

# Redeemer Lutheran Church

Wittenberg, Wisconsin

**JULY 14 & 15, 1984**

A WEEKEND OF  
**Remembrance**



**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**Saturday, July 14 —**

(At Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School)

4:00 — Registration.

5:30 — Dinner.

Music by Linda Clough and Chris Stark-Christopherson

7:30 — Evening of Fellowship.

At Redeemer Church.

**Sunday, July 15 —**

(At Redeemer Church)

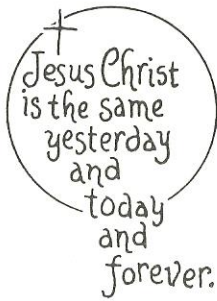
8:00 — Coffee and Rolls.

10:00 — Festival Service and Holy  
Communion.

The Offering will be divided between the American Lutheran Church "50 More In '84" Evangelical Outreach Program, and the Redeemer Building Fund.

11:30 — Buffet Lunch.

The church will be open throughout the weekend with displays and historical items for your interest. Plan to be with us for a good weekend, welcoming back many friends, relatives and former pastors.



## *Redeemer Lutheran Church*

### HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS

The history of the present congregation evolves from various mergers of Lutheran congregations in Wittenberg; namely: Immanuel, Bethany, St. John's and First Lutheran.

Early settlers found Wisconsin rich in lumbering and farming. It was ideal for immigrants to bring their families and establish homes.

People of German and Norwegian heritage also saw an urgency to meet their spiritual needs. They gathered in homes and held worship services. Although both nationalities were Christians of the Lutheran teachings, the language barrier and various synod loyalties kept them in separate groups.

At one time four Lutheran churches served the people of this area. They were congregations of the Joint Synod of Ohio — **St. John's**, The United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America — **Immanuel**, The Norwegian Synod — **Bethany**, The Evangelical Lutheran Church — **First Lutheran** (Organized by the merger of Immanuel and Bethany), and The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod — **St. Paul**.

A brief history of each of these congregations that has blended into the present Redeemer Lutheran Congregation follows.

### Immanuel (1880 - 1918)

Rev. E.J. Homme came to Wittenberg with a dream of establishing a home for orphans and the elderly. After his arrival he saw the spiritual needs for the Scandinavian immigrants. Thus the first worship services were held in the school room of the newly built Orphan Home December, 1880.

Records show the first baptism was Jorgen, son of the Edward Nelsons' in October 1881 and the first Holy Communion service was held in December, 1881.

June 11, 1882 a meeting was held to organize a congregation to be named Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wittenberg, Wis. Charter members were A.K. Dahl, Edward Nelson, Andrew Gunderson, Christian Gulbandsen, Erick Anderson, Helge Overen, Gilbert Paulson, Anton Gunderson, Hans Westgor, Joseph Boren, Ludvig Falstad, Bernt Knudson, Andrew Nelson and Ingeborg Johnson. At the first annual meeting in January 1883 they adopted a constitution and elected officers.

A deed for a church site and cemetery grounds was secured and recorded by Rev. Homme in 1885. A year later a new constitution was adopted and the congregation applied for membership in the Norwegian Synod. In 1888 it withdrew and joined the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1890.

