

Chapter 4: The Years of the Two Great Wars (1911-1945)

An old, yellowed clipping dated June 1, 1911, from the Iowa City Press Citizen recreated for us a sad time in Zion's history. The article title reads "LOVED PREACHER IS LAID TO REST", followed by: "Beloved Pastor Now Sleeps in Silent City". According to the article,

Assembled at the German Lutheran (Zion's) Church, and gathered at the bier of the lamented Reverend J.G. Hoerlein, pastor of that church, was the largest body of clergymen of Iowa and Illinois ever assembled in Iowa City on a similar occasion. Joining in their sorrow and tendering sympathy to the bereaved family were many laymen of Iowa City and abroad, who appreciated the loss sustained by the church and the community.

Especially touching was the paragraph dealing with "A Pathetic Incident":

The mourning friends at the funeral were deeply touched when they found upon the casket of the sleeping clergyman a simple wreath of holly from the far-off groves of Oregon. It was brought by Hans Hoerlein from his new home on the Hood River, and was placed over his father's silent form- the father who had listened, enrapt, when the son played the organ at a farewell reception a few months ago, and had planned to join his well-loved boy in the orchards of the great west ere long.

A card placed with the holly wreath was addressed to "My Loving Father" and signed simply "Hans, Your Son". It contained verses Hans had written for his father:

'Tis a simple token I've brought thee
From the home now so far away;
It comes whence thy thoughts oft have wandered;
Whence at hart thou didst long be.

From the forest it comes and the mountains,
Where in peace and quiet it grew,
'Amongst the pine-scented breezes and flowers,
Where there would have been peace for you.

It has heard, as 'twas borne on the wind,
The rush and the roar of the river,
And again as 'twas adversely wafted
The faint and far-distant murmur.

Thou didst seek for its language in music
And longed that near it soon thou wouldst dwell;
Thou didst hear in the organ its murmur
And rush at my parting farewell.

'Tis a simple token I've brought thee
From the home so far, far away,
That it may to thy last rest bring peace,
Peace - if peace it can be.

Pastor Hoerlein was buried in Oakland Cemetery north of "The Black Angel". Parishioners cared for the grave after the family moved from Iowa City. The minutes for the Board meeting for June of 1942 contained a note at the end by the Board Secretary, Mrs. Marie Seegers, who reminded herself that at the Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting she must bring up the "subject of Pastor Hoerlein's grave and forgot to do so".

She did remember it at a later date. At the Board meeting on September 8th she stated that it was moved and seconded and carried that the grave be "fixed", the cost left to the judgment of a two-man committee, "Mr. Dodson and Pastor Arthur C. Proehl". Mrs. Seegers reported that Pastor Hoerlein's grave was completed "and looks very nice". At about that time, many of the old graves had settled and needed filling. It seems probable that the project may have included some filling and also (as remembered by a long-time member of the Ladies Aid) "...planting a geranium or two". This speaks well of the devotion of Zion to a former pastor, as the above took place 31 years after Pastor Hoerlein's demise.

The Reverend Herman Brueckner was called to Zion. He brought his family to Zion from Alpena, Michigan and arrived on July 28, 1911. Brueckner was a scholar and a stern disciplinarian. Helen Mott recalled "Reverend Brueckner tolerated no monkey business in his classes!" He found a very active Sunday School at Zion, but as Helen remembers, "The activity was not necessarily mental." A brilliant man himself, she recalls his frustration while trying to instruct and inspire his pupils, most of whom had their thoughts elsewhere. Brueckner studied at the University of Iowa during the years of his pastorate here, earning his M.A. in 1917 and later his Ph.D.

Zion prospered under Pastor Brueckner. In 1913 a new furnace was installed at Zion at a cost of \$275. In the fall of 1915 Herman F. Schroeder reports, "The young people of the church put in folding doors replacing the partition that separate the school from the back of the basement. The back part of the basement was cemented and new closets installed."

Pastor Roy C. Nilsen wrote, "In 1915, a very significant step was taken. English language services were introduced and alternated regularly with German services. By 1921, German services were only being held on the first Sunday of each month, and in 1936, German services were completely discontinued. It was a major change in the life of the congregation."

The world became involved in "the Great War" in 1914. As the war progressed, there were mixed emotions concerning America's involvement, which came on April 6, 1917, when the United States declared war on Germany. Suddenly an intense hatred of "things German" occurred. Sauerkraut became "Liberty Cabbage". The music of Beethoven and Bach was not heard. Stories were told of hiding copies of Goethe and other old German classics because there had been threats of neighborhood book burnings. There was a real effort to preserve old family records, Bibles, books

and personal correspondence written in German “from the bonfire”. Such strong anti-German sentiment helped contribute to the elimination of German services at Zion at a later time.

On October 28, 1917, Zion celebrated the Quadricentennial of the Reformation. The Ladies had put new carpeting in the church at the cost of \$250, and this was the first service “held on the new carpet”, recalls a daughter of one of the ladies who had worked to raise the funds to finance the project. She remembers her mother telling her there was a difference of opinion over the color of carpet to be purchased, but she doesn’t remember what the two colors were, or which was used. On that Sunday the service was in English and Pastor Brueckner preached on “Loyalty to Lutheran Principle”. The following Sunday a second Reformation Service was conducted in German. A total of \$1,500 was collected, partly at the two services and partly by private subscription. This amount included \$200 from the Solon congregation and was put into a Jubilee Fund.

