PART TWELVE: CHURCHES

Prepared Under the Direction of Mrs. Agnes Green

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

by Rev. Ruben Mostrom

On September 30, 1887, the original constitution and by-laws of the church were adopted, H. B. Dahle being the chairman, and O. P. Syftestad secretary of the first meeting. The constitution was signed by H. B. Dahle, S. Thompson, J. T. Mithus, L. H. Lewis, Tideman Gaarden, J. Barsness, J. N. Dahlen, Elef Severson, Olaf Quisler and A. E. Thompson. The first officers elected were H. B. Dahle, L. H. Lewis, J. T. Mithus, as trustees; J. N. Dahlen, secretary; S. Thompson, deacon and school superintendent. The trustees were instructed to call Rev. Syftestad on condition that he preach at least 12 times a year in both English and Norwegian.

The second annual meeting was held in H. B. Dahle's store, and the fourth annual meeting at the home of J. T. Mithus, at which time a committee consisting of H. B. Dahle, L. H. Lewis and Elef Severson was selected to circulate a subscription list for a church. At an adjourned meeting held January 25, 1890, the committee reported that the people preferred to wait until the East Blue Mounds Church had taken some action in the matter. But all present were in favor of building a church.

Lutheran Church after remodeling in 1907

On February 7, 1890, the committee reported that $860 had been subscribed. This and the preceding meeting were held in Syverson & Syverud's store. A committee consisting of H. B. Dahle, S. Thompson and L. H. Lewis was appointed to look up a church site, and a committee consisting of S. Thompson, A. E. Thompson and L. H. Lewis was appointed to ascertain the cost of a church 36 x 50, 20 ft. high, brick veneered. At the next meeting, March 7, 1890, at the same place, the committee appointed at the last meeting reported $1008 had been subscribed.

Rev. Syftestad died February 27, 1890, and the congregation called Rev. Voldahl. The next meeting was held March 14, 1890, and it was reported that the material for the proposed church would cost $1300. Rev. Voldahl was present and declined the call, but agreed to serve temporarily. A committee consisting of S. Thompson, J. T. Mithus and M. Breum was appointed to prepare plans and specifications for a new church, and it was recommended that the dimensions be changed from 36 x 50 to 36 x 60. Thomas Ayen was selected to supervise the work of furnishing the foundation for the church.

An attempt was made to purchase the Union Church lot for a church site, but, this failing, it was decided April 18, 1890, to purchase the present lot. Work commenced and progressed so rapidly that the next meeting, November 28, 1890, was held in the new church. At this meeting the election of a permanent minister was held, resulting in the selection of Rev. S. Gunderson, who accepted the call. The same meeting decided to incorporate the congregation, and the following were selected to sign the articles of incorporation: J. T. Mithus, L. H. Lewis, H. B. Dahle. On October 5, 1891, it was reported that the church was indebted $1005, with $16.20 in the treasury. It was decided to purchase a church bell, and the Kvindeforening was requested to assist in raising the necessary funds.

At the annual meeting October 3, 1892, a committee was appointed to look up a site for a cemetery. At this meeting it was first suggested that an academy be started at Mt. Horeb, and exactly one year from then the school started in Thompson's Hall with P. O. Stromme and A. G. Bjorneby as instructors.

July 5, 1894, a meeting was held to consider the resignation of Rev. Gunderson, which was later accepted, with Prof. Bjorn elected to serve temporarily. On August 12, 1895, Rev. G. T. Rygh was elected to succeed Prof. Bjorn, who had resigned. In 1897 the church was repaired and improved, the chapel in the academy being used for services in the meantime. Rev. Rygh having resigned, Rev. Eggen, Madison, was chosen to serve temporarily. At the meeting held January 11, 1899, the congregation became a

member of the United Lutheran Church of America. This meeting also decided to call Rev. Stearns, who declined. Rev. Otto Schmidt was called July 7, 1899, but also declined. On August 9, 1899, Rev. Holte accepted the call of the congregation. In 1901 the congregation built the parsonage at a cost of about $1600.

A committee consisting of T. G. Lingard, Otto Dahle, and K. Gramm, with S. Thompson and A. E. Arneson to superintend construction, was selected for the purpose of preparing plans for remodeling the church. As per an article appearing in the **Mt. Horeb Times** on February 21, 1907, the cost of this project exceeded $6100. At that time the congregation consisted of "85 voting members and 447 souls, and is constantly growing".

