

# St. John Lutheran celebrates 150 years

St. John Lutheran Church of Darien is celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year. There will be the Special 150th Service and Luncheon on Sunday, October 18, 2009. The Rev. John Nunes, President of Lutheran World Relief, will be keynote speaker. Rev. Nunes is known to be an awesome powerhouse speaker who mixes fire and brimstone with compassion and comedy. The community is invited to join St. John Sunday, September 13, for a multi-cultural event. There will be no charge, however, pre-registration is requested.



You might recall seeing the picture of St. John's former church on page 15 of the last *Neighbors of Darien* "40th Anniversary Commemorative Issue." The church's 150 year roots go way back even before the first of its three historical church buildings were erected. It began during the tumultuous years between 1830 and 1855 when new steam-powered machines put crafts people out of work and blight destroyed crops across Europe.

On September 4, 1853 Rev. Friedrich Ottmann, born and trained in Bavaria, was formally installed as the first pastor. In 1855 he left the area to follow a call to New Melle, Missouri. On January 22, 1859 the church purchased three acres of land at 67th and Clarendon Hills Road for thirty dollars. With fifteen charter members, under the name of German Evangelical Lutheran St. John Congregation, they signed their first constitution on October 17, 1859. When the Civil War broke out more than ten men from the congregation served in the Union Army. The war and the subsequent great move west increased the scarcity of Lutheran clergymen. The congregation relied on evangelical pastors from 1892 to 1906.

St. John's next three pastors served from 1913-1951 and found themselves serving in the backdrop of two world wars with a depression in between. In 1950, the present site of four acres was purchased from the Andermann estate for \$5,000.

Current pastor, Rev. David M. Bottorff, was installed in November, 1987. Growth in service and dedication by the congregational members has continued to dominate the church scene.

In the spring of 2007 a "Sharing the Vision" Capital Campaign was launched. Rebuilding highlights included the parking lot, dealing with flooding issues, installing a sprinkler system throughout the building, improving the lighting in the sanctuary, installing an elevator, relocating the sacristy, renovating and installing the air conditioning in the Educational Wing.

On Sunday, July 29, 2007 Pastor Doug Swanson from Dayton, OH was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor at St. John.

Today, St. John continues to offer a variety of long-standing programs providing spiritual nurturing for everyone from the very young to seniors.

In preparation for the 150th Anniversary year, a self-produced "Faith Witnessing" booklet was prepared to help launch the year-long activities leading up to the celebrations on October 18, 2009. Twenty-seven individuals wrote 49 short stories illustrating God's actions in their lives. It was an all-out effort to live up to the "sharing" part of the theme selected — "150 Years of Sharing God's Love HIS Way!"

St. John's Church is located at 7214 Cass Avenue, Darien.

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