The final blow to the use of the German language came on May 14, 1918, when Iowa’s Governor W.L. Harding issued another of his War Proclamations called “Language Proclamation”.

To the people of Iowa: Whereas, our country is engaged in war with foreign powers; and Whereas, controversy has arisen in parts of this State concerning the use of foreign languages; Therefore, for the purpose of ending such controversy and to bring about peace, quiet and harmony among our people, attention is directed to the following, and all are requested to govern themselves accordingly.

The official language of the United States and the State of Iowa is the English language. Freedom of speech is guaranteed by federal and state constitutions, but this is not a guarantee of the right to use a language other than the language of this country- the English language.

Harding’s assertion that the United States and the State of Iowa had English as the official language was, in fact, incorrect.

One Zion member recalls being admonished by her parents not to “forget and sing any German songs when you play with other children”. It was explained to her that she must always speak and sing in English “from now on”.

The next quote from the Proclamation sounded the death knell for Zion’s German services and indeed for any classes in German at any age level. This was true of both high schools and the University. It was stated:

Therefore, the following rules should obtain in Iowa during the war.

First. English should and must be the only medium of instruction in public, private, denominational or other similar schools.

Second. Conversation in public places, on trains and over the telephone should be in the English language.

Third. All public addresses should be in the English language.

Fourth. Let those who cannot speak or understand the English language conduct their religious worship in their homes.

Both Irving Weber, I.C. historian, and Charles Mott recall that their German classes “stopped, boom, just like that”.

The “Language Proclamation” was issued May 14, 1918. Zion’s German services and classes were temporarily discontinued. At the Congregational Meeting on June 16, 1918, the attribute “German” was dropped from the church’s original name (The German Zion Lutheran Church of the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession at Iowa City, Iowa), and the name became “Zion Lutheran Church”.

Zion attempted to adopt a “business as usual” attitude during the war years. On March 11, 1916 the congregation gave a surprise party to honor Pastor Brueckner on his fiftieth birthday. In 1916 the church roof was repaired and the church steeple was painted. The money was raised by subscription with the cost amounting to about \$150. In January of 1917 a Junior Choir was organized with a membership of 14.

During the late summer and fall of 1918, Iowa City papers were full of war news. The Iowa City Daily Press printed the Iowa Casualties List daily. Until the end of the war each edition featured a three-inch box framing an American flag in the upper left hand corner just under the day’s headline. When the news began to point toward an Allied victory, the headlines grew larger and became more dramatic with each military advance.

Along with the war news, Zion members read a variety of patriotic urgings that covered everything from contributing money to the war effort to flying the American flag. Advertisements by area stores were all guided by the war fever and featured “Liberty Sales”, flags, pictures of men in uniform and every conceivable gimmick to remind potential customers that patriotism was “the thing”.

A front page story in the Iowa City Daily Press gave the following information:

Yetter’s Department Store, the Big Store, has placed before the store a barrel in which local patriotic people may deposit the stones or pits from peaches, apricot, plum, etc., to be sent on to the “proper place for use in munitions factories. It has been found that the pits and stones...are useful in manufacturing gas, which is needed to give the Germans a taste of their own medicine.”

A member of the congregation recalls her mother urging her and her brothers to eat the pits clean; then her mother carefully washed them and put them in an old box. When the box was fairly full, it was taken “downtown” on the next shopping day and deposited in the barrel in front of Yetter’s.

A few days later a similar page appeared, authored by Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, urging all citizens to buy bonds. A feature story for September 21 (also in the Iowa City Daily Press) informed its readers that the Iowa State Council of National Defense had ruled that the Amish in Johnson County “... must buy Liberty Bonds”. As conscientious objectors they had requested permission to contribute money to the Red Cross and other relief organizations.

As Zion members prayed for peace along with the rest of the world, the headlines grew in size. By October 25th they were three inches high in the Iowa City Daily Press; “RIOT IN BERLIN”, followed by two inch declaration “People Demand Kaiser Abdicate”. The next day, October 26th, two words said it all: “ASKING PEACE”.

The Saturday edition of November 9th went to a four inch headline. “KAISER IS OUT,” and finally on Monday, November 11, 1918, the single word “PEACE”! The “Great War”, the First World War

had ended - but for the entire world, peace had been costly - "What Price Glory?" What price peace? Too much, the world answered, too much, and vows were made that such a terrible disaster should never be allowed to occur on the face of the earth again.

After the sorrow of war, Zion adopted the following motto given to its congregation by the Reverend J.G. Hoerlein: "Nunquam Retrorsum", which translates "Never Backward".

In the spring of 1919 the Sunday School introduced the new Wartburg Hymnal for Church, School and Home. Pastor Brueckner had translated a large number of the hymns used in the new hymnal which was to be used by Zion for its English service. Following the war, German services were partially restored as part of Zion's worship. In 1921, the congregation voted unanimously to hold German services only on the first Sunday of each month. The 1919 Easter Sunday collection was the largest in Zion's history, over \$150, including \$31 from the Solon congregation.

An article printed on the Society Page of The Iowa City Press-Citizen early in January of 1922 tells of the marriage of the Reverend Herman Brueckner and Miss Dorothea Staehling of Waverly. The article also heaped praise upon Brueckner, "Since he came to Iowa City in 1911 he has won the cordial good will and high esteem of his friends and associates, regardless of their church affiliation." It also notes that Brueckner's father, the Reverend H. Brueckner Sr., officiated at his son's ordination, and saw his son become "an active clergyman".

