1878 Our Centennial 1978

St. Peter's

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Pella Opening

125 Years:

Fulfilled By God's Promises…
…Moving Forward By His Grace

The cover of our directory is the work of one of our very own family. Heather Korth, a name with deep family roots at St. Peter, rendered this artist's conception *line art drawing* for our cover. God has graced her with incredible talent. Thank you, Heather, for making our directory special.

This is a pictorial snapshot of God's work in building a family of faith at St. Peter Lutheran Church for the last 125 years. You can read a brief history of how God has fulfilled His promises to be with His people, and some of those who are part of the family's heritage are shown in those pages. God's family who still gathers under the name of St. Peter is pictured in the main portion of our directory. These are the present generation in the family tree who are moving forward by God's grace.

God moved early settlers to desire the pure spiritual milk of the Word and the blessed Sacraments. They knew the great need to have their faith fed. They understood God's promises to be with and keep His children in that precious faith. God has fulfilled that promise through the past 125 years. Some descendants of those first founding families are still members of the family of faith called St. Peter Lutheran Church. There are new names on the family tree, those who have been grafted in by God's gracious work.

We invite you to open this book. Look at God's holy treasure, His family of faith He has gathered together. Recognize the faces as your brothers and sisters in Christ, and know this: God will continue to work mightily, and as a family, we will be *...Moving Forward By His Grace.*

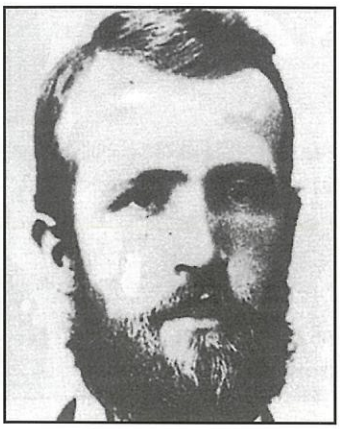
Rev. Todd R. Jerabek

History

In the 1870's a colony of German Lutherans, from the southern part of the state, came to the wilderness area around the village of "Pella." Most of the settlers came from Lutheran congregations near the Watertown area. Their needs for the precious Word of God and the Holy Sacraments let them to have their faith fed at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church near Pella. Some of these families requested services nearer to their homes to the south and east. In the spring of 1875, Rev. Jacob Diehl began preaching in the home of August Schoenike.

In the fall of 1876, Rev. Barth of Pella came and began to preach in the District No. 2 Schoolhouse on County Highway D. At that time, there were 24 names on the roster. They operated on a very small budget; the main expense was the salary for the Pastor. It is probable that they didn't have services at any one congregating place more than once a month because one Pastor tried to serve several different areas.

In the fall of 1878, these Christians took a giant step of faith and voted to organize a congregation of their own, wanting a permanent "House of God" in which to gather as a congregation. Three resolutions were passed that constituted the beginning of St. Peter: to adopt a constitution, accept a gift of land, and to build a church. This area, as well as the surrounding area, was a complete wilderness. As these people who all spoke the low-German language began clearing a place for the church, it became known as the "Opening". It is still known at the "Pella Opening."



The church was built in 1879 where the St. Peter's Cemetery is now located. It was dedicated on the 2nd Sunday of Advent the same year. Pastor Barth continued to serve as Pastor until 1880. Pastor Dickie then fulfilled the spiritual needs of the fledgling congregation. Next, Pastor Schwann came to Pella and served God's people in this place. The people of St. Peter were anxious for their children to have a Christian education, and Pastor Schwann fulfilled that desire.

In 1885, the congregation bought wooded land from Mr. Helwig, on which they built a block (log) schoolhouse in 1888. Pastor Schwann continued serving this growing congregation until 1891, now 41 members strong. It was not until 1891 that official church acts were recorded in St. Peter's own church records. Records prior to this time can be found at Bethlehem Lutheran church.

On July 8, 1917 in the name of the Triune God, the Cornerstone for the new church was laid, and the dedication services of the property were held in the church park. Rev. G. H. Schilling presented to those gathered the documents which the Congregation wished to place in the Cornerstone: congregational documents, documents in regard to the Missionary Synod, and documents in regard to civil affairs. The little tin box was soldered airtight and placed in the cornerstone, and laid in

place in the Name of the Triune God.

