

I.

B R I E F H I S T O R Y
OF THE
GERMAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
ST. PAUL'S CONGREGATION U.A.C.
IN
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

1889

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II.

List of Names of present Officers
and Members of the Congregation.

Original, in German
Script by Pastor Wegener,
taken from cornerstone
on September 13, 1989

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Brief History of the German Evangelical
Congregation of St. Paul's U.A.C.
in New Orleans, La.

The first beginnings of the local congregation are difficult to establish, due to the lack of a written account. However, from documents in our possession, one can ascertain that, as early as the year 1840, there existed in the Third District of this City a German Evangelical parish. The name, as well as the denomination existing at that time, however, can not be determined. The then, and most likely first pastor of this congregation by the name of C. Sans served the said congregation most probably until the end of the year 1843.

According to oral as well as written statements of members of this erstwhile congregation, who are still living at this writing, a split of the congregation occurred after the said C. Sans left. A certain R. Korndörfer was engaged as pastor of the congregation. A number of the members of the congregation however were dissatisfied with his conduct of office, and consequently resigned to form another congregation, and called upon a certain J.E. Schneider to be their pastor. In still available minutes of meetings during the period of December 1843 until March 1844 the formation of this congregation and the calling of this pastor is mentioned. In a roster of members of this congregation, which is attached to these minutes, the congregation was named: "German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of New Orleans, 3. Municipality."

Pastor Schneider's term of office, however, seemed to have been of a very short duration. Already by the end of the year 1844, Pastor Chr. Schrenk is listed as pastor in the record books of the congregation. During his ministrations the members who had left earlier, re-joined their old congregation. He served a little more than three (3) years, from 1844 until 1848. According to a still existing document, in his handwriting, the congregation was now known as the "German Evangelical Orthodox Church in New Orleans."

He was succeeded in office by Pastor Jakob Bühler who served the congregation a little more than eight (8) years, 1848 til 1856. At times a certain Pastor Schöne was supposed to have assisted him. Judging from the extensive entries in the church records of the various official functions and activities, a rather large group of folks belonged to the congregation. During this time the name and the unionistish denomination of the congregation seemed to remain the same as during Schrenk. It is believed that Lutherans as well as Reformed, celebrated Holy Communion at the same altar and in accordance with Reformed Rites. All in all a unionistish practice existed.

In late fall of 1855 Pastor Christian Gottlieb Mödinger of the Krischonaer Mission, was dispatched to minister among the Germans of North America, first as an assistant at the school. Then, on Christmas 1855 he preached his first sermon to the congregation. Subsequently, after Pastor Bühler's departure in May 1856 he got the call to be the pastor of the congregation. Now herewith begins the history of today's congregation.

Pastor Mödinger could not come to terms with the heretofore existing lack of a definitive denomination and the existing unionistish practice. He himself was convinced of the truth and the verity of ev. Lutheran doctrine as he knew it to exist at that time. From the very beginning it was his goal to build the congregation entrusted to him on a more solid foundation than heretofore existed. Already in the year 1856 he persuaded the congregation to join the still existing, however not entirely true, Lutheran Synode of Texas. The now following use of Hosts at Holy Communion and the personal notice of intent to receive communion gave cause to serious disagreements. The result was that a number of reform-minded and others, left the congregation and the congregation henceforth was perceived as evangelical Lutheran. In the year 1858 the congregation took on a new constitution along with the name: "The First German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of New Orleans, La." In this constitution the congregation expressly vowed to accept "any and all symbolic books of the evangelical church as those adduced from the word of God, not only the teachings had in our congregation, but all occurring teachings and religious differences be judged and regulated." That this pledge was supposed to be taken seriously is evidenced by another paragraph in the same constitution. Therein a new member must, among other stipulations, promise, "that he not only embrace the evangelical Church as such, but expressly pledge himself to our ev. Lutheran Church." In the beginning these dictates of the Church did not sit too well with many and it is said, that at the first presentation of the new constitution, no more than two or three members were ready to approve same. In due time, however, the remaining membership approved as well and signed the same.