Pastor Brueckner held many offices including:

Vice President of the Southern District
Secretary of the Board of Control of Wartburg College
Chairman of the Southern Iowa Conference
Secretary of the Board of Publication
President of the Inter-Synodical Hymnal Committee

The Ladies Aid paid for the majority of the cost of \$270 to have the parsonage painted in the spring of 1922. In August of the same year Bloomington Street, in front of the church and parsonage, was paved at a cost \$1,000. A total of \$1,300 was raised to cover the expense of the paving by a special envelope collection later in the fall.

On January 14, 1923, the Annual congregational Meeting was held. Zion's Secretary, Chas. W. Gill, reported in the minutes, "The meeting opened with prayer and scripture reading. The following voting members were present: Sievers, Trumpp, Grimm, Musack, Maas, Helm, Wille, and Kutchenreiter". Mr. Gill noted that the committee previously appointed to translate Zion's original German constitution into English consisted of Messrs. Brueckner, Pastor; Gill, Secy.; Grimm, Treas.; Trumpp, Deacon". Article 5 deals with VOTING MEMBERS, stating:

All communicant members who have attained the age of 21 and affixed their names to this constitution shall have the right to vote without limitation.
No member shall, however, be eligible for holding an office unless 25 years of age and has been an active member of the congregation for at least one year.

The following was added to the constitution:

Article 5-B, WOMEN VOTING. NOTE: The matter of extending the right of suffrage to the women of the congregation was earnestly discussed by the committee of revision, and was recommended to the congregation for approval. This right was extended at the regular meeting which was properly called for June 14th 1923 at two o'clock p.m.

Secretary Gill states in the minutes, "In the recognition of the financial assistance always obtained from the ladies organizations of this church, the committee on translation and voting privileges reported in favor of extending this right to the ladies who qualify." Considering the many financial contributions from the Ladies Aid and the Ladies Sewing Circle, plus their untiring efforts in Zion's behalf, the decision was a wise one.

Several ladies at Zion today (1985) reported that the table discussions in more than a few Zion homes centered on this very subject of giving "the vote" to the ladies, and while no actual threats were made, it is remembered that the ladies left their husbands in no doubt as to how the ladies expected them to cast their vote. One lady recalls her mother reminding her father that the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States had given her the right to vote in 1920, and asking him if the men of Zion could do less. Happily the ladies prevailed and it must be assumed that peace permeated the Zion households following the granting of the privilege. It was decided to print copies of the translated constitution for Zion members.

The Congregational Meeting held June 10, 1923, drew a small crowd due to very rainy weather. It was decided that it was too expensive to print copies of the constitution at that time, but hopes were expressed that it would be done at some future date. The paving debt was still a problem. It was decided to "rob Peter to pay Paul". Secretary Gill wrote, "It was decided to borrow \$500 from Mrs. Michel's Gift Fund" to apply to the paving bill. The plan was to then "replace the original \$500" and maintain it as a reserve for "any arising emergency in the congregation".

Pastor Brueckner left Zion in the early summer of 1926. A call was extended to the Reverend Arthur C. Proehl of Cleveland, Ohio. Proehl preached to the Zion congregation for the first time on September 26, 1926. He was installed on October 3rd by his brother, the Reverend Otto L. Proehl, who was then the President of Wartburg College. Robert Ruppert recalls, "Pastor Proehl came in his Model T and served 32 years. He might have not come if he had known a card party was held above one of the member's garage to raise enough money to get him here."

Pastor and Mrs. Proehl, the former Margaret Kuhlmann, had been married at the Limestone Lutheran Church in Peoria, Illinois on June 29, 1921, five years before they came to Zion. Both were the children of pastors, and their fathers, the Reverend H.J. Kuhlmann and the Reverend C.W. Proehl, officiated at their wedding ceremony.

The Zion congregation watched the Proehl family grow to seven. Listed in the order of their births were: Arthur, Margaret (named after Mrs. Proehl), Otto (named after Proehl's brother), Gertrude (Trudi to most), Ruth, Marie and Carla, the "baby". Those of us privileged to know the Proehls can attest to their unity in their love and service to God and their deep devotion to one another.

Just two weeks into his ministry, on October 17, 1936, Proehl was present when it was voted to discontinue the German service and to conduct all regular services in the English language. At the

same meeting, he was given permission to introduce the Singing Liturgy “to further beautify the church service”. He also asked to make other changes, including one involving the annual Christmas Program. It was agreed, according to the minutes, “... to grant the desire of the Pastor to use a Pageant to create a change in the regular Christmas Programme”. Pastor Proehl was “off and running” and all for a salary of \$1500 per year.

The Ladies Aid installed new carpet in the church for \$600 in 1928. Improvements at a cost of \$1400 were completed including a new entrance to the church basement, painting and repairs. The income in 1928 was \$3800.

At the Congregational Meeting on Jan. 13, 1929, the congregation voted unanimously to adopt the Common Service Book, published by the United Lutheran Church, as the official hymnal. Repairs to the parsonage amounted to \$700 and were approved. In Zion minutes for that meeting, A.R. Drew, Secretary, wrote:

Inasmuch as the envelope system has proven its worth by showing a marked increase in the amount available, the Pastor will be paid a salary of \$1800 per annum . . . that the congregation take recognition of the faithful and laudable services of our organist by raising her salary and to fix it at \$200 per annum.