The new church edifice was dedicated to the service and glory of God, on December 2nd, the First Sunday in Advent, 1917. As the world was at war, it was dedicated as a Temple of Peace amidst the throes of war. Above the entrance the members stated their bold doctrinal position and confessional stance: Deutsche Evanglisches Lutheranisch St. Petri Kirche Ungeänderter Augsburgishcer Konfession (German Evangelical Lutheran St. Peter Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession). Records show that you young people of the congregation purchased the bell and the ladies of the congregation purchased the organ.

After the church was built, the people realized the need for gathering together for social time, and the great opportunity for a congregational picnic ground in the wooded area next to the church. The men of the congregation built several little enclosed buildings to be used for food stands, beer and pop stands, also for a podium, benches and band stand. Their Mission Festivals were celebrated in this picnic area during the summer months. No church was complete without sheds for horses. St. Peter had two large sheds which supplied the needed room of the members to keep their horses under cover while they attended church services.

In 1918, St. Peter Lutheran Church joined the North Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod. Rev. Schilling served until 1924 when he accepted a call to Amherst, Wisconsin. During the vacancy, Rev. Mueller of Belle Plaine served as the vacancy pastor.

On April 19, 1925, Rev. Walter List was installed as Pastor. Prior to his arrival, a parsonage was purchased in Embarrass. It was during the pastorate of Rev. List that the congregation made the move from German to the English language, the last class confirmed in German being the class of 1931.

In 1930, during the Great Depression, the congregation found the cost of the school to be more than the people could carry, thus the school closed. The schoolhouse, however, was used for religious instruction on Saturdays, taught by Rev. List, for all elementary aged children.

Several other significal events took place during the "List era". Among them was the installation of electric lights in the church and the organization of a Ladies Aid in the congregation in 1945. They set a date for a first meeting. "Not a cent of money to work with, not two cents of brains between them," they said. There was not place to hold meetings, so the first meetings were held in their homes. The schoolhouse was later used as the meeting place for the Ladies Aid, and was furnished to meet their requirements. A Sunday School was begun in 1950. Pastor List retired to Appleton in

1956. In the following vacancy, the parsonage was extensively remodeled and a study was added.

In September of 1956, Rev. Edgar Barg was installed as the pastor of St. Peter and Zion Lutheran Churches. Pastor Barg introduced a new soul accounting record card system and began to print a regular Sunday Bulletin. It was during Pastor Barg's tenure that a two-week Vacation Bible School was begun. It was also an evangelism tool since the neighborhood children were invited. In 1968, Pastor Barg accepted the Call to serve St. John Lutheran Church of Ladysmith, Wisconsin. During the long vacancy period that followed, the congregation was fortunate to have Rev. G. M. Krueger of Clintonville serve as the vacancy pastor.

After many calls were declined, the Rev. Edwin Schlade of Illinois accepted the Call to serve St. Peter and Zion Lutheran Churches and was installed as Pastor in October of 1969. Pastor Schlade's tenure was a brief one, as he was suddenly called to his eternal rest in November of 1970, leaving the congregations with a long vacancy. The Lord provided Word and Sacrament to nourish His people in the ministry of Rev. Harry Kriefall of Shawano.

In April of 1971, a Seminary candidate was assigned to serve their spiritual needs. This Call was given to seminary graduate, Rev. Robert E. Hintz, who was installed on August 28, 1971.

It was also in 1971 that the basement of the church was examined to see if renovation and remodeling would allow it to accommodate the needs of the parish activities. Since that time, the ladies have held their meetings in the basement. The newly renovated basement has also served for congregational pot-luck dinners, Sunday School classroom, dartball, and other activities. At the time of the basement's remodeling, the schoolhouse was sold and moved.

In 1978, Rev. Hintz accepted the Call to St. Paul Lutheran Church in rural Ceylon, Minnesota. Rev. Paul Laabs of Immanual and St. John in Caroline served as the vacancy pastor until he became ill. Rev. Michael Ernst of Bowler then served the vacancy.

Rev. Charles Kolk, accepted the call and was installed on December 3rd, 1978. During his ministry, a new organ was bought and dedicated. In 1981, the stained glass windows were re-leaded and repaired. While the men from Minnesota releaded the

windows, several families were expected to furnish dinner for them. The Schoenicke's and Habeck's are shown in the picture.

