoffmann nominated him and he was sponsored by the Business and Professional Woman's Club. All of Belleville voted and they knew that our church had the best! They also had a big part that celebrated Lorenzo's 25th anniversary as a minister. It was big, but not as big as the man that he was.

Other things that happened around the church during this time were:

In 1968, 8 years after we built the church, we finally installed air conditioning in the new sanctuary.

In 1971, Caroline M Busse was unanimously elected as the first woman to serve on the church council.

In 1973, both Rev. Marvin Engelsdorfer, our associate pastor, and rev. Eichenlaub received their Doctor of Ministry degree at Eden Seminary. This is quite an honor.

There were happy times and everything was good. But just when we think we were comfortable with life, god gives us more to think about. He hits us with a big one, to see how we handle it (see my next article). Dr. Eichenlaub will lead us...

OSP September 2014

IN THE BEGINNING...

You have heard of writer's block? Well, this writer had had this, as well as other good things, that have taken up my time. So, after 21 straight months, I am taking a vacation. See you next month. Thank you.

OSP October 2014

IN THE BEGINNING...

I'm back and refreshed so I shall continue with the history of our church. But first, I want to correct a mistake I made when I wrote that Rev. Engelsdorfer was hired as a Pastor of St. Paul and was to work side by side with Rev. Eichenlaub with shared duties of the congregations. This he did and they made a great pair.

But, once again, things were not to stay that way. The sad news came in March of 1976 that Rev. Eichenlaub was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. That was a hard pill to swallow and the church was stunned. However, out of faith and prayers came the diagnosis after surgery that it was the slow growing type. Our prayers were answered, With help from Rev. Engelsdorfer and a dedicated staff, things got back to normal.

Then word came that Rev. Engelsdorfer had accepted a call to St. Paul UCC in Edwardsville, IL. While here he was a strong man in the church and the community. He belonged to many organizations within the Synod, with continuing education and civic activities. He followed in the footsteps of those before him and was highly thought of by church and community.

Rev. Eichenlaub, now feeling better, was back at work. Once again he handled his job made strong by his faith. The congregation prayed too, and felt that their prayers were answers. His belief was..."You should always give more to the world and to the people than what you take from them...If you do that, then you prevent self pity." He didn't want pity.

In the spring of 1981, Rev. Eichenlaub became ill and went to Memorial Hospital and then to the Mayo clinic in Rochester, MN. Everything was tried but there was no cure. He was brave, doing tests and procedures, but losing weight and strength. Prayers were sent everyday and in return he wrote a note every Sunday in the bulletin on how he was doing. He was leading us and showing us how one can get strength from God. We have most of those notes, and in reading them, his concern was not for himself, but for his congregation. He passed away on September 18, 1981.

Many memorials and tributes were held in his memory but I'll end this segment with a Tribute to Dr. Lorenz L. Eichenlaub that was written anonymously by a St. Paul Member.

For 17 years as Senior Pastor,

We've looked up to him as our Master.

With radiance he had a special touch

Making us feel we all meant so much;

For Lorenz L. Eichenlaub, a leader of all,

Has been our guiding light at St. Paul.

He has played a great part in all our lives
Baptizing, confirming, joining husbands and wives.
On those happy occasions, he was with us to share
His great sense of humor with everyone there.
He stood with compassion until all could be done
During illness, problems, and loss of a loved one.
With all of his busy schedules and work for the Lord above
What a joy each evening to come home to a house of love.
His house had been blessed by the Lord as we know
With a wife and two sons loving him so.
Though out his life as a leader, he's been a success-
It made his family proud of him and brought them happiness.
When 5 years ago, his health began to go down
It was hard to accept us, including our town;
Our spirits were darkened and we felt it unfair
As we were secure, and needed him there.
There were tears shed by many who we could hear tell,
And prayers said all for him to get well.
He performed all his duties too numerous to mention
With too many filled with pressure and tension;
But in spite of all this turmoil and pain,
After each Sunday service it was always his style
To extend a welcome greeting and a bright cheery smile.
Our memories will soon fade of our leader and friend;
He was given the strength to fight to the end.
He has earned and claimed his promised reward,
And entered into your Kingdom, Oh Lord.
His great performance of courage had meant much to us all-
It had taught our fellow members that – St. Paul must stand TALL!