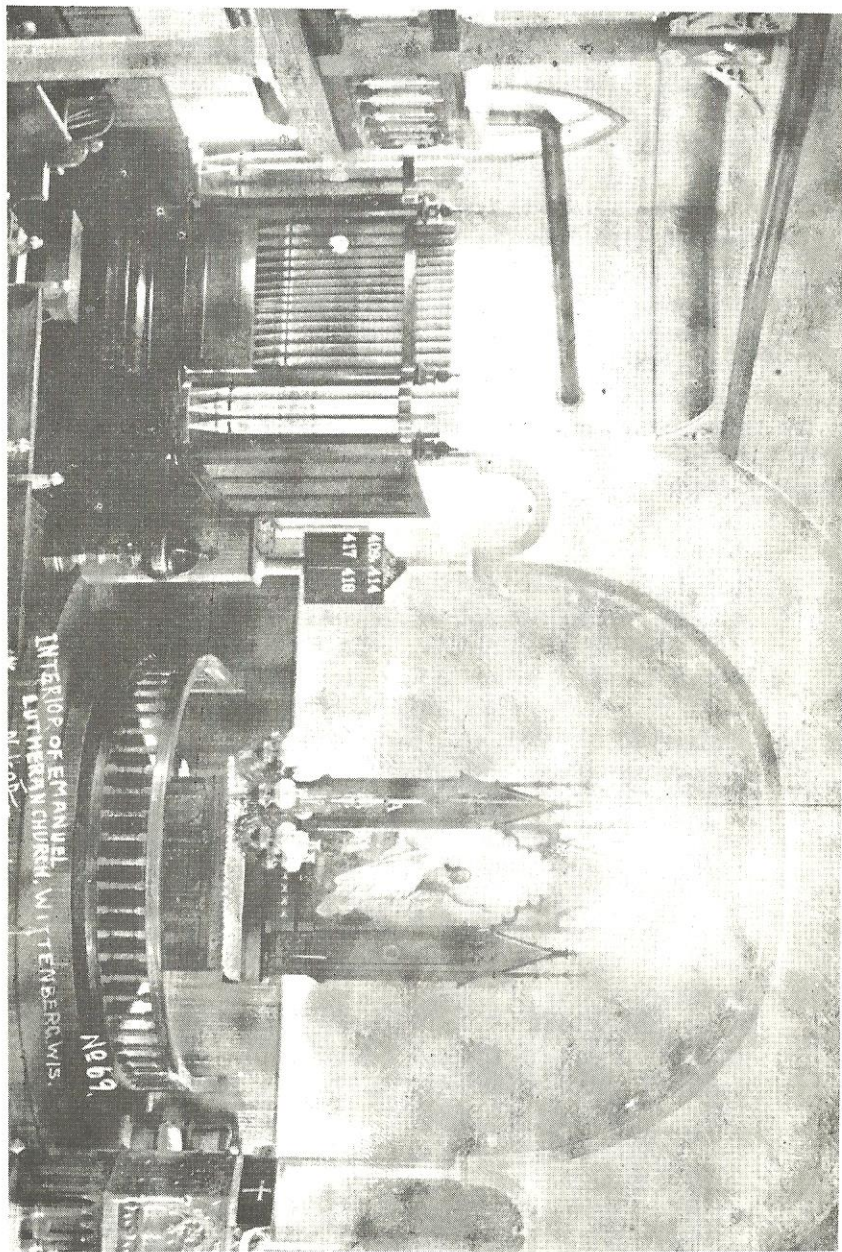
The new building was completed, mostly by volunteer labor, in 1892 and Rev. Homme was authorized to purchase a bell for the church. This bell still calls to worship. Although records do not indicate the date of the church dedication, it is assumed it was in 1892.

Organizations within the congregation played an important part in the early history just as they do today. Records show that the Young People's Aid Society provided funds for the altar painting and the Ladies Aid Society paid for the interior decorating.

Rev. Homme resigned in 1903 after serving this congregation for twenty-three years. The following day he passed away. Rev. O.C. Farseth succeeded him and served for one year. Rev. K.L. Eidahl served as temporary pastor until Rev. P.P. Houglum took charge of the congregation in 1905.

The congregation had grown considerably and

Immanuel Lutheran Church



there was rejoicing at their 25th Anniversary. Now they numbered 271 souls with 59 voting members.

In 1911 Rev. Houglum resigned and Rev. J.A. Wang, who was manager of the Homme Homes, filled in as temporary pastor until the following year when Rev. N. Lunde became pastor for the next seven years.

It was in November 1918 that Immanuel Congregation joined together with Bethany Congregation from across town, forming First Lutheran Church of Wittenberg.

### Bethany (1887 - 1918)

During the years of 1887 to 1890 a number of Norwegian families had moved into the Wittenberg area. They were affiliated with The Norwegian Synod.