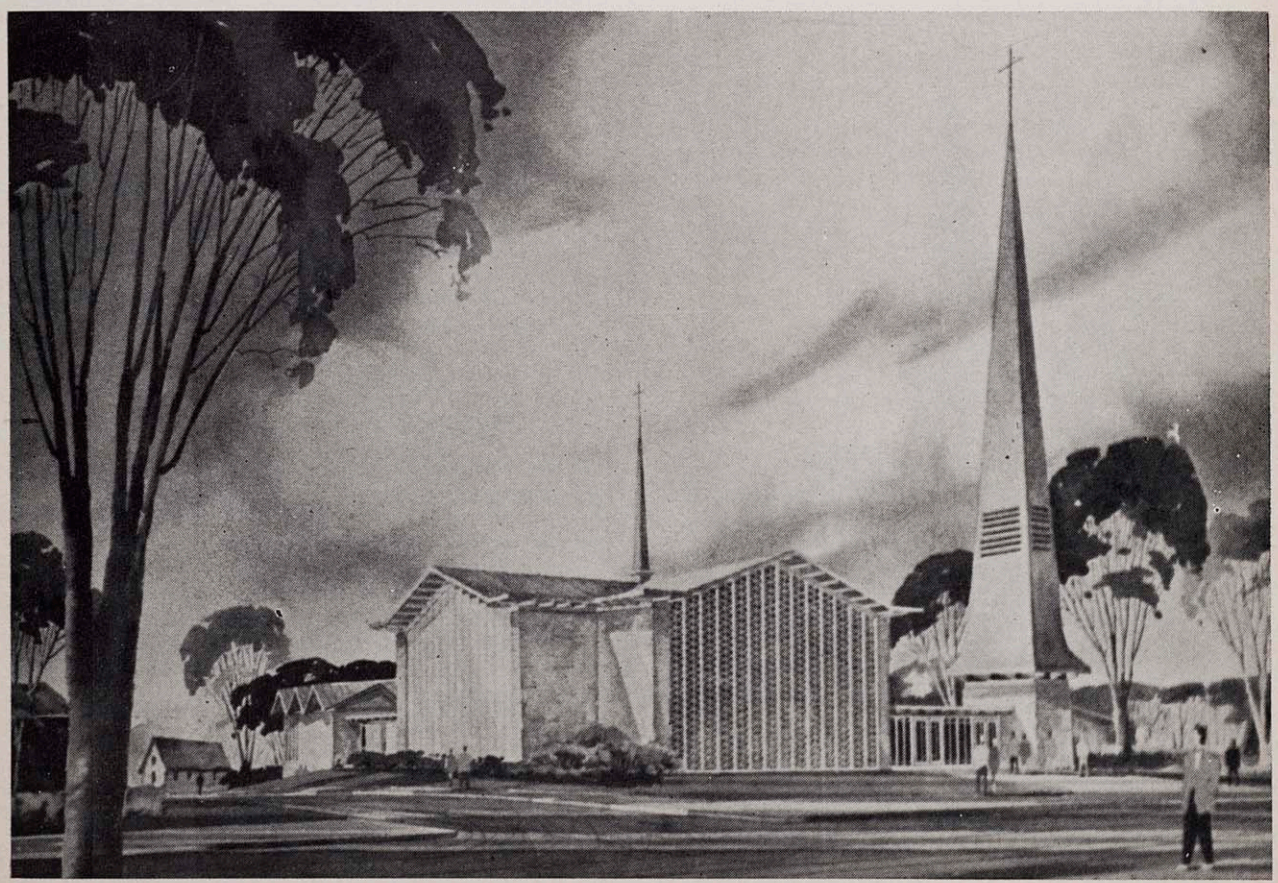
The cornerstone was laid Saturday, February 23, 1907, by the Rev. Theodore Eggen, Minneapolis. On the following day, Sunday, February 24, 1907, the church was dedicated by Rev. T. H. Dahl, president of the United Church.

Rev. Holte resigned October 1, 1907, and Rev. Hooverstad and Rev. S. Gunderson served as interim pastors until the congregation was able to secure a fulltime pastor. Rev. Aasgard suggested this arrangement so as not to unduly burden either of the two men. During this interim, in January, 1908, Blue Mounds and Mt. Horeb united as one parish and extended a call to Rev. Otto Mostrom, who accepted and was installed November 29, 1908.