No sooner had the congregation somewhat settled down, when it was besieged by a terrible misfortune. In April 1860

a dreadful fire gutted entire city squares and with it all buildings, church, school and parsonage of the congregation fell victim to the flames. At year's end, and with God's help it became possible to dedicate a roomier church. The lower floor was designated for use as schoolrooms. At the same time the congregation built the still existing two-story parsonage. The entire costs for church and parsonage came to approximately \$17,000.00 (Seventeen Thousand Dollars). At a later date the congregation acquired additional property, adjacent to the church, together with an existing building thereon, which became the teacher's residence. Still later, the basement of the church was utilized as a schoolroom. Despite the four-years (1861-1865) raging Civil War between the Southern and Northern States, which also affected New Orleans greatly, the congregation was able to flourish in peace. Even though the number of voting parishoners was comparatively very small, the church services were well attended, oftentimes so well, that the large church could not accommodate all.

In the year 1866, under the leadership of Pastor Mödinger, a guild for the care of poor orphans, named "Orphanage Guild of the First German ev. Lutheran Congregation of the Third District, New Orleans, La."

Until the year 1872 no important events, regarding the congregation, are recorded. With that year, however, a new chapter starts in the history of the congregation.

For a long time Pastor Mödinger realized that the Synode of Texas to which he and his congregation belonged, had the name ev. Luth. Synode, but did not practice the true Lutheran teachings in earnest. Consequently, such Synode was not the true home for the ev. Luth. congregation and its pastor. Since apparently no change in this regard could be anticipated, he realized finally that it was his unavoidable duty to leave this Synode and to persuade his congregation to do likewise. The question where to turn with his congregation found its answer soon, when, through oral and written testimony he learned and became convinced of the beliefs and tenet of the "ev. Luth. Synode of Missouri, Ohio and other States." Some members of the congregation objected vehemently to joining this Synode, however, the move came about in 1872. Shortly before, the by-laws of the congregation were once again examined as to text and tenet and a few paragraphs which needed revision were properly amended. Since the old Articles of Incorporation were about to expire, the congregation decided on new Articles of Incorporation and from then on (1872) carried the name: German Ev. Luth. St. Paul's Congregation U.A.L. in New Orleans, La."

Shortly after joining the Missouri Synode, the congregation introduced the Lutheran Hymnals. Prior to that time different hymnals were used at various times.

Even though the blessings of this change became not immediately evident to the human eye, and even though it seemed more harm than good would ensue because of it, the blessings were to become real. The true meaning and witnessing of faith of the Gospel, through the public sermons, as well as in the school, in the Lutheran writings, which now circulated, had to bear glorious fruits in due time.

The blessings of the new church affiliation were most evident in the parish school. One of them was erected amidst the parish at the very beginning. Every now and then it became difficult to find suitable teachers for the school, and the congregation, in some instances, suffered bad experiences. Now, however, this aspect was well taken care of, the teachers seminary at Addison, Ill. made available well educated, faithful and consciences teachers to the school and the congregation was able to entrust its youth and their education to these teachers without any reservations. Under their tutelage the parish school became the seedbed of church and congregation. Depending on circumstances 2 or 3 and for a time even 4 teachers served the school.(see "addendum")

A further blessing of this new affiliation was the fact that the congregation, once alone in the big city, now could join the two local sister parishes (St. John and Zion Parishes) in worship and brotherly union. Consequently, greater success in building God's Kingdom on earth and pursuing good deeds and Christian charity were possible. So it came about that members and communicants of these sister parishes founded the "German ev. Luth. Mission of New Orleans, La.", which exists to this day. Its purpose is "primarily an inner mission in the southern states of our country and especially in the City of New Orleans, and its surroundings." Also, at a later date "The ev. Luth. Bethlehem Orphanage Guild of New Orleans, La." was formed. For a time there existed a parochial Young Men's Association within these three parishes; however, this association faltered later on.