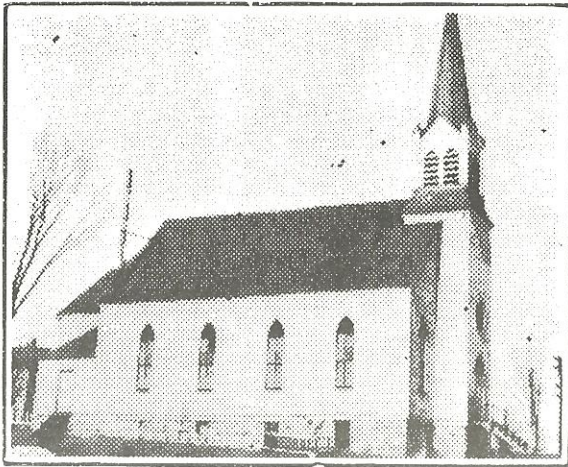
Through the efforts of Rev. E.J. Homme, The Norwegian Synod became interested in establishing Christian teaching for the area Indians. Missionaries and teachers were provided and eventually an Indian Mission and Boarding School was built on the western edge of Wittenberg bordering Highway 29.

Discord within The Norwegian Synod in 1887 brought about a split from that organization by some pastors and congregations. Some became affiliated with other synods while others remained loyal.

With guidance by Rev. O.K. Ramberg, Pastor at Iola, and assistance by Rev. T. Larson, Pastor and Superintendent of the Indian Mission, the people in Wittenberg who remained loyal to The Norwegian Synod organized The Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Congregation.

Records show that the documents of incorporation were signed and recorded January 15, 1891. Charter members were Rev. T. Larson, Andrew Gunderson, John Huse, George Weding, A.K. Dahl, Jacob Lunde, O. Madsen, Ole Peterson, Hans Helgeson, Edward Dahl and Gullick Madsen.

Two acres of land were donated by Jacob Lunde



**Bethany Evangelical Lutheran**

for the purpose of a church and cemetery grounds. Work on the edifice was done by Ole Peterson, a carpenter and former boy from the Orphan Home, and a group of young Indian men.

The cornerstone was laid June 14, 1891 and two years later the church was dedicated with joy and thanksgiving to the service of the Triune God. The church was jointly used by The Bethany Congregation and The Indian Mission.

Pastor Larson found it impossible to give the needed attention to the congregation along with his duties at the Mission. Therefore Rev. Ramberg was asked to serve the congregation, while Larson continued at the Mission.

Rev. B. Hevde was called in 1893 and served until December 1, 1900. The same day Rev. O.H. Strom was installed as pastor. He served the congregation for five years and also taught at the Wittenberg Academy.

When Rev. Strom left to assume pastoral duties in Cleveland, Ohio, Rev. O.T. Boe from Wausau served as temporary pastor until 1908.

Rev. M.G. Waller came to assume leadership of the flock May 31, 1908. He resigned September 11, 1918 in order to grant the congregation the liberty to unite with the Immanuel Congregation in forming First Lutheran of Wittenberg.

The church building was used for festive services

by the Indian Mission from 1919 until 1933 when the Mission closed. The building was dismantled in 1942. A memorial marker now notes the site. Bethany's church bell has a new home at Waypost Bible Camp at Mission Lake.



### **St. John's (1913 - 1963)**

A group of people of German descent and Lutheran doctrine in the vicinity of Wittenberg held occasional worship services in various meeting places. Gradually a desire for an established congregation began to assert itself.

In June, 1913 they formally adopted a constitution affiliated with the Joint Synod of Ohio and designated the congregation as St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Wittenberg, Wisconsin. Recorded charter members were: Herman Ewald, Reinhold Huber, T.D. Schaar, Fred Kersten, Conrad Aggen, August Hempel, Charles Schwertferger, Herman Hubert, Herman Seefeldt, Christian Hartleben and Charles Hartleben.

The first services were held in the Wittenberg Town Hall with Pastor Frank Sachs serving at Zion of Tigerton, accepting a call. To meet the needs of the people the German language was used. After a time English was used on alternate Sundays.