Following the resignation of Rev. Mostrom, Rev. E. R. Anderson came in response to the call of the congregation in 1917, and served until his resignation, submitted in 1956 and effective in January, 1957. Rev. Ruben Mostrom was installed in January, 1957, by Dr. M. C. Austinson.

In September, 1957, the congregation approved plans for a fund raising drive to erect a new church, educational unit, and chapel. The total pledges and special gifts amounted to $309,000. After enlisting the services of the architectural firm of Sovik, Mathre, and Madsen, Northfield, Minnesota, in July, 1958, the congregation approved their preliminary plans in April, 1959. Contracts were let in June, 1960, with the total cost of the church, educational unit, and chapel, including furnishing and architect fees, set at $535,230. Ground breaking ceremonies were held June 19, 1960, and demolition of the church and parsonage proceeded immediately afterwards. December, 1961, is the anticipated completion date for the entire project.

The total membership of the congregation now is 1030 members.



Evangelical Lutheran Church being built in 1961

ST. IGNATIUS CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Rev. Andrew R. Breines, Ph.D., Pastor

German Immigrant Beginnings

St. Ignatius Congregation, Mt. Horeb, has its roots in Holy Redeemer Mission, Perry Township. The latter was settled by German Catholic immigrants during the period beginning in 1846 — fifteen years before the village of Mt. Horeb was established in 1861, a hundred years ago.

The first chronicler of these events was Lawrence Post, an early settler and founding member of the Perry Church; later a Civil War veteran and township officer. He recorded the names of the first German Catholic settlers and the years in which they arrived in Perry. "These settled mostly in the north-east section of the town of Perry," he wrote, "and in a few years formed the nucleus of what is now Holy Redeemer (St. Salvator) congregation." The rest of the township was predominantly Norwegian and Lutheran.

Area Catholics Face A Crisis

During this initial period, 1846-61, these pioneers worshipped in the nearest Catholic churches at Pine Bluff and Cross Plains, 15 and 20 miles away respectively, going through the wilderness on foot or by ox-cart. St. Mary's at Pine Bluff was then a mission of St. Francis Xavier at Cross Plains. Father Lawrence Conrad was the first resident pastor.

St. Ignatius Catholic Church as it looked when dedicated in 1895.

In March, 1859, a crisis struck the tiny Catholic community in Perry which was to have long-range consequences for the settlers and their descendants: Mrs. Simon Keller (a sister of Post) became critically ill; her life was despaired of. She wanted the ministrations of a priest. Vincent Holtz, a neighbor, walked the 26 miles to Madison, calling at Holy Redeemer Church. Father Michael Haider, organizer and first pastor of the congregation, answered the call. Winding his way over hills and through valleys, in many places fording little streams, the priest reached the bedside of Mrs. Keller in time to administer the last sacraments.

She died shortly after the priest left and later was buried from Holy Redeemer Church in Madison.

Perry Church Is Planned

This experience led to the building of the Perry Catholic Church. Dreading similar long and tedious journeys, the people sought the counsel of Fr. Haider. He urged them to remain united and advised them to build a church as soon as they felt able to do so.

At the Madison priest's suggestion they called at the nearest Catholic church, St. Francis Xavier at Cross Plains. Fr. Conrad received them warmly and promised to come occasionally on weekdays in order to celebrate Mass in private homes, to baptize and, in general, to minister to the spiritual needs of the Perry Catholics. At this time, our chronicler reminds us, Mt. Horeb did not exist, and Perry was a wilderness.

Under the direction of Fr. Conrad and his successor, the Reverend Father M. Gernbauer, the Perry Catholics began the building of the first Catholic church in the township.

The above-mentioned temporary arrangements continued throughout 1859 and the beginning of 1860. When several more Catholic families arrived, it was felt that the time had come to build the church. Eleven acres of land were donated by Michael Goebel and Frank Fix. Three hundred and fifty dollars were subscribed by willing members; others volunteered to quarry and haul stones. Masons were hired for 75 cents a day, and the new edifice was started. Later an additional $268 were raised for various improvements.

