

## Chapter 5: The Post War Years (1945-1960)

The end of the war brought great rejoicing to Zion, but we were to learn that the aftermath of a war causes its own problems and miseries. Finances were not improved with the end of hostilities, and “our boys over there” did not come home at once. By the end of 1945 Zion still had 16 young people in military service; 10 on foreign soil and 6 in the United States.

In his annual report at the Zion congregational meeting on January 10, 1946, Pastor Proehl spoke of our “gratitude for the safe return of our young people in service”. He also spoke of another problem that arose in 1945 following the ceasefire:

How coldly indifferent the peoples of the victorious nations in arms have become to the unprecedented and inconceivable suffering of the innocent victims of war. The consequences are tragic, not only for those who permitted to die a cruel death from starvation and cold, but also for those who by their indifference are permitting their hearts to harden toward the working of God’s Spirit within them.

Proehl spoke on behalf of others, never once alluding to the fact that just 5 days before (Jan. 5) Lt. Arthur Proehl, 22 years of age, had been killed when his plane went down in the Pacific. The faith and courage of “Papa and Mama” Proehl and their family at that time was truly inspirational to us all. On November 17, 1946 a special service was held to dedicate special memorials and the newly redecorated church.

In 1947 the Zion Board became known as the Council. What became known at Zion as Pastor Proehl’s “dream talk” appeared in the 1947 Jan.-Feb. Zion Tidings newsletter:

It may be worth mentioning that in the course of the annual meeting, expression was given to a dream. Just a dream! But sometimes dreams come true, especially if there’s a will to make them come true. What was the dream? A Parish House!...A Parish House suitable for conducting Sunday School classes, social gatherings and where our youngsters could find a wholesome, supervised gathering place! Only a dream, but – ‘We can dream, can’t we?’ or should we do more than that?

In his annual message on Jan. 15, 1948 Proehl wrote of Zion’s need to support Lutheran World Action:

The crying need for food and clothing in war-ridden lands has not abated and will not abate in the foreseeable future. It is comforting to note that the Church is two years ahead of the so-called ‘Marshall Plan’. Christians are not affected by the perplexities of political considerations. Lutheran World Action will continue to function and appeals will come to us again during this coming year to give generously to this cause.

(Note: Zion gave \$742.22 to Lutheran World Action in 1948.)

Proehl was recognized for his work with students. He personally inspired at least 5 young men to the ministry. One was John Northwall, a student at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque and in 1948, at Proehl's suggestion, Zion voted to help finance his studies. Later another student, Lyle Daraur, also received financial aid from Zion. They were two of many ministerial students Zion has helped over the years.

Music has always been an important part of Zion's worship life. According to available historical records Zion had an adult vocal choir as early as 1885/1886. During the 1940's Margie (Schrock) Alton Herr began a choir for children. According to Margie she drove around to all the schools and picked up the children in her car for after school rehearsals at the church. Many current Zion members remember with great fondness the "Angel Choir" she prepared for Christmas services.

On September 26, 1948, the Reverend August Engelbrecht of Dubuque Seminary delivered the sermon at a special service for the dedication of the pipe organ rebuilt by the Reuter Organ Company of Kansas. The cost of rebuilding the organ was \$4,120. Organist at the service and the afternoon dedication concert was the Reverend A. Jagnow of Dubuque.

The October 5, 1949 Council meeting featured a discussion of a new oil burning heating unit to be installed in the church for \$2,267 by Schuppert and Koudelka Plumbing & Heating Co. Bids were taken for oil for the 1949-1950 heating season. The contract was awarded to Jones-Herriott. On January 4, 1950 the Council had a problem as recalled by a 1950 Council member:

Dane's Coal Co. had put 400 gal. of oil in Zion's tanks but the contract had been given to Jones-Herriott. The problem was due to a misunderstanding with Dane's presenting, and Zion accepting, a check for \$25 thought to be a gift. It was actually given as a donation by Dane's for getting the oil contract. The Council had a bill for \$50.18 from Dane's for oil and Jones-Herriott was wondering where to put the oil we'd ordered from them. The bill was allowed and with it Mr. Dane would receive an explanation that would refund his \$25 check if he so desired.

In February of 1950 the Council allowed a sum of \$31.62 to Dane's for 250 gals. of oil and \$78.30 for 600 gals. of oil to Jones-Herriott. No mention was made of the \$25 donation.