An agreement was reached with the Methodist

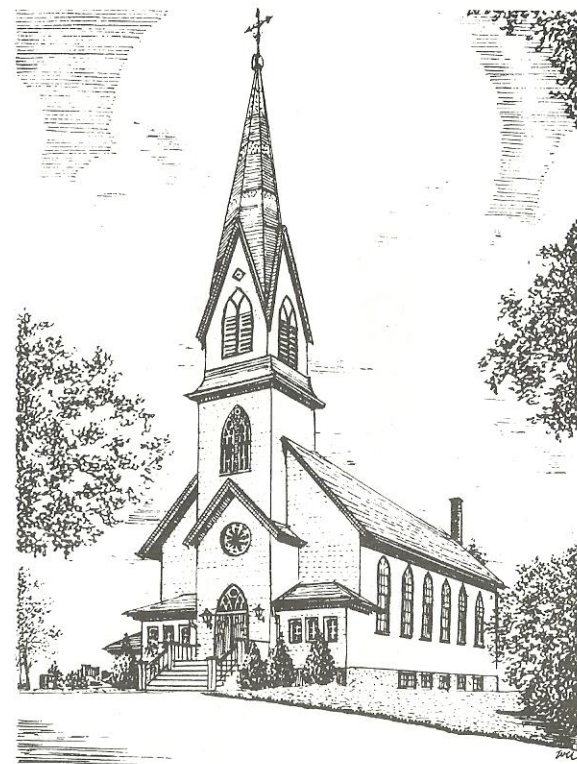
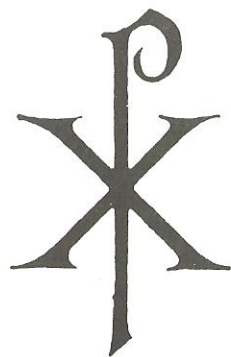
congregation to rent their church for Sunday afternoon services. Pastor Sachs passed away in 1914 and the congregation had a temporary pastor, Rev. Hugo Stubenvoll, until Rev. George Beck accepted a call and remained for two years. Rev. E.C. Stubenvoll was called and stayed until 1921.

As the congregation grew, plans to build a church did also. Rev. Martin Durkop was the new pastor. A site at the corner of Vinal and Ellms Streets was purchased and with much of the labor donated by members, this congregation had its own home in 1922.

These people held a strong Christian faith and were active workers in Sunday School, Choir, Ladies Aid, Luther League and community service. After Pastor Durkop left Rev. Kroeger, Rev. Herman Diemer and Rev. Carl Musall called on the pastoral guidance.

In 1957 alterations and additions for the original building were needed. The entrance and kitchen were renovated and plumbing, heating and wiring brought up to the building code.

The merger of the Ohio Synod in 1960 with The American Lutheran Church gave Wittenberg two separate congregations, First Lutheran and St. John's in the same synod. Both churches were served by Pastor Myron Haleen after the retirement of Pastor Musall in 1963.



### **First Lutheran (1918 - 1963)**

In November 1918 a joint meeting of members of the Bethany and Immanuel congregations was held. It was unanimously agreed by members of both congregations to dissolve their respective organizations and merge into one congregation to be known as the First Lutheran Church of Wittenberg.

The Rev. L.L. Mastad was called in 1919 and served for four years. He was succeeded by Rev. T. August Lillehei in March of 1924. Besides ministries to the local congregation both pastors served Immanuel at Morris and the Norrie church.

Close ties with the Norwegian tradition were loosening with the younger generation speaking English, so English was adopted as the official language.

Half a century brought many changes to the community and the church. On June 11, 1932 the 50th Anniversary of the congregation was celebrated. Two former pastors, Rev. P.P. Houglum

and Rev. L.L. Masted, officiated at the morning service and in the afternoon Rev. Lillehei was assisted by Rev. J.A. Wang, Rev. S.R. Tollefson, Rev. R.P. Wasbotten and Rev. H.M. Mason.

The congregation had seen steady growth down through the years. The by-laws were amended in 1935 to give women the right to vote and hold office. The Women's Missionary Federation was organized and the Ladies' Aid became its members.

Other organizations active during this era were The Luther League, Mothers' Club, Junior and Senior Bible Classes, Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation and Men's Lutheran Brotherhood.

Each year the surrounding area looked forward to the annual lutefisk supper promoted by the Men's Club and The Ladies' Aid.

When Rev. Lillehei resigned in 1937 Rev. E. Stollen, manager of Homme Children's Home, served as temporary pastor until Rev. Palmer Wahl's arrival in 1938.

A change in the church's heating system and a new roof was accomplished. The Ladies' Aid provided funds for the re-decoration of the interior of the church.