Rev. Kolk accepted the Call to Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Anoka, Minnesota, and preached his farewell sermon on February 19, 1984. Rev. Thomas Myrhe of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bowler served in this short vacancy as pastor, riding his motorcycle on nice days.

Rev. Robert Selle accepted the Call and was installed on August 5, 1984. Rev. Selle accepted the Call and was commissioned as Missionary to the Philippines on June 24, 1990. Again, Rev. Thomas Myrhe of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bowler served as the vacancy pastor.

It was decided once more to receive a graduate as pastor. Rev. Thomas Clocker was assigned the Call and installed as pastor on June 16, 1991. In early 1993, Rev. Clocker accepted the Call to Galilee Lutheran Church of Pasadena, Maryland, preaching his farewell sermon on May 2, 1993. Rev. Gary Stawicki of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bowler then served as vacancy pastor.

Rev. Russell J. Grabau accepted the Call as pastor and was installed on August 22, 1993. Having accepted the Call to serve as pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Atwater, Minnestota, Rev. Grabau preached his farewell sermon on May 23, 1999. For this vacancy, Rev. Vilas Mazemke of St. Martin Lutheran Church in Clintonville fulfilled the spiritual needs of the congregation as vacancy pastor.

In December of 1999, Rev. Todd R. Jerabek accepted the Call to serve as pastor and was installed on the Third Sunday after Epiphany, 2000. The exterior of the parsonage was upgraded in 2002.

Throughout the 125 years of our history, St. Peter Lutheran Church has been blessed by God with faithful pastors who have preached the Word of God in it's truth and purity and administered the sacraments in accordance with the command of Christ. God has used them to build and sustain His

flock which gathers in this place. We give thanks go God for all His mercies toward us. We also pray that God would continue to bless the members of St. Peter Lutheran Church of Pella Opening and the ministry of this congregation to bring the message of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, to all people.

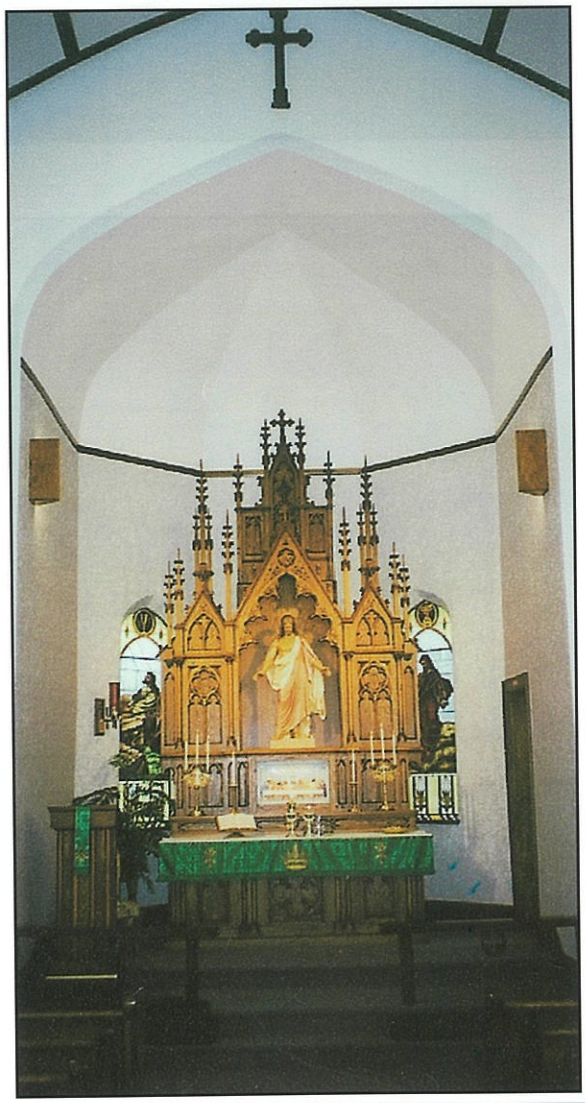
Wednesday Morning Bible Study Group

Our newly refurbished Chancel

2003
Membership Directory

St. Peter Lutheran Church

Pella Opening, Wisconsin
Office phone (715) 823-3889
Established 1878
Reverend Todd R. Jerabek



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