Such was the enthusiasm of the members that a simple frame building was completed before the end of the year. The following year, 1861, this structure was probably dedicated by Bishop Martin Henni, who came from Milwaukee for the ceremony. Fr. Haider donated a tabernacle. A tract of land was set aside as a burial ground.

Perry Catholics gathered in their new church each Sunday to pray the Rosary and recite the litany of the Blessed Virgin, after which one of the elders read the epistle and gospel for the Sunday with the accompanying instructions as found in the well-known commentary "Goffine". About once a month, either on Sunday or on a week day, the members took turns to get the priest from Cross Plains, and later on from Pine Bluff, to say Mass and administer the sacraments.

This situation continued for 35 years until a Catholic church was built in Mt. Horeb, and Perry became a mission to the former.

Founding of St. Ignatius Congregation

Mt. Horeb had been established as a postal station for some 33 years when the first meeting of St. Ignatius Congregation was held on February 24, 1894. The congregation at this time consisted of but 10 families. Present at the meeting were: Messrs. M. Rephan, F. Rephan, J. Reilly, B. Murphy, M. Cunneen, Eugene Allen and Father Ignatius Klein, pastor of St. Mary's Church, Pine Bluff, and of Holy Redeemer, Perry.

At a meeting it was agreed that a church should be built in Mt. Horeb, the latter showing signs of becoming a thriving community. Land was bought and construction on the new church began on October 5, 1894. Some three months later the cornerstone of the new building was laid by Fr. Klein. On January 9, 1895, the new St. Ignatius Church of Mt. Horeb was dedicated by Archbishop F. X. Katzer of Milwaukee.

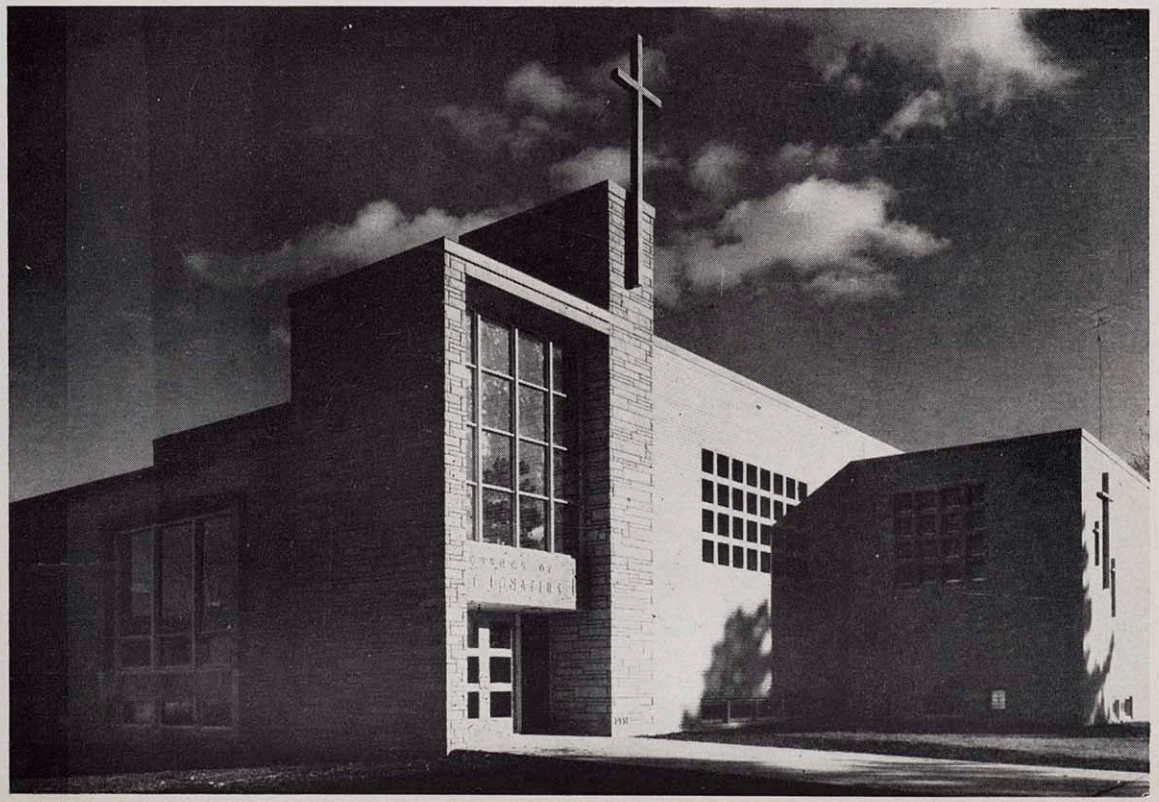
This church was to serve Catholics in the Mt. Horeb area for the next 57 years. During this time the congregation grew from the original 10 to 110 families and was served by 9 pastors. The first resident pastor of the Mt. Horeb church, with Perry as a mission, was the Reverend J. J. Salentin (1895-98). The second pastor was the Reverend John Herriges, who served from 1898-1901. Other pastors serving the two churches were: the Reverends Joseph Schlitz (1901-02); Albert Mueller (1902-05); Adam July (1905-09); Theodore Rohner (1909-28); Michael Jacobs (1928-36), now pastor at Milton Junction; Joachim Haeusler (1936-41); and Theo. F. Thome (1941-53), now a monsignor and pastor of St. Bernard Church, Madison.

