

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, POPPLE CREEK

VAUDT, REVEREND ERWIN and DUSCHA, MR. and MRS., INTERVIEWS

This tape covers the personal backgrounds of Erwin Vaudt and Mr. and Mrs. Duscha, longtime members of St. John's Lutheran Church. It also gives the early church history back to the beginnings of the church.

INTERVIEWERS: John LeDoux and Mark Stone

DATE: July 28, 1978

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 1 Side 1

006 PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

- 006 Reverend Erwin Vaudt's parents were born in the United States. (Iowa)
- 009 The name Vaudt is a German name.
- 011 The ancestors go back one generation in this country and beyond that they are from Germany.
- 013 His grandparents from both sides came over from Minden of Germany and a province near Holland.
- 021 His father's people were farmers over in Germany.
- 023 His mother's people were well educated.
- 032 They came to Iowa to farm.
- 053 He was the first generation to come to Minnesota.
- 055 He was born August 20, 1910.
- 056 He grew up and went to school in Northern Iowa.
- 058 Attended Concordia Academy in St. Paul for high school as well as Junior College.
- 062 After Junior College he went to a seminary in St. Louis.
- 066 He graduated in January of 1945.
- 069 The system has changed in recent years that they have four years of college and 3 years in the seminary.
- 075 His parents had a great influence on him to join the ministry.
- 088 His first congregation was a parish in Benson, Minnesota.
- 094 He was there from 1945-1951.
- 096 From Benson he went to a congregation in Aitkin, Minnesota, 1951-1955.
- 098 From Aitkin he served in Ada, Minnesota, then served in Eastern Iowa and was in South and North Dakota.
- 104 He served in a congregation North of Detroit Lakes.
- 107 He came to Popple Creek in the year 1970.
- 129 It varies on how long the pastor stays.
- 132 It depends on the situation and on the person and how work is progressing.
- 138 Having 2 or 3 points (a pastor serving more than one church at the same time) is a disadvantage as far as what you may want to accomplish.
- 147 They maintain a confirmation class between the two congregations.
- 149 Therefore, some things have been combined.
- 156 The salaries from Urban and Rural churches are about the same, but of course there are larger congregations in the cities.
- 168 The Missouri Synod definitely is a more conservative body than the American Lutheran Church of America.

- 181 As he sees it now, the conservative element won out and appears to be a more dominant in the future.
- 185 The conflict was that some seminary professors who have received extra training with other groups also receive training on what they call the historical method of interpretation of the scriptures.
- 221 The professors who got the extra training were from schools outside the Synod.
- 233 These schools were non-Lutherans.
- 252 His feeling towards the community in relation to the sacraments literally becoming the Body of Christ. The Lutheran and scriptural teaching is the real presence.
- 264 They did not teach that they turn into body and blood.
- 272 The word which is connected with the elements is what gives the sacrament its power and strength.
- 278 God is inseparable, and all three are involved, the Holy Spirit and also the word is involved.
- 283 It is involved in conversion to the faith which takes place in Baptism.
- 296 The sacraments therefore are not looked upon as simple.

302 EARLY CHURCH HISTORY:

- 302 He was presented with a 35 year history from 1890 to 1925.
- 309 Organization of this book was March 2, 1890.
- 312 They met in homes to begin with.
- 317 There was a church in Sauk Rapids whose pastor came over to Pople Creek and did some services to begin with.
- 322 It was then a daughter church of Trinity Church in Sauk Rapids.
- 326 The present church was built in 1910 and is still standing. Before that they had a frame church.
- 334 The original name of the church is St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church United Unaltered Oxford Confession.
- 340 Officially, Evangelical is today part of the name, it has just been shortened for convenience.
- 353 The Missouri Synod was organized in 1847.
- 359 Then the name German was incorporated as part of it.
- 362 They were largely German Lutheran, but actually there were some Polish people.
- 377 They more or less had their own separate church body in the beginning, with just a small number of congregations.
- 386 Then they gradually affiliated with Missouri Synod.
- 391 Primarily it was Polish Lutherans that founded the church.
- 396 There evidently were some conflicts in the congregation with accepting Polish Lutherans into the Missouri Synod.
- 408 There were language problems, such as the services would be in German and the Polish people couldn't understand it.
- 420 The services had to be interpreted for the Poles.
- 423 Today, in the Missouri Synod, there is no significance placed on the ethnic origin if people want to join.

- 429 Pastor Hines had services in 3 languages, English, German, and Polish.
444 The first World War had a lot to do with the Germans. He thinks that this is the milestone that turned things around.
462 He would assume that there would have to be some disagreements of changing the language to all English.
477 St. John's has not always been a 2 point parish. They were independent for a number of years.
485 In terms of independent means with one pastor for one church.
488 The church's independence in relation to the Synod as far as any dictates or suggestions.
494 The Synod is an advisory body and the final decision of everything rested with the individual congregation.
499 When the congregation affiliates with a church body, they give up some of their rights too. They will go along with policies of the Synod and the projects they come up with etc.
508 They will always have a voice in the vote but still should feel responsible to the church in which they belong.
521 If the congregation would go another direction from the Synod, the Synod would take over.
530 In general, he has never felt at odds with the Synod.
540 The congregations that he serves pay for his salary.
547 During the time the church was independent the congregation was larger.