OSP November 2014

IN THE BEGINNING...

First of all this is an apology to Rev. Engelsdorfer. In Sept. OSP it was stated that Rev. Engelsdorfer was hired as an Assistant Pastor. This is not correct. Rev. Engelsdorfer was hired as an assistant but as a Co-Pastor with Rev. Eichenlaub to share the duties of the church. They did this and they made a great pair.

In 1973, the Belleville Area Clergy Association sponsored an annual Thanksgiving Day service on Nov 22. It was held at St. Paul and was well attended. The speaker of the day was Rabbi Mark L. Shook, Asst. Rabbi, Temple Israel, St. Louis. The community choir was under the direction of Father Joseph Schwaegel of St. Peter's Cathedral Belleville. Things were changing in the life of the church. Good things.

In the 1970's attendance at the church started slowly declining. It is recorded that in 1977 the attendance had dropped from 900 each week to 730. The Sunday School had dropped to 451 children each Sunday. It's hard to believe this is a decline!

The bells were installed in new church towers in 1977. This was done in April, when they also installed the new "Lester Gass Memorial Bell" donated by this wife.

Things were moving along and looking to the future. In April, 1978 plans were brought to the Building committee, chaired by Art Peters, and they created the modifications of the 2nd church, Parish Hall, and Activity Center. The council passed the plans.

In 1979, another first for us was about to be on the record books – Pearl Spies was elected as the first woman to serve the church as its President. It took 140 years, but we made it, girls!

It took two years of planning and raising over \$500,000, so on June 22, 1980, the groundbreaking ceremony was held. The building that had housed the first parsonage, the janitor's quarters, Centennial Hall with a full stage, Sunday School rooms, pastor's office and kitchen came down. In its place a building to become the Activity Center, a new kitchen, Heritage Hall and Chapel. This was to prove a great asset to something that was to be torn down, (the second church) but the congregation wouldn't let it happen.

Another big asset to the church happened in the fall of 1980 – Mother's Day Out Program. It started out on Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. to give mothers a day to themselves. It turned out to be a new and well accepted idea.

In 1981, we decided to loan the St. Paul Home the beautifully carved wooden altar that had served in the second church from 1861. It was to be used in their new chapel and should they ever decide to not need it, it would come back to us. There is some thought that was the actual altar in the first church from 1839. However, to this date this has not been documented.

In 1983, we got some terrible news that we had termites. Where? Well, if you go into the sanctuary of the new church and look at the left front two wooden arches that stretch to the ceiling, that's where! Of course they weren't in the top, the little critters had to be in the bottom and about ten feet up in the arch. Many heads were scratched wondering what we were going to do about this problem. Many prayed. That's what we do. Then we found out that we had to open up the roof and take out the two infested arches. It seemed impossible but someone in the congregation did think to take pictures of the whole event and it's unbelievable! We have them in the Archives and if you look carefully, you can see just a slight difference in the finish in the arches.

In 1983, there was a huge clean up of the church and an auction was held in the parking lot. There was just about everything you can imagine – Stoves, fridges, coffee pots and warmers, to wood and cabinets. You name it, it was there. It was a huge success and helped pay for some of the arch damage. We may be a church and termites may be one of God's creatures but we didn't want them here. I guess God had a plan when he created them, I just don't know what it was. But he gave us the strength and knowledge to handle the situation. He always does...

OSP December 2014

IN THE BEGINNING...

After the death of Rev. Eichenlaub in 1981, St. Paul's once more went through a few years with as many pastors. Rev. Marion Clark Harrison, Jr. was pastor for not quite 2 years, leaving in 1984 and then we had Reuben H. Huenemann as Interim Pastor for one year. Just when the church wondered if we were going to repeat history by having many pastors in a short period of time, the tide changed. We were blessed with the hiring of Dr. Rev. John Edward Trnka in 1984. He wasn't a big man in stature, but he was so full of smiles, ideas, handshakes, and love for the church that he had to let it all out. And we were the recipients of it all. His wife Shirley was also part of her husband's work and was active in the choir and organizations in the church. They made a beautiful pair and we were happy to have them.