New Ignatius Church Is Built

In 1950, with their membership approaching 500, St. Ignatius parishioners voted to build a new and larger church in order to meet the growing needs of the congregation. A modern structure of simple functional design made of glazed buff brick at a cost of $165,000 was dedicated on December 14, 1952, by the Most Reverend William P. O'Connor, the first Bishop of the Madison Diocese.

Reorganization of the Parish

In September, 1953, Father Thome was replaced by the present pastor, the Reverend Andrew R. Breines. During the past 7 years marked



New St. Ignatius Catholic Church dedicated in 1952

progress has been made in the catechetical instruction of grade and high school students under the supervision of the Dominican Sisters from Edgewood High School, Madison. At the present there are 250 youngsters in the catechetical program from the Mt. Horeb parish and from the Perry mission; another 250 are expected to enter the program during the next 5 years.

The St. Ignatius Altar Society was reorganized in 1953; its present constitution was adopted at that time. The organization was affiliated with the newly-formed Diocesan Council of Catholic Women in 1954. Shortly after, the Holy Name Society for the men of the parish was also reorganized. Both societies actively participate in the parish adult education program; nine study groups are in operation in the parish each year.

In 1958, the Parish Adoration Program was established in St. Ignatius parish. To date parishioners, young and old, have made more than 5,000 private Holy Hours. Since its inception at St. Ignatius, the adoration program has spread to more than 50 other parishes in the Madison Diocese.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by Mrs. R. L. Guenveur

The earliest information we have pertaining to the Methodist Church in Mt. Horeb is to be found in a **History of Dane County,** published in 1880, in which is recorded the following statement: "The first Methodist Episcopal class was organized November 7, 1854, with Benjamin and Mary Blackwell, William T. and Rose Boardman, Elisha, Charles and Elizabeth Carver. The class was organized by Rev. J. F. Pryor and was attached to the Black Earth Circuit, to which circuit the present church belongs, Rev. H. Dockham being the minister."

For about forty years the pastors serving the Mt. Horeb Methodist Church resided in Black Earth. The class met in homes and possibly part of the time in a small church which the Presbyterians had erected as early as 1848. This church stood in the present cemetery lot a short distance east of its present stone pillar entrance.

By 1866 the growing Methodist class bought two and one-half acres of land from Nathan H. Dryden and wife Emma "for the consideration of $50" and erected a church and provided for a burial ground as well. It was a well-planned, well-built church in which any pioneer community could have taken pride. One of our townsmen, the late Thomas S. Thompson, once wrote of this old church: "The building erected was rather a pretentious one for its day, which means that the pioneers of that time were willing to give bountifully from their meager funds when it was given to further their spiritual welfare."

The Presbyterians sold their little church, united with the Methodists and later were deeded a one-half interest in the new church property. Because of the merging of these two denominations it was referred to as "The Union Church", although it remained under the jurisdiction of the Methodist conference.

For about 25 years this was the only church in the Mt. Horeb community. For a nominal fee the Lutherans were granted use of the church for their services and Sunday school until they erected a church of their own about 1890.

The spacious, well-arranged and pleasant church basement served as a community center,

Methodist Church 1954

and many were the social functions held there, including lectures, the weekly singing school and several terms of public school. Temperance societies and various business groups also held their meetings there. So it is easy to see how the community life of that early day centered around the church, and what the church really meant to the pioneers.