In 1950, Proehl added \$5 per month from his own salary as a personal gift to the choir director, raising her salary to \$20 per month. The choir director at that time was Miss Leona Henrickson. Proehl's salary in 1950 was \$3,600. Also in 1950 The Brotherhood (men's group) was started.

Pastor Proehl's "dream talk" had not been forgotten. In 1951 a Long Range Planning Committee had been appointed to investigate the possibilities of a parish hall for Zion. In 1952 at the semiannual meeting on July 17, a report was presented by the above mentioned committee. A Building Fund was to be established and when the first \$5000 had been raised, a 7-member Building Committee was to proceed with obtaining an architect for a Zion Parish House. From 1952-1957 the main project at Zion was to make the "dream talk" a reality.

By 1955 Zion had pledges of \$100,000 for the parish hall. The congregation voted to build a parish hall 104' by 46'. It was planned to fit into an overall forward looking plan to allow for future expansion. The roof was to be a reinforced concrete slab to allow the addition of a second story and a new church in the future, which would be connected to the parish hall on the south.

On Sunday, February 10, 1957 the parish hall was dedicated. The Reverend Dr. Hermann W. Seifkes, President of the Iowa District of the American Lutheran Church, delivered the sermon at both morning services. A potluck was held at noon and an open house from 2 to 4:30 p.m. for visitors to view the building. The formal Service of Dedication was held at 7:30 p.m. with Dr. Bernard Holm, President of Wartburg Theological Seminary delivering the dedication address.

A special Zion Family Night was held on Friday, February 15, which featured a program sponsored by the various church auxiliaries and included a play presented by the Luther League. The Women's Missionary Guild provided light refreshments. The "dream talk" had become a reality.

The description and photos of the new "Parish House" were included in the dedication bulletin and are reproduced on the following pages.

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# *Dedication Services*

Sunday, February 10, 1957



## *Zion Lutheran Church*

Iowa City, Iowa

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**A New Beginning  
For our old Zion**

## THE PARISH HOUSE

The Parish House we are dedicating today is largely the result of "growing pains." About six years ago, when the enrollment of our Sunday School and Vacation Bible School began to rise perceptibly, resulting in crowded conditions, the congregation rather casually authorized the appointment of a "Long-range Planning Committee" consisting of 16 members whose duty it was to study our need for expansion. This committee did a thorough job over an extended period and reported its findings at a special congregational meeting held July 31, 1952. At the recommendation of this committee the congregation voted unanimously to build a parish house.

It was not until a year later, however, that a Finance Committee and a Building Committee were selected. Both committees immediately applied themselves to their respective assignments. While the Finance Committee conducted a general solicitation of funds, resulting in pledges amounting to approximately \$20,000, the Building Committee made a thoroughgoing study to determine what type of building was required. As a result of this investigation, it became increasingly apparent that a building which would fit into the future needs of the congregation should be erected. This resulted in the adoption, on the part of the congregation, of an over-all, forward-looking plan which would allow for future expansion. In other words, the new parish house should constitute the first unit in a project which visualized an entirely new church plant some time in the future. At this time the firm of Thorson, Thorson and Madson was engaged to draw up plans. Four steps are required in the realization of this project. In addition to this Parish House, which constitutes the first unit, and the church proper, mentioned above, plans call for the addition of another story and office rooms on the south side of the Narthex. The Church office next to the kitchen is a temporary arrangement.

After adopting the plans submitted by the architect, and after a canvass for funds conducted by a professional firm resulted in new pledges amounting to over \$80,000, the congregation authorized the construction of the first unit. The general contract was awarded to the R. H. Wildman Company, the plumbing contract to Boyd and Rummelhart and the electrical contract to Nate Moore Wiring Service, all of Iowa City. Construction got under way in October 1955.