In 1939 the children and staff from Homme Children's Home became members of the Sunday School and Congregation. The first Christmas Candle-light Service was held that same year.

Music always plays an important role in Lutheran worship. Junior and Senior Choirs faithfully used their talents to praise the Lord. A new organ was purchased in 1941.

Pastor Wahl accepted a call to Gays Mills, Wisconsin in 1952 and Pastor Leon Holm succeeded him.

All pastors resided at the parsonage on Walker Street. It was built around 1900 and is presently the home of the Gordon Cowles. It was decided to build a new parsonage a few doors from the old one for better accommodations.

The Board of Home Missions closed the Indian Mission, and after Rev. Ernest Sihler left, the spiritual welfare of the area Indians became First Lutherans' responsibility.

Pastor Holm left in 1955 and Rev. S. Tverberg was temporary pastor until Rev. Eugene Peterson arrived

in 1956 to minister to the congregation.

Our Saviors' Lutheran of Elderon joined the parish with First Lutheran and Immanuel of Morris. Rev. K. Rye was called as assistant pastor and remained until First Lutheran withdrew in 1961 to be on its own.

Mrs. Beatrice Kjena came from Minneapolis and began her duties as parish worker in 1957. This same year the 75th Anniversary of the congregation was celebrated.

Synodical mergers of several Lutheran Churches formed into one body, The American Lutheran Church in 1960. The headquarters was located in Minneapolis. Theodore Ohlrogge assisted in the transition of First Lutheran and St. John's becoming affiliated with The American Lutheran Church.

Pastor Peterson resigned in 1961 and Pastor M. Haleen accepted the call to serve the congregation.

Negotiations toward the merger of congregations of St. John's and First Lutheran were finalized in 1963.

## **Redeemer Lutheran (1963 - To Date)**

The merger of the congregations of St. John's and First Lutheran began March 17, 1963. A joint meeting between the two congregations was held to discuss the future merger. The members of both congregations were given the opportunity to select a name for the new congregation. On the second ballot the name "Redeemer" was chosen.

The first congregational meeting of the new Redeemer Lutheran Church was held on June 26, 1963.

A congregational meeting was called August 21, 1963 to issue a Letter Of Call to Rev. Myron J. Haleen to serve as the first Pastor. He was instrumental in the merger process and served as Pastor until his resignation on July 31, 1969.

The Rev. Herbert H. Landdeck was installed as Pastor of Redeemer on October 26, 1969. The Vinal Street Church was sold to the Wausau Bible Church in July of 1971 and has become the home of Community Bible Church.

Some special projects at Redeemer included the

expansion and blacktopping of the parking lot in 1971, and the installation of carpeting in 1972.

After the resignation of Rev. Landdeck in August 1973, the Rev. Norbert H. Hellrud was called to serve as Pastor. He was installed October 21, 1973. Installation of room dividers for Sunday School rooms took place in 1975. Rev. Hellrud served Redeemer until his resignation December 26, 1976.

Rev. Reuben Carlson, Chaplain at Homme Home for Aging; Rev. Richard Gildseth, North Central Area Director of Lutheran Social Services; and Rev. Albert Moldenhauer, retired; all members of Redeemer, served as interim pastors until Rev. Ray Reinholtzen was installed as Pastor September 22, 1977.

The latest special building project at Redeemer was the new entry to the church built in 1981.

This congregation provides learning and serving opportunities as well as two worship services each week. The high schoolers, known as His Kids, have spearheaded events to benefit World Hunger. Each week the men meet for breakfast, Bible Study and fellowship. The ladies' organization, ALCW, holds monthly meetings for Bible Study and throughout the year work on projects for Lutheran World Relief. The Senior Choir has recently been revived.

It is truly with thanksgiving and celebration that all can look back to the heritage of our forefathers. May the congregation continue, with God's help, to carry on his mission.

### **Acknowledgements**

Sincere appreciation is extended to general celebration chairman, Dianne Long and all who worked with Marian Parker on Heritage, Esther Wheeler and Elenora Larson on Hospitality, Irene Cappel on the Worship, Music, and Arts Committee; and to Mildred Block for the Redeemer Banner.

Thank you to all pastors, current and former members, and all who made a special effort to participate in the weekend festivities.