With the exception of a short period in the sixties,

during which time an assistant pastor stood by, who, however, left the church and became a Presbyterian, Pastor Mödinger was alone in the ministry of the congregation until the year 1883. In that year the ev. Luth. Bethlehem Orphanage was founded and pastor J. M. Maisch was called to be the orphan father and at the same time became the assistant to pastor Mödinger, all at the behest of the congregation. Under his leadership the still existing Ladies' Auxillary of the congregation was formed. However, in August 1884 Pastor Maisch decided to take on another profession.

At this time it became evident especially in this parish, that there was a need for a service in the English language. The younger generation, due to the lack of German language instruction, was in many instances only able to speak English. They had only limited knowledge of the German language and consequently would benefit little from sermons and lessons and the blessings therefrom. To fill the need and at the same time afford Pastor Mödinger an assistant, pastor G. Franke was called in the year 1884. Henceforth he would, along with his assist in German also conduct Sunday evening service in the English language. Prior to that time, at the behest of the congregation, various pastors in the city had performed Sunday evening services in English. Under Pastor Franke's leadership an English speaking congregation was formed in a very short period of time, consisting mostly of young people from the German congregation. However they remained connected with their German mother parish, inasmuch as they met in the church, shared the services of the assistant pastor and contributed to his salary. During his three year stay here, Pastor Franke instructed and confirmed between 125 and 150 children in the English language. When he left in the summer of 1889 to pursue

another career, it seemed that the existence of the English congregation had come to an end.

At about the same time it became necessary for St. Paul's to call a new pastor. For 31 years pastor C. G. Mödinger served the congregation faithfully and dedicatedly. His waning strength no longer allowed him to take on the many tasks. He consequently reduced his workload and suggested that the congregation issue a call for another pastor. He would hold himself available for sermons and other official functions when he felt strong enough physically, and he was needed.

The congregation, in agreement with this proposal, called the undersigned, Gottfried Johann Wegener, to be its new pastor. The said, until that time, having lived in Altamont, Ill. was, on the 23. Sunday after Trinity, dated November 13, 1887, at the behest of the then president of our Southern Synode District, Paster Tim Stiemke, by Pastor Mödinger himself, with assistance of all Lutheran pastors in New Orleans, installed inoffice of this parish. Thereafter on the following Sunday the undersigned delivered his first sermon.

Shortly before there had taken place a change in teachers in the parish school. Mr. C. W. Sauer, for many years teacher of the upperclass, left to pursue another career. Mr. J. Friedrich Thomson, who sine 1879 taught underclass and middleclass respectively, was now delegated to the upperclass. For the underclass, Mr. Friedrich Doepke, formerly of Houston, Texas was hired. Both last named still head the parish school today.

Under the newly called pastor once again the need arose for an English language service. Not only were the

needs of the previously English confirmed not met, there came about the necessity to instruct and confirm approximately 40 children in the English language. The parish consequently brought about the previously held Sunday evening services. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1888 several members of the previously founded English speaking congregation joined together. In peace they separated from the German language mother church and organized their independent congregation which they named: "The First English Lutheran Congregation of New Orleans, La." For a time they were served by the undersigned, however they acquired their own pastor in October 1888. In January 1889 they consecrated their new church in the service of God.

No sooner had the St. Paul's congregation returned from the joyous participation in the celebration of its daughter congregation, when, in God's infinite wisdom, a very trying time of great sorrow befell them on Tuesday evening, February 5, of the same year. Pastor, teachers and congregation delegates left the previous day to attend a Synode gathering of the Southern District in Texas. A fire broke out in the church; how it started is still unknown. Because of it the church building burnt to its foundation. The parsonage and the school building next to the church were spared by the Grace of God. All investigations into the cause of the fire are without results as of this writing. However, we know that without God's will this mishap would not have befallen us. We bow under his mighty hand and ask that he lift us up once again and give us joy in his time. Trusting in God's Charity and Grace which has no end, the congregation decided to undertake the reconstruction of God's house.