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 1 Side 2

- 003 In 1925, the church had listed 230 communicant members and 360 souls.
005 At the present time there are 170 communicant members and 220 souls.
008 Souls are all individual members including children, and communicants are the adult members.
011 In the years he has been here, the congregation has been fairly stable, with a slight increase.
015 There is no worry from the old people that the younger ones will leave because of the greater job opportunity in the Twin Cities.
039 Today there are 170 members and 200 baptized children.
043 In the congregation, the German and Polish are still the two predominant backgrounds.
048 There aren't any traditions or Holiday Services still in effect that are either Polish or German.
057 ½ of the parishioners in the area are still farmers.
059 Some that do live in the area farm as a hobby.
062 Active farmers have become less over the years.
064 The people who are non farmers, work in St. Cloud, or Foley. The job range varies.
071 The women's group has been the most active in the past.
076 Youth groups have been up and down and at the present time there isn't a lot going for them.
080 The women's group is affiliated with a national organization called Lutheran Women's Missionary.
082 They have their conventions regularly and adopt various projects that support the Synod's special missions at various times.
085 They have their local projects such as visiting nursing homes, etc.
092 There is direct support by all the congregations of the Synod's programs.

- 097 The money to start new churches, and the money for the overseas missionaries comes from the offerings of the congregation in the Synod.
- 103 The records that he has go back to the beginnings of the church.
- 105 Some of the records are written in the German Script.
- 122 The baptism records start in the year 1908; they are in German script.
- 133 There weren't any records in Polish, although the book has a German and English version which would indicate the use of the 3 languages at the time.

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 2 Side 1

006 PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

- 007 Mr. Duscha's parents were born in Germany.
- 012 He was born on October 9, 1891.
- 015 His parents may have come to the United States in the 1860's or the 1870's.
- 020 He grew up in this area of Popple Creek.
- 022 His father was a farmer.
- 025 He went to a country school, but no high school.
- 032 Mrs. Duscha's first name is Annie.
- 040 Her parents were born in Germany.
- 046 Her parents lived in Sauk Rapids when they came to America for a while and started a farm.
- 056 They were not members of the church right away.
- 061 Her parents belonged to the original frame church sometime before 1910.
- 069 Mr. and Mrs. Duscha grew up in this church and remember it being a frame church.
- 072 Before they built the frame church, there was another church North of here.
- 075 This church was torn down but they can't remember the name.
- 083 The 4-H then took it over to become a cemetery.
- 086 All the members of this church then went to separate churches.
- 090 The Germans then separated from the Polish. They didn't want to be in the same church anymore.
- 100 This was because of the two different languages.
- 109 The church that was torn down was also St. John's.
- 113 In the one that was torn down, the Germans had services in the morning, while the Polish had one in the afternoon.
- 120 Once the present St. John's was built, they were basically German.
- 123 For the church, Mr. David, donated one acre of land.
- 143 The Polish Lutheran is a carryover from the old country.
- 147 There are quite a few Polish Lutheran.
- 148 The Poles that were Lutheran clustered together.
- 154 Back in the 50's or 60's in the present St. John's Church, there were services in Polish and in German at one time.
- 165 It was hard for the older people when it turned to English.
- 188 There was a Reverend Von Brandt, who was fluent in German, gave the sermon while there was also someone who interpreted for the others.

202 Mrs. Duscha also went to the same country school as her husband.
205 There was never a Polish teacher in the school.
208 No German was being taught to the children, only English.
210 The younger people were taught only English, which had a great
influence on the change of the services to English.
227 There wasn't too much dissatisfaction for the change.
232 The old people didn't really understand English.
235 For a while there was a service once a month just in Polish.
242 There were 14 families who started out the church.
256 There were some Polish and some German.
298 Today, there are a lot of Polish who have the Polish ancestry.
322 They could then trace their families back a couple of generations
at least.
325 The church grew fast after the new church was built.
339 Mr. and Mrs. Duscha have 2 sons.
346 The older one is Gordan, then the other is James.
351 Most of the people who go to St. John's are farmers.
354 Some families come from St. Cloud, and Sauk Rapids.
359 There aren't any Polish customs brought over from the old
country, that are practiced today.
369 The church, back in the early days had some social events,
but not too many.
384 The Polish people over here do not fix a lot of Polish food.
393 If asked what nationality they are, they would say they're
Americans.
413 In the early days when Mr. Duscha was a boy, he walked to church.
423 Most people that were further than 3 miles, rode their horses.
435 The school was $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile away from his home.
448 The automobile first made its appearance in his family, in 1917.
458 The car didn't come in handy until after 1920. The car was a Dodge.
462 During the depression Popple Creek didn't suffer a lot.
470 Some people asked for help but the Duscha's didn't.
475 It was an advantage to be a farmer.

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 2 Side 2

004 There was a drought during the depression and families asked for help.
006 The help came from the country.
012 The church during these years kept its membership.
017 The business establishments did include a Creamery and it was
under 50 years that it disappeared.
028 They knew each other a long time because they met through school.
039 Mrs. Duscha's birthdate is May 28, 1897.
047 14 families organized the church.
053 David and Mr. Duscha's father and his uncle, were some of the
ones that started the church.
063 Several people who were Catholics shortened their Polish names.
080 The services in the church haven't changed, such as the music
and the way the services proceed.
089 The hymns are all in English.