The organist at that time was Mrs. Charles (Nettie) Gill. Quoting Mr. Drews again:

The Board recommended that the congregation, in accordance with other Lutheran congregations and especially those of synod, observe in fitting manner the 400th Anniversary of the appearance of Luther’s Catechism, and the 75th anniversary of the founding of our synod, both of which occur this year, and that your Board be authorized to devise ways and means of observing these anniversaries.

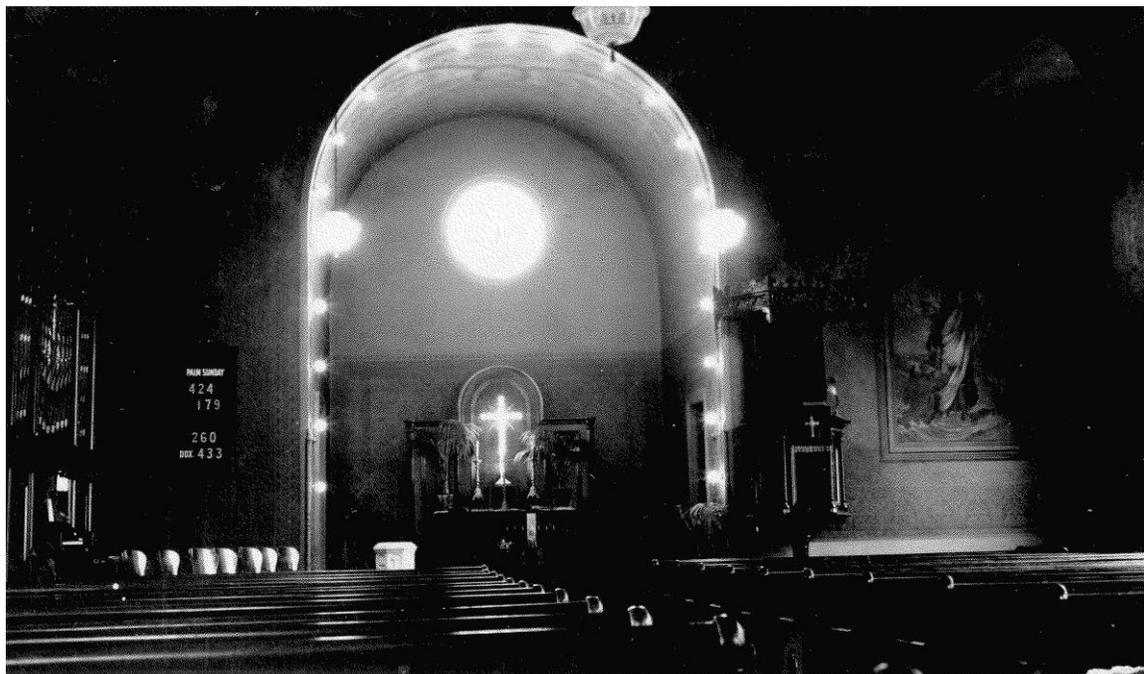
Secretary Drews also recorded the minutes of the 1930 Congregational meeting held January 26th, in which he noted:

Mr. Charles Gill called attention to the seemingly unnecessary length of time the congregation is required to stand during the liturgical service preceding the main hymn, and asked for a discussion of the matter. This was done at some length, the Pastor explaining that according to liturgical usage it would not be incorrect for the congregation to be seated during a portion of the liturgy. What discussion followed seemed to indicate that those present at the meeting did not approve of any change, and the matter was dropped.

At the Congregational Meeting on January 31, 1931, the Zion members discussed the world situation. The Depression and the world-wide economic crisis had begun in 1929 with the stock market “crash”. The Nazis had registered significant gains in German elections. Many believed that “war clouds were again gathering”. The congregation voted to donate the library of 60 German books to Wartburg College.

Mr. Charles Gill persevered, and at the January 13, 1932 Congregational Meeting his persistence was rewarded. “The congregation voted in the affirmative that members will remain seated during the reading of the Epistle and Gospel lessons in the Sunday morning service.” Zion did not have kneeling benches, so when it was time to kneel for confession and the Prayers before Communion,

the congregation would turn, backs to the altar and the pastor, kneel on the floor with hands folded in prayer and resting on the pews, and prepare for the coming Meal. The congregation then rose, faced front again, and the Communion Service continued. It brought a feeling of great relief when the congregation discontinued this practice.



Zion's Nave and Chancel in 1933

Evidence of financial problems among Zion's members was apparent in an announcement made at the Annual Meeting on January 18, 1933: "The balance on hand January 1, 1933, was \$12.45". It was noted at that meeting "two years hence" would occur Zion's Diamond Jubilee, and that a 75th Anniversary Fund should be established.

At the semiannual Meeting July 9, 1933, "The balance on hand was up to \$20.82" which drew applause from those present. Pastor Proehl announced that "a competent choir director" was available for \$200 a year. He stated half the amount was available and received permission to attempt to raise the remaining amount by subscription of the members.

By January 17, 1934, the balance in the treasury was up by seven cents to \$20.89, with a deficit of \$475. The congregation voted to have quarterly meetings with Potluck Suppers, chiefly to receive financial reports. The Board was asked to appoint an Emergency Committee of three members to work on the financial problems. At that meeting, it was voted reluctantly to reduce the salary of the organist by half to \$100 per year. In a note to the Board dated February 24, 1934, Mrs. Charles (Nettie) Gill wrote "I graciously accept the 50% reduction in salary tendered me by the Board."