In 1984, for the second time in the church's history we were to have a library. The Eichenlaub Memorial Library was established on the first floor of the Educational Building, dedicated on October 14, 1984. There were 802 volumes of books in place for the congregation to use. This was the second library with the first one made up of books from the first German members of the church in 1839. Most of those books were in German and until recently they were stored in the Belleville Public Library. Upon their remodeling the books were transferred to the State of Illinois Library in Springfield where they have the correct conditions to store such aged books.

That spring also brought about the purchase of a new music ministry with the purchase of three-plus octaves of the Schulmerich Handbells. They are a joy to our music program.

In 1987, it was realized that in two years we would be celebrating our 150th anniversary as a church. The first mission project for that was to take one of the military living quarters at the former Turkey Hill radar site off Freeburg Road and remodel it. This was now to be the S.A.V.E. site which was a protected living community for the challenged as well as a place of employment. Many volunteers finished and dedicated one of those cottages that are still in use today.

On April 24, 1988, another project that had been worked on since 1983 came to finish and was dedicated. It took 5 hours of planning but with the committee of Herb Kaufmann, Arthur Peters and Don Stein the new St. Paul Retirement Apartments was connected to the Nursing Home by a walkway and a seventy foot high atrium. It was a beautiful beginning to the 150th Anniversary of the church.

An old tradition was brought back to life when on July 24 the Sunday School children paraded around the church neighborhood and when they got back to the church they were treated to pink lemonade and a pretzel, followed by a picnic. This too happened in the late 1800s.

The anniversary Quilt was another project for the year. Chaired by Edi Holliday, fourteen ladies from the church cross-stitched fourteen quilt blocks. Pam Walton and Mildred Drake designed and painted the Logo, and the St. Paul Quilters completed the task. In all, over 450 hours of sewing and praying were spent on the project. When completed it was framed in plexiglass and hung above the entrance to the chapel.

On April 27th the Board of Christian Education decided that we had some very faithful members of the Christian Education of the church. James and Helen Alexander were honored on the occasion of their many years of service to the church school. Also a very special award was presented to Pearly Wetzel for her teaching the children for more than 50 years. Also honored for 40 years or more were: Louise Boos, Shirley Eckert, Eileen Wetzel, Olga Klein, Elmer Schuessler, Florence Bosch, and Beth Utke.

It was a busy year and every task completed was to be honored. Did our forefathers dream that we'd celebrate 150 years? Maybe. After all, they came from Europe where everything lasts a long time. Did they ever dream the dreams that we accomplished this year? We'll never know, will we? But faith in God and faith in ourselves, we can do anything. The only problem is that now we have to prove that we can grow some more, with more ideas, more success. As we move forward will we carry God's power and God's love to higher heights? We can. Times change, we hear people say. But it is only with Faith in God that those changes will turn into good for His people...

OSP January 2015

IN THE BEGINNING...

The one thing left to celebrate our 150th Anniversary was to nominate Norman Raab as chairman of the St. Paul's Organ committee and in October he reported on the approval for a new organ which led to a new Schantz Organ at the purchase price of \$315,000. Ten percent was collected at that time and pledges were accepted starting in January of 1990. It would take an additional \$150,000 to prepare the space and meet certain requirements needed for the installation. The old organ had been in the balcony and the new organ was to be installed in the front of the church along with a place for the choir. Several rows of pews were taken out in front and the altar moved toward the congregation. A new marble floor was put in and with the help of the Wicks Organ company and our music Director, Norbert Krausz, the organ became known as "Norberts" Organ because of all the extra time and work he put in on it. It was his "baby". At the dedication service of it, he made that organ do everything but talk, and I'm not too sure that that didn't occur also. We loved it and it loved its new home. There was a concert almost everyday in the sanctuary as Norbert would practice and find new buttons to push.

Rev. Marja Coons, the associate pastor and minister of Membership started a Clown Ministry that year and several of our members became clowns. They had a lot of fun bringing fun to other people that needed it. Other churches and hospitals received much joy from the clowns!