The new building measures 104 by 46 feet (including the Narthex, with the tower entrance extending beyond). The lower floor provides, by means of Modernfold doors, space for 19 classes, as well as a large hallway, two lavatories, a furnace room, a large Sunday School material cabinet, a

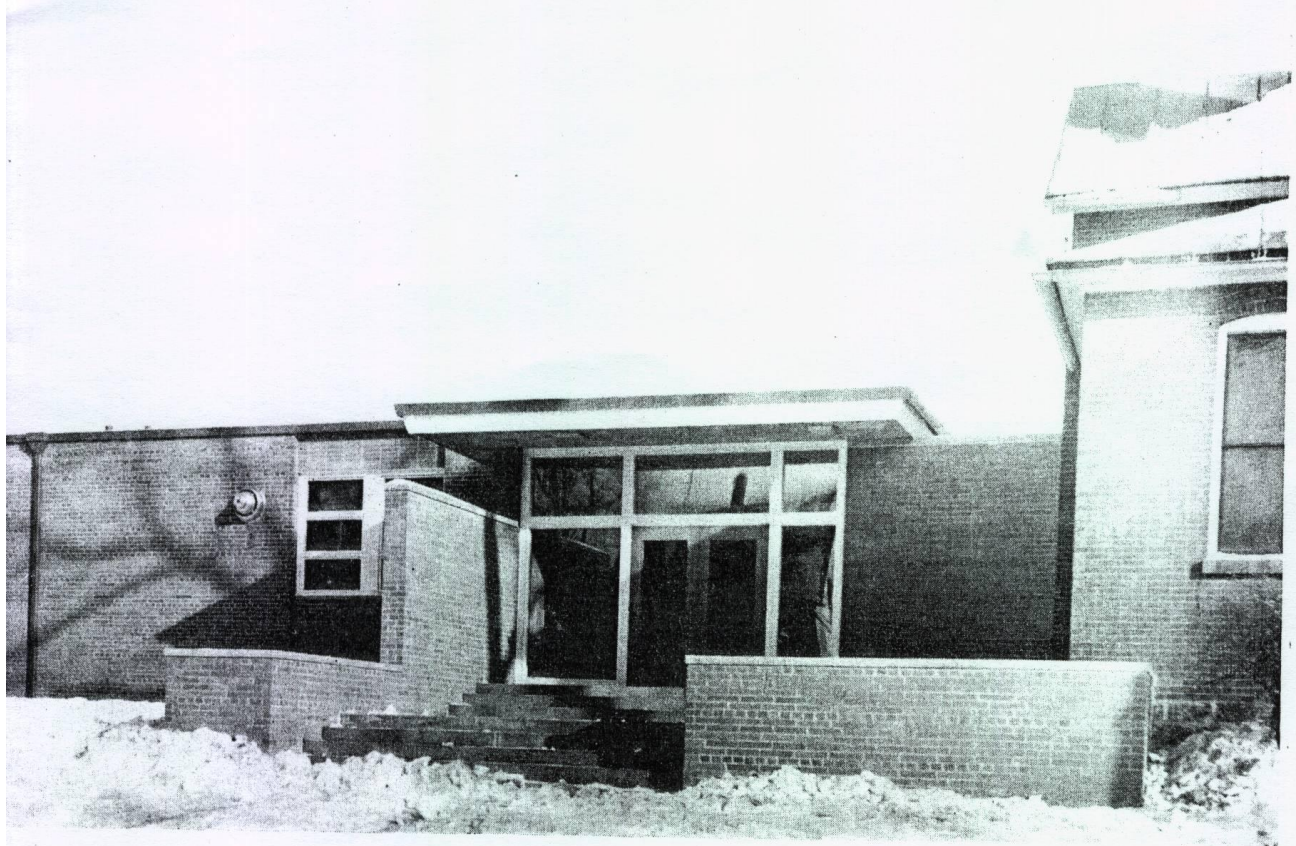


kitchenette, and two large storage areas. The upper floor includes a narthex, an auditorium with a seating capacity of 300 and a stage 18 by 18 feet, a modern kitchen incorporating the latest in facilities, a church office, a lavatory and a storage room. There are four entrances to the building. Parents bringing their children to Sunday School will be able to drive right up to the East entrance. The auditorium is so designed as to serve as an overflow to the sanctuary when the new church is built. All floors are covered with asphalt tiling, with the exception of the lavatories and kitchen, which are covered with vinyl and grease-proof tiling respectively. The large Pella windows (double pane glass) and the colorful walls and folding doors give the interior of the building a light and cheerful appearance. All stairs are covered with thick molded rubber. All ceilings, with the exception of the kitchen, are of a newly developed acoustical material. Heating is by low-pressure water with zone control. The building is of sturdy construction, the basement walls being of reinforced poured concrete. The roof is a reinforced concrete slab which will serve as the floor when and if another story is added. Except for doors, trim and kitchen cabinets, the structure is fireproof, which is reflected in the low rate of fire insurance required. The cost of the building, without furnishings, is approximately \$114,000.