At a Potluck Quarterly Meeting on April 12, 1934, Proehl asked that his salary be reconsidered and possibly reduced by the congregation and withdrew from the meeting. By closed ballot, the vote was unanimous to honor the Pastor's salary.

At the September Board meeting, Miss Laura Benner (Mrs. Glenn Means) was authorized to purchase a reed organ "that she has in view, the price not to exceed \$10". Miss Margaret Schrock (Mrs. Margie Alton Herr) was appointed assistant organist. It was decided to accept a Mr. Hall's offer

to direct the choir for “the experience”. The October, 1934, Board Minutes express thanks to “Laura Benner for her donation of the very fine organ, which will be a great benefit to our choir, and all”.

Meetings, committee gatherings and Sunday School classes were held in the Proehl home, Zion’s parsonage. One has to marvel at the way the Proehls continually opened their home for church activities. One of the few times a Board Meeting was not held in the pastor’s study was one scheduled for January 8, 1935. It was held at the home of Miss Louise Munkhoff two nights later, as recorded by Secretary Clarence Ruppert. “Due to illness in the pastor’s family, and the church basement being used by the Ladies Sewing Circle, the regular monthly meeting of the Board was held at Miss Munkhoff’s home.”

The “Winter of ‘35” was severe. In the words of Secretary Ruppert:

Due to a covering of ice that made transportation nigh impossible, the Annual Meeting announced for January 16th was postponed till January 23rd. The meeting was held in the church basement with 23 members in attendance. The evening was extremely cold and doubtless was the cause for the poor attendance.

Pastor Proehl made several proposals concerning the Diamond Jubilee which were adopted:

- 1.) That we re-express our determination to observe the 75th Anniversary in a new way that bespeaks our gratitude to God and to our forefathers for the bountiful goodness to which we have fallen heir.
- 2.) That we set the time for this observance to the early part of October next:
- 3.) That a committee consisting of 5 members be appointed by a chair to propose definite plans for the Jubilee. . . and carry out such resolutions pertaining to our Anniversary Observance as the congregation may adopt:
- 4.) That we come before God with some tangible evidence of our gratitude for 75 years of blessings, however such an expression involves self sacrifice and self denial.

At the Annual Meeting on that cold night it was announced that as of January 1, 1935, the balance on hand was \$1 even.

The Diamond Jubilee was held on Sunday, September 15, 1935. The September 14th (Saturday) *Iowa City Press Citizen* devoted over half a page to the event. Pictures of Zion, Pastors, and the 1910 Zion Choir were included.

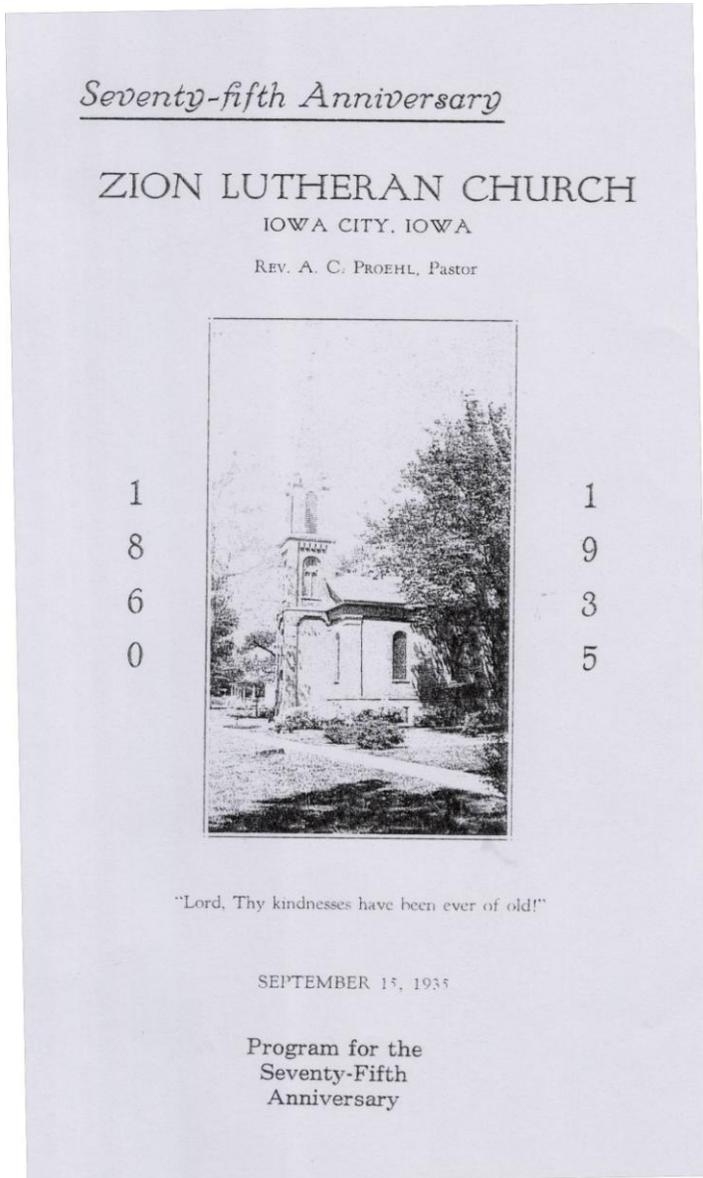
The article cites details of Zion’s history and pastors. One paragraph deals with special projects that had been completed for the 75th Anniversary:

In addition to marking the 75th Anniversary, tomorrow will witness the opening of the church following a complete redecoration in the last few weeks. The auditorium and basement have been redecorated throughout, and the organ has been recessed in order to enlarge the auditorium. Oak flooring has been placed, and the pews and furniture refinished. A new heating system has been installed. . . new light fixtures will be installed in the basement. . .

