

A HISTORY OF EMANUEL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

1970-1995

By: Dr. A.G. Wiederaenders

EMANUEL, a Hebrew word, translates into "God with us." The 125-year history of Emanuel's Lutheran Church of Sequin, Texas, illustrates how appropriate the name of this congregation has been. Our Centennial Celebration in 1970 emphasized this happy fact. Twenty-five years later it is equally fitting for us, the present members of this flock, to give special thanks to God for His continuing presence among us!

Under God's blessing, during the past twenty-five years, pastors and people of Emanuel's have continued to build on the firm foundation laid by our forbearers. The foremost mission of our church has remained the preaching and teaching of God's Word in its saving power and the administration of the personalized Gospel in Baptism and Holy Communion. Emanuel's of Sequin continues to proclaim the blessed fact that we are saved by the grace of God, for the sake of Christ, through faith in Him. As a result of this Best of News, Emanuel's continues to urge its worshippers to express the genuineness of their faith in generous thanks to God, in daily Christian living, and in Christlike service to their neighbors, especially to those in need.

Pastor Daniel Schorlemer was our congregation's senior pastor from 1963 to 1977. He had the assistance of Pastors H.A. Heineke, A.C. Steng, and A.G. Wiederaenders as visitation pastors. For brief periods of time, young Gerald Ripley

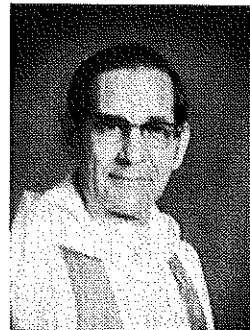


Daniel Schorlemer

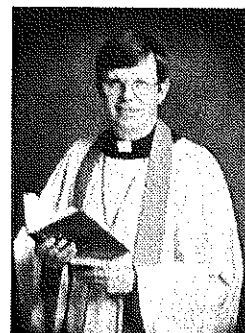
and Fred Oeters served Emanuel's as Pastor Schorlemer's assistants. Nearing the close of Schorlemer's pastorate, the Rev. Duane Semmler became his assistant. The Rev. George Schardt served Emanuel's as its

interim pastor during the following vacancy.

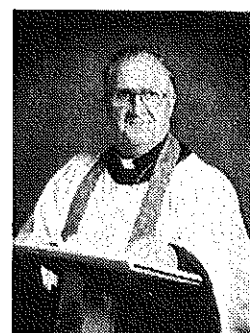
A former Youth Director of the American Lutheran Church, the Rev. Chester Patten, accepted Emanuel's call toward the close of 1978. Pastors Larry Olson and Orville Kalkwarf cooperated with Senior Pastor Patten to form one of our congregation's five ministerial teams. Although these three servants of the Lord were trained at three different theological seminaries and were sons of three different nationalities, they worked



Chester Patten



Larry A. Olson



Orville B. Kalkwarf

harmoniously in meeting the many-sided spiritual needs of their parishioners. Emanuel's doctrinal and liturgical heritage was preserved intact and offered attractively to our congregation and to our community.

"Supportive," "cooperative" are apt descriptions of earlier ministerial teams in our church's life. Pastor Stanley Sultemier came to us in 1988; his associate, Pastor



John Guilfoyle

John Guilfoyle, arrived the year following. Visitation pastors Arnold Moede and Henry Flathmann, assist our present ministerial team in bringing God's loving care to members who are unable to attend our worship services.

Pastors Stan and John describe their team effort as "dynamic". Their ministry is innovative and evidence anew that pastors do not come in duplicate. Pastor John has accepted a call to Flower Mound, Texas, and will be leaving us in September. We wish him God's blessing in his new field of ministry.

While observing the different special God-given talents of Emanuel's pastors, present and past, one is reminded of St. Paul's comparison of the Christian Church with the human body. Like the human body, the Church has many members, each one distinctive, yet supplying its specialized abilities and functions for the welfare of the entire body.

This inspired comparison carries over from our pastors to the lay leadership, of

our congregation. What a long list it would make to name the chairpersons—equally distinctive—of our church's key committees and auxiliary organizations by which, with the congregation's approval, most of our non-ministerial work is done. We thank God for each of them!

And, lest we forget, our well-deserved recognition and thanks are due also to our recent volunteer workers among us who, by their expertise and weeks of donated labor, have improved our congregation's properties and saved our church large sums of money!

All of this God-given, dedicated and talented leadership, by pastors and members alike, tells us in this anniversary year that EMANUEL'S remains a fitting name for our congregation.