On October 25, 1990 the Fine Arts Committee was started under the leadership of Norbert Krauz and grew bigger and better every year. There were different entertainers from all over the world including the London Boys Choir, the Kiev Choir from Russia, and Opera start and professional groups. The end of each year ended in June with the Patriotic concert the last Sunday of June. It consisted of singers from many communities in Southern Illinois, numbering in the 100's.

In 1990 another project, small in nature, was started. Member bob Eckert loved to garden and when he couldn't eat it all he brought it to coffee hour and those who didn't have or couldn't afford fresh vegetables were welcome to them. This grew with the idea that we could set up a food pantry for the neighborhood people. So 3 days a week the volunteers would set up their little card table and 2 chairs and give food to those who came. At first there were only 2 or 3 a day but it didn't take long before they were serving 10 a day and then a network was set up with other churches to control the out flow of food. The Heely's, Mr. Herschal, Mr. Joellenbeck were in charge at various times and then we couldn't handle them all in the hallway. So Jerry Messick acquired the house across the street from the church, volunteers remodeled it and the pantry was in full swing in Aug. 2007. When that became too small to store all the donated food and 600 families a month that were served, they moved again to the 1200 block of W. Main St. in October of 2014. From a few tomatoes from a garden to a warehouse of food for those who need it, was another dream fulfilled. Jerry got other churches in Belleville to volunteer also and so the City of Belleville now has another asset!

The old organ was sold to the LaSalle United Methodist church of St. Louis in 1991 for \$10,000.

By 1991 the church was a big church. It occupied the whole square city block. The buildings were 25,000 square feet, parking area in excess of 39,500 square feet and landscaped ground totally 11,000 square feet. The church consisted of 2,169 members with an average attendance of 650 and church school of 100.

One Sunday morning as church was letting out several members looked across the street to the corner grocery store. There was a young man on the pay phone outside and in a few minutes a car drove up and there was a hand-off. Another drug deal had gone down! These members thought there had to be an end to this not only for us but mostly for the children and families who lived in the area. So another idea was thought up. The phone got ripped out and with laws passed and regular meetings of the police, aldermen, the church and others at City Hall, it sparked the action to form the Franklin Neighborhood Association. It was connected with the Franklin School to benefit the children and a donated house became the Neighborhood Community Center and another house became a computer center for the children. The first executive director was our member Mark Eckert. When he became alderman, Al Wunderlich, another member of our church, took over. Another successful project for St. Paul's. Other school districts followed suit when they saw how much the environment improved around the schools.

In 1991 another first for us was the hiring of Rev. Ann Asper Wilson. She became the first woman Senior Pastor of the congregation and also St. Paul became the largest UCC church in the nation to be led by a woman pastor. Another milestone.

And so as in years past, St. Paul's continues to grow. To create a better world for God's children to grow up in and the background to become better citizens of the community. Will there ever be an end to what we can do? I pray not, for we will not only be letting ourselves down but all those people who started it all in 1839. They had dreams. They spoke of them, they created them and they became reality. We must continue to do the same. All dreams are good dreams when based on the teachings of God. All we have to do is start with one meeting on the Court House steps or one tomato and see what happens. God takes care of the rest...

OSP February 2015

IN THE BEGINNING...

In the last month we left with two big things started but not finished. We had a new organ installed and in use but the necessary and unseen things were installed in 1992. The Plumb Square Contracting co. of Belleville was given the contract to finish the organ chamber totaling \$15,874.55. This covered the cabinetry, electrical fixtures, heating and air conditioning, carpentry and materials. No wthe organ was completed. Also Pastor Ann Wilson was installed in 1992 and the collection doated at the service was \$1,064.35. At the time neither Ann nor the church knew where the money was to be used. In 1993, one of our sister churches, St. John's UCC of Valmeyer, IL was destroyed in the "great flood". The community decided to move up the bluffs and rebuild the whole of Valmeyer including the church. So that was where the money went, to help them. The town of New Valmeyer welcomed the ground breaking of the new church in March 1995 and was completed by Christmas of the same year. We were starting to find a new path in our mission for the church. In the next two decades many more hands on missions will come into being.