The improvements were financed by the congregation and totaled over \$1,000. Mrs. Marie Sievers loaned the money for the new floor for five years without interest. The new furnace from Schuppert

and Koudelka cost \$214. The bid to recess the organ, refinish the pews and redecorate the church was \$538. Contemporary musicians state that if the organ had not been recessed we might still have the 1885 Moline organ which was purchased about the same time as the Moline organ still at St. Mary's. The work was done, but the funds collected were not enough. The decision was made to put all the loose change from the Jubilee Service into the plate collection fund, with the remainder of the collection to be applied to the Jubilee Fund. The financing in those "hard times" was very difficult, but the congregation was determined to ". . .make the church as beautiful and comfortable as possible in praise to the Lord."

The bulletin for the day was a cream color with brown ink for the printing.



The organ prelude for the morning service was played by the Reverend F. Schoenbohm of Clinton. The Anniversary Sermon was given by former pastor, H. Brueckner of Hebron, Nebraska, who had returned to Iowa City to celebrate with Zion. The Ladies Aid and The Sewing Circle provided beverages and helped with a noon "Basket Dinner", which was attended by over 400 members and guests.

The afternoon program was a "SACRED ORGAN CONCERT" according to the bulletin. The Reverend F. Schoenbohm was the guest organist. Pastor Proehl gave "The History of Zion" and the Ladies Aid served refreshments following the concert. The "CONFIRMANTS' REUNION SERVICE" was held that evening at 7:30 p.m. The bulletin states "Those confirmed at Zion's altar will gather in the basement to form line march".

**Zion's Oldest Member Here
Is Mrs. Fred Ruppert at 88**



Mrs. Fred Ruppert, 88, of 421 East Davenport street, is the oldest member of the Zion Lutheran church of Iowa City, records of the church reveal.

She was confirmed in the first class of Zion in 1860 before the completion of the structure. The ceremony was held in the old Third ward school where services were conducted prior to the completion of the structure.

Mrs. Ruppert is planning to be present tomorrow at the 75th anniversary services to take part in the observance. She is in good health and is active.

**Delinquent Paving
And Sewer Bonds In
City Are Refunded**

Last block of the city's five per cent delinquent special assessment paving and sewer bonds were refunded by the city council Friday night. The \$120,500 issue to the Carleton D. Beh Co. included about \$53,000 at 3½ per cent and about \$62,000 at 3 per cent.

**Fall Meeting of
C. E. at Washington**

MRS. FRED RUPPERT

Included in the *Press Citizen* coverage was a picture of Mrs. Fred Ruppert, who was 88 at the time and the oldest member of Zion. She was confirmed in the first class of Zion in 1860 before the completion of the church. Her confirmation ceremony was held in the old Third Ward School where services were conducted until the structure was completed.

The following day the Confirmation Class of 1935 presented her with a bouquet.

The Sunday edition of the *Daily Iowan* printed on September 15, 1935, (at a cost of "FIVE CENTS") features a picture on page 12 of Pastor Proehl and our previous pastor, Brueckner, who had returned for the seventy-fifth anniversary observance. An article accompanied the photograph outlining plans for the celebration and gave some of Zion's history.

Zion Lutheran Church Here

PLAN SERVICES DURING DAY TO MARK JUBILEE

Rev. Brueckner, Former Pastor, Will Preach Sermon at Worship In Morning

Members of the congregation of the Zion Lutheran church tomorrow will observe a jubilee program, marking the 75th anniversary of the construction of the church edifice. Special services will be held throughout the day as the Rev. A. C. Proehl and his congregation celebrate the work of their pioneer forefathers.

The anniversary service will be held at 10:30 o'clock, with the Rev. Prof. H. Brueckner of Hebron, Neb., a former pastor, delivering the sermon. At noon a basket dinner will be held on the church lawn. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock, the Rev. F. Schoenbohm of Clinton will present a sacred organ concert. Confirmation classes will meet at the church at 7 o'clock, and the confirmand's reunion service will be held at 7:30 o'clock, with the Rev. S. Altpeter of Peoria, Ill., delivering the sermon.

Started in 1860

The origin of the church dates back to 1856 when the early German and English settlers of this community formed a Lutheran congregation. It was not until February, 1860, that construction on a church building was started, with the congregation holding Christmas services in the basement of the new structure. The work of those pioneers still stands as the auditorium portion of the present structure.

In addition to marking the 75th anniversary, tomorrow will witness the opening of the church following a complete redecoration in the last few weeks. The auditorium and basement have been redecorated throughout, and the organ has been recessed in order to enlarge the auditorium. Oak flooring has been placed, and the pews and furniture refinished. A new heating system has been installed, as well as air-conditioning facilities. New lighting fixtures will be installed in the basement.

Complete Program

Complete programs for the day follow:

Jubilee Sunday Program

10:30 a. m.—Anniversary Service:
Prelude—The Rev. F. Schoenbohm. Mus. M.
Hymn
The Liturgical Service
Anthem, "Praise ye the Father"

Pastor



REV. A. C. PROEHL

The Rev. A. C. Proehl is the present pastor of the Zion Lutheran church of Iowa City, having served here since 1926. He has directed the arrangements for three quarters of a century observance tomorrow.