How does one measure the progress of Emanuel's Lutheran Church of Sequin over the past 25 years? By its membership? Nearly all of the older, well-established church bodies in the U.S. have reported a loss of membership during recent decades, our Lutheran Church among them. Our local congregation is no exception. From 1977 to 1994, Emanuel's baptized membership has decreased from 1729 to 1364 and its confirmed membership from 1488 to 1140. There are good reasons for these reductions. Our congregation's present membership-count is more realistic than years ago and, for some time now, our gains in members have been greater than our losses. Perhaps a congregation's annual budget could give a clue to its vitality. In 1977, our church's annual budget was around \$114,000.00. In 1994, this figure was over \$380,000.00. Inflation of our U.S. dollar does not account for all of this difference. There is a great

financial ability among our members and, perhaps, also a stronger sense of stewardship toward the Lord's cause.

Statistics, whether counting members or dollars, are not the best device for measuring a congregation's progress as a living and vital part of God's Kingdom. The number, the scope, and the quality of the congregation's services to its own members of all ages, to its neighbors near and far, and to and through its mother-Church would be a better gauge to determine a Christian congregation's vitality and worth. (Since 1988, Emanuel's mother-Church is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America—the ELCA.)

Our congregation's various and valuable services are revealed, in large part, by the descriptive names of its key committees and auxiliary organizations, such as the Building Committee, Education Committee, Evangelism Committee, Property Committee, Property Stewards Committee, Social Concerns Committee, Youth Committee, Altar Guild, Ladies Aide, Men's Bible Study Group, and WELCA (Women of the ELCA).

The number and variety of valuable services in and for our congregation keep on growing. The former "Traeger Building", half-a-block from our church, has been converted by our group of talented volunteer technicians into a code-complying school house. It accommodates our Montessori Day School, also our Kindergarten. Both are under the direction of Mrs. Pat Hoppe. Further emphasis on the youth of our church and of our community is apparent in "YEP" (Youth Enrichment Program) which is coordinated by Mrs.

Maureen Bakenhus. Our music program, led by choirmaster-organist Tom Engler, has been expanded to include choirs for all ages, instrumental ensembles, a five-octave handbell choir, and more. Our present organ is a gift of Mrs. Hilda Weinert, when Victor Schaper was our organist. Emanuel's has become linked with Lutheran Social Services in this area, with the Lutheran Institute for Religious Studies stationed at Texas Lutheran College, with the community "Christian Cupboard" for the hungry and otherwise needy, and with Martin Luther Homes for the handicapped.

A recent, large-scale project undertaken by our church is a three-phase building program, referred to as "Faith 2000." It envisions the expenditure of nearly a million dollars to provide state-approved school facilities, to replace or rebuild some present buildings and to make Emanuel's overall building complex a more practical and attractive structure. Our Building committee, chaired by Mrs. Elin Oelke, supervised the drawing of these plans. Architects and a financial consultant were hired and, by 1994, well over half-a-million dollars had been collected in cash and pledges.

Phase I of this project has been completed, largely because of the volunteer expertise and labor referred to above. At present, our Building committee is chaired by Mrs. Linda Dietz. She is optimistic that, by the year 2000, our church's building plans will have become a complete reality. May this spirit be contagious among us!

Emanuel's! Surely, God has been and continues to be with our church! To Him, our Heavenly Father, all the glory and praise!

Emanuel's Lutheran holds Founders Day celebration

On September 4, Emanuel's Lutheran Church held a Founders Day celebration, honored the descendants of those founding fathers and first families who were instrumental in establishing a Lutheran church in Seguin.

Prior to 1870, when Emanuel's was formally organized. Seguin and the area had been periodically served by missionary pastors from St. Martin's Lutheran Church. On September 1, 1869, Pastor Johannes Wohlschegel gathered a group of 19 families who determined to form a congregation in Seguin.

On September 4, all those descendants who have maintained lifelong membership in Emanuel's in the past 125 years were honored.

The descendants span from second generation to seventh generation. Of the approximately 98 descendants, 87 were in attendance.

Following a brunch at 9:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall, and special greeting brought by Linda Dietz, Church Council member, the families proceeded into the sanctuary where they sat in reserved pews by family. Those honored and individually recognized were descendants of the families of Henry A. Brodt, Augusta Tiemann, Paul Pfullmann, Frederick Fritz, F.W. Naqumann Sr., Henry Troell, Frederick Woehler, Gottlieb Dietz and Ernst Dolle Sr.

Special recognition was given to Julius Naumann. Naumann is the son of a first family, a lifelong member of Emanuel's and the oldest member of Emanuel's Lutheran Church. He celebrated his 100th birthday in March of this year. Emanuel's Lutheran is anticipating its 125th anniversary year of celebration in 1995.

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