Martha Mae Schmidt, although not a member of our church but a UCC member, along with her mother, could read German Manuscript. For years she had been translating the German records of all the small UCC churches in the area and now she was ready to do so for St. Paul. The manuscript contained the first 100 years of the baptisms, confirmands, marriages, and deaths for a total of 861 pages of information plus the index which contained 6600 surnames. They worked on this for four years and published it with the help of the St. Clair County Genealogical society. There are no more in publication but we are fortunate to have on e in the Archives. We do have most of the records from 1939 to present in the Archives but they are in file order not in publication order. Perhaps by 2039 someone will publish the 2nd book.

The Mothers Day Out Program is still growing with 184 children attending each week in the 1997-1998 year.

The Food Pantry was able to serve 371 families during the year. Also 63 Thanksgiving boxes and 84 Christmas boxes were also given out. What a Mission!

Then came 2000. A millennium! How exciting is that! Now we can feel like the pioneers who lived from one century to the next. That was the year that Betty Leppard was called as a Parish Nurse Coordinator to our Ministry staff. She joined us on May 1, as part of the Deaconess Parish Nurse Ministry in St. Louis. She was to promote healing to individuals by integrating body, mind, and spirit. And in the years that followed she did just that.

Down through the ages it seemed that most every new pastor had made their mark on the appearance of the church. Pastor Wilson was no different. We were to build an addition to the church, one end of the church was to be a welcome center and the end by the activity center was to be a new office entrance. The welcome center was to be Phase I and the other Phase II. So on Sunday May 21, 2000 our congregation voted to undertake the challenge. A Capital stewardship Program was established and headed up by Jim Riess and Rusty Wagner. It was to cost \$4.5 million and total pledges were received of \$1,184,261.00 at that meeting.

The Lawrence Group was hired as the project architect and Holland Construction as the principal construction company. Ground breaking was held on July 14, 2002 with the addition of a 11,000 square foot addition which include a welcome center, a new sanctuary entrance with a covered driveway, and elevator, heating and water system, a nursery, offices and meeting rooms. Dedication took placed on April 27, 2003. We all met in the new parking lot with a short service and then the choir led us into the new welcome center with all of us singing "When the Saints Go Marching In." It was quite the service.

The snowflakes were falling that day in the late fall but that didn't stop workers from Holland Construction as they hoisted a 1,200 pound, 38 foot tall steeple into place with a crane, as preschool students, staff and neighbors looked on. Then Jerry Burton of Campbellsville Industries installed the cross to finish the steeple. It sparkled in the sunlight the next day.

It seems that St. Paul is built on dreams that start with one person's dreams down through the ages. So it was with Dick Erdmann when he dreamed that the church needed to install two new flagpoles on the corner of 1st and "C" Streets next to our new parking lot. They were to be dedicated to veterans who had served in the Armed Forces of the United States. The money was raised and on Scout Sunday Feb 8, 2004, the boy Scouts and Scout Leaders raised the flags for the first time. We now have the American Flag and the UCC Flag flying high in their honor. On Memorial Day 2004, the congregation dedicated the new flag poles.

As you can see the missions of our church have taken a new turn. One that helps individuals and smaller in scope. But this, too, needs to be done with so many needs to be met. This trend will continue for St. Paul in the years to come and yet they, too, seem to grow into bigger and better projects.

OSP March 2015

IN THE BEGINNING...

Will continue next month, when I finalize our current edition.

OSP April 2015

IN THE BEGINNING...

The next ten years, bringing us up to the present, was packed with good news, good deeds and a lot of successes!

On Jan. 1, 2004, Pastor Drew Kramer came on board as a Co-Pastor with Pastor Wilson. Being a Presbyterian minister before, he now held a Dual Standing in both churches. He brought with him the experience of founder of Neighbors for Renewal which he started in 1999. At the present the few volunteers have completed 12 homes in Belleville. He was also the founder of the Abraham Lincoln Neighborhood Association. This then helped when Mark Eckert, now Mayor, wanted to start the Franklin School Neighborhood Association. Pastor Drew also worked with Dist. 201 to set up the Bridges Program in one of the houses that we owned. These projects are still going and growing. Pastor Ann Wilson left in 2005 for a church in St. Louis and Drew became the senior pastor. We still carried on the mission idea of helping individuals so Adult Missions trips were planned each year to places hit by disasters. Some of those trips included New Orleans, North Dakota, and Virginia. Much was done in the name of love for mankind and new friends were made. Several trips were made to Honduras with Pastor Gus Kuether at the helm.