In 1885 a Ladies Aid Society was organized at the home of Mrs. A. W. Gordon. Charter members, besides Mrs. Gordon, were Mrs. W. M. Curtiss, Mrs. Andrew Hoff, Mrs. Henry Lohff and Mrs. Harvey Scott. Mrs. Curtiss was elected the first president with Mrs. Scott as secretary.

In the fall of 1893 the church circuit arrangement with Black Earth was terminated by action of the annual conference, and thereafter Mt. Horeb had a resident pastor. Rev. J. W. Irish was the first minister to serve in the new parish.

For 23 years after the coming of the railroad the Methodists continued their worship in the church in the old town, after which they built in the new town. On Sunday, November 27, 1904, Bishop Hamilton dedicated a new house of worship at its present location on the corner of North Third and Oak Streets. In 1913 the present parsonage was built; prior to that the congregation had rented homes for parsonage use.

On Sunday, November 25, 1929, the 25th anniversary of the new town church was observed. Several former pastors took part in the day's services, and Mrs. Henry Lohff read a church history.

At various times since its erection in 1904 the church has undergone alteration and improvement. Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hoff, the church was presented with a substantial sum of money which was used for the brick veneering of the church and the purchase of a Hammond organ, dedicated Sunday evening, November 20, 1947.

On December 18, 1949, the church was re-dedicated, for it was 95 years since the Methodist class was organized in 1854 and 45 years since the new church had been built. Special services were held, and Bishop Northcott delivered the re-dedication address.

Centennial Services were observed on Sunday, September 19, 1954, with Bishop H. Clifford Northcott, and Rev. Deane Irish, Superintendent of the Southern District, as speakers. An excellent Centennial book of the Methodist Church in Mt. Horeb was published at that time.

Resident pastors over the years have been as follows: the Reverends J. W. Irish, G. W. Jones, J. E. Holden, John Denniston, Gilbert Denniston, George Carver, R. Pingilly, Mayson Sewell, C. C. Christenson, Ambrose Jett, William Rowe, Walter Marshfield, J. W. Barnett, Thomas Kell, Walter Snow, Robert Pow, W. I. Walker, David LaVinn, Earl Hibbard, Herbert Thompson, Gay Smith, Ralph Shackelford, John Grenfell, Norman Stephenson.

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

by Rev. Alvin O. Pinke

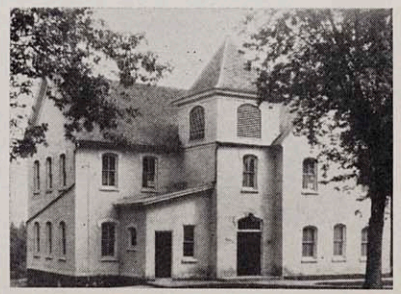
The history of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mt. Horeb can best be expressed with the meaning of the name the congregation chose many years ago: Immanuel — God with us! For 105 years God certainly has been with them.

In the year 1856 Pastor J. Deindoerfer, then serving St. John's Lutheran Church of Madison, began making regular trips to "German Valley" just outside of Mt. Horeb to serve the families of that area. Worship services were held in various homes, and before long formal organization of the congregation took place. After Pastor Deindoerfer, came the Rev. Theodore Koeberle, then the Rev. J. List.

Soon it became evident that homes of members were no longer adequate to serve the needs of the congregation, so in 1867, under the spiritual leadership of Pastor H. Vogel, the congregation purchased land for a church site and cemetery. Records during this time are meager, but it is known that a small frame church was erected, and not long after a school for religious instruction was built. Further construction followed sometime later when a parsonage was erected in the valley for the pastor.

Pastor Vogel was succeeded by Pastor Christian Wilke. In 1885, for the first time, the congregation called its first resident pastor, the Rev. Henry Kumpf. Following Rev. Kumpf was Pastor Carl Schaffnit. It was during his leadership that it became evident that something had to be done to provide more adequate facilities for the growing congregation. In 1893 the original church was taken down to make room for a new and larger House of God. The new church was dedicated in 1894.

In 1898 the Rev. G. Nitardy was called to the parish and thus began a ministry which was to extend over 42 years. During his ministry, in the year 1906, tragedy befell the congregation when lightning struck their church building, and it was completely destroyed by fire. The congregation immediately set about planning for the erection of another church. It was on the same site, only facing west instead of north



First Immanuel Lutheran Church, formerly one of the West Side School buildings.

as the old church had. Dedication of the new building was in 1908.