The Building Committee consisted of Mr. Chas. Ruppert, Chairman, Mrs. Harland Sprinkle, Secretary, Dr. O. E. Nybakken, Mr. Everett Alton, Mr. Myron Ernst, Mr. Bruce Hiscock, Mr. C. Emerson Brandt and the Pastor. The Finance Committee is composed of Mrs. C. E. Brandt, Mr. Wm. Knowling, Mr. Marvin Sass, Mr. Harland Sprinkle and Mr. Warren Johnson. The late Alfred Gies was, until the time of his death, a valuable member of this committee.

The First Unit stands as a monument to Almighty God, Who has made us partakers of His Grace in Jesus Christ, as well as to the sacrificial spirit of Zion's members, whose love and devotion to the Church under God's blessings have made it possible. It also serves, by reason of the facilities it offers, as a challenge to greater and more effective service in the work of God's Kingdom. May God hasten the day when the projected plans involving a completely new church plant are realized!

TO GOD BE ALL HONOR AND GLORY!



Through the years Zion has provided young people the opportunities for learning and fellowship. Younger children were invited to become Junior Missionaries. The group was started in the 1950's by Ruth Ebbs and Margie (Schrock) Alton Herr and was open to all boys and girls from age 8 to 12 years. In 1967 the group was privileged to have a new co-director, Dorothy Mandsager, who had served as a missionary in Africa. February of 1968 brought New Guinea missionary, Barbara Ide, into the group as a co-sponsor. Joan Luhman and Dottie Powell coordinated the Junior Missionaries from September, 1968 into the early 1970's. The Junior Missionaries met once a month and had established agenda items which included a memory verse for each month. Programs highlighted many different aspects of church work ranging from missionaries, Lutheran World Relief, Native Americans and migrant workers. The programs also included fun activities ranging from sack races and egg tosses to caroling for shut-ins.

Junior Luther League was open to students 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade. Meetings were held once a month and "fun" activities were the focus. Luther League was designed for High School youth and was organized like a club with elected officers and participants paid dues. Fun activities included: hayrack rides on the Schmidt farm, caroling to shut-ins and providing a plate of cookies, overnight camping, and horseback riding. Luther League also provided a chance to meet members of other Luther leagues (West Liberty, West Branch, etc. ). Basketball provided both girls and boys the chance to compete with other Luther League teams. Sherry Carpenter reminisces,

Luther league was something I always looked forward to. Some of the most wonderful memories were when we went ice-skating near the Alton's, Christmas caroling and visiting the shut-ins and when we got back to the church we were so frozen we could hardly move.

Pastor Proehl had seen the establishment of the Lutheran Student Ministry and the Lutheran Student Center, Christus House. He had received an honorary doctor's degree from Luther College in Decorah. He had seen his beloved congregation through two World Wars. He had been underpaid and overworked, but he had never wavered in his duties or in his faith. He saw many of Zion's dreams come true, the last of which had been the parish hall. For the first time since coming to Zion, "Mama" Proehl didn't have to have meetings and Sunday School in her home. But Proehl wasn't through with his dreams for Zion. Visions of the future pictured a new parsonage and a new church! He was to see these efforts accomplished, but as a visitor returning as Zion's honored guest. In 1958 he submitted his resignation, to be in effect May 1<sup>st</sup>. He had accepted a call to the American Lutheran Church in Ashland, Nebraska. A farewell party for the Proehls found very few dry eyes in the gathering. He had served Zion for 32 years; he was "family" or, as one youngster put it, "He's our Papa!"

The Reverend Lowell A. Koch was installed as Zion's pastor on June 1, 1958. He and Marilyn brought five lively youngsters to Zion, filling the old parsonage with laughter and youth, which was of special pleasure to the Proehls and the congregation. Koch graduated from Wartburg Seminary in 1948. He served in Sibley and Grundy Center, Iowa before being called into the U.S. Air Force Chaplaincy in December 1950. He served most of his 3 ½ years on the island of Guam. After his discharge, Koch served the Church of the Good Shepherd in Waterloo, Iowa before coming to Zion. He was installed by District President Siefkes who was assisted by the Reverend D.F. Hetzler, administrator of Christus House, Iowa City.