After 58 years of transmitting our church services on WIBV radio, this ended on August 20, 2006. With a lot of hard work on the part of Ron Steen and many volunteers they were successful in getting us back on the air on KSTL in St. Louis. It was and is still being listened to today by many of the sick and elderly, and anyone who can't make it to St. Paul for worship.

In 2004, another idea blossomed into fruition. I had the dream of restoring Heritage Hall to its original beauty as a Hall and Chapel. Pastor Wilson guided me as well as a group of ladies whose hearts beat to the same tune. Of preserving Heritage Hall. It was to be a program where we were to collect the money and then restore the building. Therefore, no loans and no interest paid. Donations were to be made from the heart. It took years and many setbacks but in 2008 it was started and in Jan. 2011, we had a beautiful new chapel thanks to the donations and volunteer work of many people. And it was paid in

full! 2012 Phase II was started that was to be the hall part and Phase III to be the stage part (where the old Chancel was). The Heritage Hall Restoration Committee is still alive and well.

The food pantry kept growing until they had to move to a house rehabbed across the street from the church. Several other churches of the community now came on board to help because they had grown to giving food to 600 households a month. Many food drives were made in these years. They kept growing and so in Oct. 2014 they opened yet another larger commercial building on West Main St. to serve the 1,000 families that it had grown to. Many churches and volunteers of Belleville are now involved in it. Jerry Messick and Jim Young are now the co-coordinators of the Pantry. Keep up the good work – you have a wonderful group of volunteers!

In the last 10 years we saw the start of a children's program call the Wednesday Edition of W.A.V.E. The Tuesday Community Dinners give a hot meal to many people who might not have one. It makes one feel good when the tummy is full and warm, all served from volunteers with warm hearts.

The men came up with an idea in 2011 because some of them liked to cook, (oh those lucky wives!) and became an instant hit. Known as the Culinaires, they have created many wonderful dinners with the gourmet touch. They really look quite spiffy in their white shirts, black pants and tuxedo aprons. Say Culinaires and the church is ready to eat.

This brings us up to the present day. There have been many things that I have not reported on but that doesn't mean that they are not important. When I started this idea in Nov. 2012, the idea was to give all of us some idea of what our church was in the 175 years that was to be celebrated in 2014. It was to run through 2013, 1 year and 2 months. It is now 2 ½ years later and I'm signing off. It has been quite a journey. One I hope you have enjoyed and learned from as much as I have. Many of us have lived a great deal of that time within this church. Many generations of families.

Times have changed. Yes, they have. We went from dirt streets and stagecoach to paved highways and interstates. We've gone from speaking mainly German to many languages and dialects. And yes, our church has changed too. From the time when women were not counted as members, to holding offices and guiding the church. It has come from what was a traditional family to families of many types and colors. Have we kept up with the times? I'd say yes. Have we changed in our beliefs? There I'd say yes also. We have grown from a church that was hard line in its beliefs and some times hard to live by to a gentler more loving time. It's a time of less damnation and more love for each other.

So I bring to close "In the Beginning" and hope that the next 175 years of faith at St. Paul will be as open, loving, accepting and forgiving as the last 175 years. God has blessed us all well and with our faith in Him I know he'll bless us in the years to come. You have an idea, bring it up, maybe it will be the next successful outpouring of St. Paul! Say "yes" and less "no s", more smiles and hugs and pray with all your might. It's been great! AMEN.

Alice Jerome
Your Archivist

*There it is, folks. Every word... written by Alice. Thanks to her.
I remember her diligence in being a recorder for St. Paul Church. This document is indicative of her love of God and His work.
She was a hoot to know.*

Roger Henke
A poor substitute

January 2021