The first "Frauen Verein", or Ladies Aid, was organized in 1910.

In 1913, when more and more of the membership was residing in Mt. Horeb, the congregation began holding preaching services in a Methodist Church right near the village. The congregation purchased the old Public School on West Main Street in Mt. Horeb in 1919. In 1925 the school house was remodeled. Dedication of the renovated building was held on December 20, 1925.

Upon Pastor Nitardy's retirement in 1940 Pastor B. F. Matter accepted a call to serve the congregation. Pastor Matter was followed by Pastor James Hughes, who was installed on November 1, 1950. It was during his leadership that the German Valley Church was dismantled. In 1954 the congregation voted to build a new church in the village. Their former place of worship, the old school house, was torn down to make room for the new church building and parsonage. In 1955 the congregation was privileged to dedicate its new house of worship and its new parsonage.

This was also the year the congregation became independent, calling Pastor Hughes as full-time pastor. Previously Immanuel had always been a part of a multiple parish. In 1956 they celebrated their Centennial.

Pastor Hughes served the congregation until 1957, at which time Pastor Alvin O. Pinke was called. Pastor Pinke was installed on November 24, 1957, and still serves the congregation.

Immanuel means God with us. Verily, God has been with His people at Immanuel. As they go into their 106th year, the congregation prays that God will continue to be with them and bless them as they strive to serve the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

CONGREGATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

by Chester Nesheim, Jr.

The Mt. Horeb Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses had its start as missionaries preached at the homes of the people throughout this community. In conjunction with these preaching campaigns over the years, these missionaries at times conducted public Bible lectures in various parks, in the basement of the Municipal Building and in the old Parkway Theatre.

As a result of their preaching, a few persons from this community joined them in the ministry. In the late 1930's these few began to affiliate with the nearest congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, which was located in Madison. Gradually others united with them in this work, and by 1954 there were 19 active ministers in the Mt. Horeb community. On November 26 of that year the Mt. Horeb Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses was formed under the direction of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, governing body for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Chester Nesheim, Jr., was appointed by the Society to be presiding minister, and his first task was to find a suitable place to meet regularly in Bible study. In December the congregation held its first meeting in the private home of one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The congregation conducted 5 meetings each week in this home for 23 months. After meeting in this home for a few months, the attendance began to exceed 50 persons, and the congregation felt the need for larger meeting quarters. On February

Immanuel Lutheran Church

20, 1956, the congregation decided to build their own Kingdom Hall, which is the name of the meeting place of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. The congregation resolved that the new Kingdom Hall would be used as a center for free Bible education in the community with no collections taken up at any time.

Construction of the one-story stone and redwood building at 428 West Main Street began in October, 1955. On November 18, 1956, the congregation began holding meetings in the new Kingdom Hall, even though it was not yet completely finished. The new building now represents more than 9,000 volunteer man hours of labor, and has a debt of less than $8,500, although its replacement cost is estimated at $40,000.

Today the congregation consists of 61 nonsalaried ministers, 45 of whom are ordained. This represents an increase of 311% since its formation six and a half years ago. Services performed by the congregation during this period include 35,633 hours spent delivering doorstep sermons and conducting some 200 weekly home Bible studies.

BETHEL CHAPEL

by Rev. Ernest B. Rockstad

Bethel Chapel is the meeting place for a group of Christians seeking to follow the Bible in simplicity and truth. The work had its beginnings in a series of tent meetings in the summer of 1955. The founder and present pastor is Ernest B. Rockstad, a native of the town of Springdale and a graduate of Mt. Horeb High School.

Following the tent meetings, services were first held in a downtown store building. The former Gunderson parsonage was purchased, and since January 1, 1956, this has served as the meeting place.

Although the Christians who gather at Bethel Chapel have no particular denominational affiliation, Mr. Rockstad is an ordained Baptist minister and the teachings and practice followed are Baptistic in nature.

The group believes in the Bible as the Word of God and as the only rule for faith and conduct. It believes that all men outside of Jesus Christ are alienated from God, but that those who truly trust in Christ can be assured of eternal salvation in Him. It is dedicated to bearing witness to the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Kingdom Hall — Jehovah's Witnesses