We are diligently at work now for two weeks, and today, Palm Sunday, April 14, 1889, the cornerstone of the new church shall be put in place in the name of the Holy Trinity. This short story of the congregation we shall commit to the cornerstone in order that, God willing, our descendents will bear witness to that which our Lord God in his generosity has bestowed upon us all.

In closing we add an account of the present standing of our congregation:

1. The congregation counts now 66 males and approximately 160 female members. The communicants number between 900 and 1000. The count of souls stands at about 2000 persons.

2. The parish school, which suffered to some extent because of the interruptions due to the fire, presently has 150 pupils.

3. The Ladies' Auxillary, whose head count has nearly doubled during the last 3 months has now 70 members.

4. The Young Men's Guild, which was founded on November 11, 1888 now has 30 members.

As we put this history of our congregation into the cornerstone of our new church, for the benefit of our descendents, our heart is full of praise and thanks to God for all His Mercy and Grace which He has bestowed upon us, and we beseech Him that He will preserve for us, our children

and children's children His Holy Word and Sacrament in
this place; that we and they may find solace and eternal
life in Christ Jesus Our Lord. AMEN.

New Orleans, La. April 14, 1889.

s/ Gottfried J. Wegener
ev. Luth. Pastor

(SEAL)

II.

Roster of Names of present
Officers and Members of the
Congregation.

1. Pastors:

Gottfried J. Wegener
C. G. Mödinger

2. Teachers:

J. Friedrich Thomson
Friedrich Doepke

3. Officers:

<i>P. Thormählen</i>	President
D. Amerland	Vice President
Hinr. Ringhoff	Secretary
L. Schulz	Treasurer
Hy. H. Ortland	
J. H. Gassner	
J. J. Thomas	

4. Members:

1. ^{Georg} Gerry Durchmann	8. Matth. Bauer
2. Johannes Pflüger	9. Rudolph Stahl
3. Jakob Broders	10. Heinrich Mohr
4. Wilhelm Stegelmeier	11. Ludwig Hornung
5. Joh. Martin Stoll	12. Joh. Friedr. Brandt
6. Heinr. L. Frantz	13. Christ. Theod. Schmalz
7. Michael Pons	14. Daniel Thomas

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| 15. Jakob Schneider | 36. Ferdinand von Behren |
| 16. Conrad Rübenkönig | 37. Wilhelm Dürker |
| 17. Herman Ortland | 38. Karl Fusch |
| 18. Johann Waldt | 39. Gust. Ad. Mödinger |
| 19. Johann Keim | 40. Gottlieb Harder |
| 20. Johann Reppel | 41. Joh. Jakob Wüst |
| 21. Heinrich Düker | 42. Dietrich Imwolde |
| 22. Heinrich Ulmer | 43. Johann Baumer |
| 23. Phil. Pet. Manger | 44. Ferdinand Nolting |
| 24. Johann Friedr. Klein | 45. Friedr. W. Würdemann |
| 25. Wilh. Aug. Brunssan | 46. Johannes Meyer |
| 26. Christ. Heinr. Röhling | 47. C. F. C. Rickert |
| 27. Johann Goller | 48. Gustav Broders |
| 28. August Meyer | 49. Heinrich Liern |
| 29. J. Heinr. Leonhardt | 50. Adolph Bergmann |
| 30. Karl W. Nolting | 51. Friedrich Würdemann |
| 31. Georg D. Fust | 52. Peter Mischler |
| 32. Friedr. Nunga | 53. Georg Gleber |
| 33. Gustav Sühning | 54. Johann Gerholdt |
| 34. Friedr. Honold | 55. Max Berndt |
| 35. Philipp Honold | 56. Christian Dannecker |
| | 57. Johann Baum. |

The cornerstone of our church was laid this day, April 14, in the year of our Lord 1889 and the 113 year of the Independence of the United States of North America, at which time the following officials were in office`

1. President of the United States
Benjamin F. Harrison
2. Vice President of the United States
W. T. Morton
3. Governor of Louisiana
F. T. Nicholls
4. Mayor of New Orleans
Jos. Shakspeare

s/ G. J. Wegener
Pastor