Takes Part



REV. H. BRUECKNER

The Rev. H. Brueckner, of Hebron, Neb., pastor of the Zion Lutheran church of Iowa City from 1911 to 1926, is returning to participate tomorrow in the 75th anniversary services of the local congregation. He will preach an anniversary sermon at the 10:30 o'clock service Sunday morning on "The Perennial Presence of Jesus."

RECALL EARLY DAYS OF ZION CONGREGATION

Small Group Immigrants From Germany Started Construction Of Local Church

Seventy-five years ago, in 1860, a small group of Lutherans, immigrants from Germany, began the construction of what today constitutes the first unit of Zion Lutheran church of Iowa City. Being artisans, and due to their very limited means, they did most of the work themselves. They felled trees and prepared the necessary beams, hewed rocks and cooked lime, and supplied the labor. It is this event that the congregation is observing tomorrow with special services.

In reality the history of Zion Lutheran church dates back to the year 1856. After the English and German elements had jointly purchased a lot and resolved to establish a congregation, difficulties arose resulting in a separation of the two factions. In 1857 the "First German Evangelical Lutheran church of Iowa City" was incorporated under the pastorate of the Rev. Josias Ritter, who unfortunately left the field after a brief stay.

First Members

The articles of incorporation were witnessed by the following signatures: Josias Ritter, pastor, Michael Protz, George Fictor, Johann Euler, F. Blume, Michael Immel, Adam Mickel, Leonard Trumpp, Henry Behrens. The articles were filed before Malcom Murray, a justice of the peace, on the 21st day of December, 1857.

The church records reveal that the Rev. Mr. Ritter baptized 42 children in 18 months, married 11 couples and buried 12 persons. The first baptism was that of Elizabeth Friedericke Oestreicher on August 24, 1856. The first couple married was Wilhelm Buck and Barbara Baer on November 12, 1856, and the first burial was that of Dora Kuehner on September 18, 1856.

Re-Organize Church

Unable for a time to obtain a successor to the Rev. Mr. Ritter, the church work suffered and the congregation dissolved. In 1859 the Rev. A. Selle of Rock Island, Ill., re-organized the church and conducted services fortnightly. The re-organization was effected on April 10, 1859, under the name of

The Reverend S. Altpeter of Peoria, Illinois, preached the sermon. The closing hymn was “Grant Us Thy Peace.” The quote on the cover of the Jubilee was printed beneath a picture of Jesus:

Jesus, with Thy church abide,
Be her Savior, Lord, and Guide,
While on earth her faith is tried.
We beseech Thee, hear us.



Zion's 75th Anniversary Participants

On Monday, September 16, 1935, the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* printed an article on page two titled “Many Attend 75th Zion Anniversary – Auditorium Packed At Zion Lutheran.” The article listed the highlights of the jubilee celebration. On page one of the same edition, an article appeared headlined “Hitler Takes Drastic Move Against Jews.” The Associated Press reported from Nurnberg:

The Reichstag of Adolf Hitler today relegated Jews in the Germany of the future to their position during the middle ages. They may not become citizens, intermarry with Aryans, have intimate relations with gentiles nor even employ Arian servant girls under 45 years of age. On Sunday, the third reich of the future, by unanimous decision of the 600 Hitler followers who make up the Reichstag, passed a law entitled ‘protection of blood and honor’. It provided that marriages contracted abroad were declared void.

Two gatherings of people held at the same time in two different parts of the world, both groups speaking of God, both groups with participants of German heritage – no one could have known what future effect the one gathering would have on the other, indeed upon the entire world. The Board of Zion met on March 10, 1936. Still basking in the success of the Zion Jubilee Celebration, it was then time to pay the bills. The Trustees were authorized to “...make a loan in the amount of \$418 to pay

the bill for redecorating the church owed to Stillwell's Paint Store". The Treasurer was authorized to transfer the \$.96 in the Jubilee Fund and add it to the borrowed \$418 to cover the total Stillwell bill of \$418.96.

In April of 1936, Mrs. Charles Gill retired as Zion's organist. She was still salaried at \$100 per year. It was decided to hire the Reverend Holm (position in Iowa City unknown) to fill the vacancy at the same salary, his duties to begin April 1, 1936.

At the same time Mr. Bartles, the choir director, submitted a bill for \$22; \$10 of the amount having already been paid. It had been agreed to pay him \$2 per Sunday. The bill included charges for rehearsal time, which was not part of the original agreement. It was moved and passed to "add \$6 to the pot" but not to pay the additional \$12 requested.

In July of 1936 Proehl was allowed the purchase of "...a piece of lumber 6" X 6" for use as a support post" to shore up a sagging beam in the basement of the Parsonage. The above was one of many instances when the Proehls put up with less than perfect living conditions for the sake of Zion Lutheran Church.

That summer the Ladies Aid financed the papering of three rooms at the parsonage and the hallway. They also paid for the woodwork to be painted. The jobs had needed doing for some time, but Reverend Proehl had refused, citing the needs of Zion as "more important".

At the November Board Meeting in 1939 Mrs. Proehl, who had been serving as temporary organist, was named Zion's permanent organist. At the meeting that night, Reverend Proehl mentioned that Zion owed a debt of \$500 to the American Lutheran Church. The Secretary, Mrs. Sievers, wrote "A motion was made we do not think this is the right time to take part in the drive. However, this matter will be discussed at a later date."

The "later date" came nearly a year later, in September of 1940, when a letter arrived from L. L. Belk, Chairman of the Committee on Stewardship and Finance, Iowa District:

Dear Members of the Board:

Where would we turn for consolation and peace in these hectic days if it were not for the presence of the Church of Christ? The value of the church cannot be estimated in dollars and cents for she is a spiritual agency. And yet it is dollars and cents that help to maintain God's institution in our midst.

You and your congregation are members of the American Lutheran Church. I do not wish to speak of the unhappy synodical relationships of the past. No one is happy because of them. Today we must think only of the Church of tomorrow and our allegiance to it.

The records show that your congregation has made no remittance for the District dues since the year 1936, or a total amount owed in dues of \$126.20 (The previous figure owed was \$500, so the debt was evidently not mentioned, just the arrears in yearly dues Zion had evidently chose not to pay. – Author Mott's note.) Knowing the circumstances and realizing your past expenditure for the property improvement, we make you this proposition: Pay one half of the dues owed, \$63.10, and then

consider yourselves paid in full and of good standing. We want you to be of good standing with the Church and know your Pastor does too.

There was no written signature, just the typed closing with Mr. Belk's name. In October the Board voted to call a special meeting of the congregation on Sunday, October 13th, and "...the letter was placed on file". At the next Congregational Meeting the following January (January 16, 1941), Pastor Proehl reported, "I am happy to report that the matter of the District Dues has been adjusted to mutual satisfaction. An offer from the Financial Committee of the District to settle the differences which had arisen...was accepted". He mentioned next that at their last convention the District had appropriated \$100 toward the congregation "...for this year as a token of good will and in appreciation for the use of Zion's basement by the Iowa City Lutheran Student Association". His final wry comment was, "Naturally, we at Zion are appreciative of the assistance given".

As a sign of the times and the fighting in Europe, a vote in October of 1941 ruled that the American flag was to be placed permanently in the church. Pastor Proehl's remarks in his report to the congregation on January 15, 1942 are eloquent and deserve mention:

The days through which we are passing are truly evil. It is easy to discern that what lies ahead will put us to a rigorous test. Let us not lose confidence in God's care and protection. He will not forsake us nor His Church. Let us only remember 'it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful'. May we not be found wanting!

It was in 1942 that Proehl was given "...blanket authority for purchasing service books for our boys". Proehl's Annual Report dated January 14, 1943 stated, "I cannot refrain in referring to the impact which war conditions have had and will have on our congregation. Thus far 34 of our young people have been called to our Nation's colors." In 1943, fifteen more were called to serve.

Proehl credited the Ladies Aid with sending Christmas packages to Zion's servicemen and "...implore that they be remembered in prayers and written to as often as you are able". In 1944 Proehl wrote of World War II:

To what extent we all be caught in this maelstrom of world-wide catastrophe, only our God knows, but this we know, and therein we shall seek refuge: God's promises stand forever; He will not leave nor forsake us.

Financing was a continuing problem and Proehl announced that War Bonds of \$25, \$50, or \$100 could be given to Zion if they were properly registered to Zion Lutheran Church of Iowa City, which was a corporation and therefore eligible.

On October 1, 1944, the Ladies Aid celebrated its 75th Anniversary. Officers were:

President, Mrs. Emmy Schrock
Vice-President, Mrs. Elsa Dohrer
Secretary, Mrs. Mary Sorensen
Treasurer, Mrs. Emma Schuppert

Six hymns were sung by the members during the program and Miss Melba Sands sang a solo, "To My Mother". Pastor Proehl gave the address to the ladies, "Women's Service to Her Lord". The history of the Ladies Aid was reviewed by ten members of the Ladies Aid. Refreshments followed the program during which time the members shared memories and, we're told, "many a chuckle".

The years of World War II were difficult for Zion, as they were for churches everywhere. Money, always a major problem, was scarce for “the duration”. Salaries were frozen and repairs had to be postponed. Only the necessary supplies were ordered, and there were shortages the congregation learned to work around. The feelings against those of German descent that marked World War I were absent locally. Many Zion members still had families in Germany and prayers were said for their safety, as well as for all Americans in service, and for peace. When the German armies surrendered on May 8, 1945, V-E Day, all gave thanks, but there was no great rejoicing, no spontaneous celebration. The war was not over – Japan fought on.

The following headline was bannered on the front page of the *Press-Citizen* on August 15, 1945:

“Iowa Citizens Let Down Their Hair in Celebration.”

The sub-headline read, “Business Area Jammed Full Over 3 Hours.” Japan had surrendered on Tuesday, August 14, 1945, V-J Day. The fire siren and the bell from City Hall sounded non-stop. Then one by one, all the church bells in Iowa City began to ring, Zion’s among them. Then car horns began to honk as a spontaneous celebration began. Cheering and yelling could be heard along with noise makers of all sorts. The nearer one got to the intersection Dubuque and Washington Streets, the center of the demonstration, the more one was deafened by the uproar. Streamers and confetti and rolls of toilet tissue filled the air. High school and college students with instruments joined in to form impromptu bands. They played every patriotic song they knew, and everyone sang along with them. Strangers hugged and kissed and flags of all sizes were waved. Cars were decorated with flags and streamers, and chain and tin cans were tied to bumpers. Cars were bumper to bumper until well after 10 p.m. It was a warm summer night, but no one noticed the heat. Late in the evening a lone trumpet took advantage of a lull in the tumult to play “The Star Spangled Banner.” There was such a unity among all present, and very few dry eyes by the close of our National Anthem.