

# Church History

The earliest mention of Lutheran services in Merced was in **1903**, when the Rev. A. Hansen of Newman, held services for a few people before he accepted a call to Pasadena.

In **1923**, Pastor William O. Grunow of Livingston, held German services at the Episcopal Church every other Sunday afternoon. When Rev. Grunow moved away, services were discontinued. The Rev. H. J. von Renner of Oakdale and Newman, also served the Merced group in the early 1920's. A constitution was written and officers were elected in 1923 or 1924, but these records were subsequently lost.

The Rev. Richard J. Jagels, resident pastor in Livingston, held services in Merced every other week in various churches and buildings in 1926 and in 1934. In 1932, Candidate Bertwin von Renner, son of the Rev. H. J. von Renner was engaged by the District Mission Board to serve the Merced areas.

Over the past eighty-three years, our St. Paul's family has been served by Pastors who shared their unique talents, helping to develop the gifts within the congregation. Their combined efforts have been a channel for God's Holy Spirit to shape a people who are involved in the Christ-centered ministry.

**February 18, 1940** - St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church of Merced was organized at the home of Vi Clark's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gustav H. Polzine.

**February 21, 1940** - At the home of Thelma Heil, the LWML was organized.

**December 1941** - A building site was purchased for \$700.

**December 22, 1941** - The congregation was incorporated. The first resident pastor was Rev. Edwin Fritze, who was installed on May 3, 1942. He left Merced in August 1943 to accept a teaching position at a Lutheran High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**January 1942** - The congregation applied for membership in Evangelical Lutheran Synod, of Missouri, Ohio, and other states.

**May 3, 1942** - Rev. Edwin Fritze was installed as pastor, Rev. Brohm of Grace Lutheran in Modesto preached the installation sermon.

**July 4, 1942** - The congregation purchased a parsonage at 51 Union Ave.

**May 1944** - The Rev. George W. Hoffmann became pastor. During his ministry, sites for a parsonage and church were acquired and construction was begun on a parish hall, with much of the work being done by members of the congregation. Pastor Hoffmann served St. Paul's until June, 1953.

**March 20, 1949** - Groundbreaking for parish hall at 851 W. 21st Street.

**October 2, 1949** - The sanctuary was dedicated as a multi-purpose building to be used for worship and as a parish hall.

**August 16, 1953** - Rev. E.A. Wessel was installed as pastor and he served until March 1964. during this time the parish hall was remodeled to provide more space for a growing congregation.

The Rev. H. J. Von Renner, who served the Lutheran families in the Merced area during the 1920's again returned to serve as interim pastor from March to August, 1964.

**August 23, 1964** - The Rev. James Profitt was installed as pastor. Beginning in April, 1964, the parish hall was remodeled into a sanctuary and an additional parish hall and kitchen was constructed and dedicated in October, 1964.

During these years the lay leadership was highly motivated by God's Spirit and experienced tremendous growth in their stewardship. Giving to missions increased from zero to \$9,000. The congregation experienced physical growth as the Sunday School, youth group, and circuit youth events were re-activated. In **February, 1970**, Pastor Profitt accepted a call to serve the congregation at Susanville, California.



# *Church History*

**February 26, 1970** - Rev. John Marozik was installed and served the congregation until his retirement in May, 1977. During his ministry, the congregation entered into the "Bethel Bible Series," established a weekday school, initiated early communion for the youth, and increased the celebration of Holy Communion to twice a month. Following Rev. Marozik's retirement, the congregation again remodeled the sanctuary on 23rd Street.

**February 26, 1978** - Rev. Clarence Eisberg was installed. During **1979** and **1980**, the hall at 23rd Street was redecorated. Redecorating the youth room, the "old kitchen," and the kitchen area in the parish hall took place in 1981. The Church Council held a Planning Retreat in 1984 to set both short and long term goals.

**September 9, 1984** - Stained glass windows were installed and dedicated. The congregation began to strengthen its music ministry and reach out to the community.

**October 30, 1984** - St. Paul's voted to purchase six acres on McKee Road from D.A. Marchini.

**June 8, 1986** - The congregation approved the master site plan. A new building committee was established under the chairmanship of John Wallace. "Today's Labor - Tomorrow's Harvest" was chosen as the theme for the Pledge Drive.

**September 14, 1986** - The congregation voted to sell the property at 851 W. 23rd St., to the County of Merced. It became a center for senior citizens.

**October 19, 1986** - Dedication of the Pledge Drive with worship services held outdoors on the McKee property. Theme: "Today's Labor, Tomorrow's Harvest."

**December 14, 1986** - Pledge Banquet

**February 8, 1987** - The congregation votes to hire Denominational Building Service (DBS) to be the construction managers for our project from design to opening of the doors.

**February 24, 1987** - Merced County Board of Supervisors vote to approve the recommendation to purchase the present church building and property at 851 W. 23rd St. for \$230,000, plus other expenses up to \$8,000.

**May 3, 1987** - DBS and the Building Committee presented their final floor plan, colored renderings and budget through a slide presentation.

**May 5, 1987** - The voter's approved the floor plan, the elevation and the budget up to \$800,000.

**August 30, 1987** - The congregation broke ground for the new church, parish hall, classrooms, and offices on McKee Road.

**May 1988** - The congregation began worship services in the new facility. The first baptism in the new facility was Ashley Livesay in the parish hall, and Daniel Petzold in the new sanctuary.

**June 12, 1988** - The church, parish hall, and classrooms were dedicated.

**October 1988** - The church began a preschool and day care ministry with Carol Juneman serving as director.

**August 1989** - The congregation received its first Vicar, Kou Seying. Following his vicarage year, the congregation called Paul Larsen to be the Director of Christian Education and Youth. Paul was installed in August, 1990, the same month that the school called a new Director, Joan Swanson.

**August 1991** - The first Kindergarten class was established under the direction of Joan Swanson, who also taught this class.

**April 1992** - Rodney Johnson was called by the congregation to serve as Minister of Assimilation, Spiritual Care, and Education, filling the staff position left open when Paul Larsen returned to graduate school.

**May 17, 1992** - Dedication of the new pipe organ.



# *Church History and Growth*

**August 20, 1995** - The dedication of the new Lutheran School. Sanna Klipfel accepted the “call” to serve as the Lutheran School Principal. Tammie Meyer became the director of the pre-school and daycare program. The school served grades K-3.

**August 1996** - The Lutheran School expanded to serve students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. The school has expanded to include 6th grade as of the **2006-2007** school year.

**June 7, 1998** - The congregation welcomes into membership 95 HMong Adult and children by baptism, and 44 adults by confirmation. Rev. Nou Vang Thao and Philip Koua Thao were commissioned by Dr. Walter Tietjen, President of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

**June 1998** - Several Council members attended the Saddleback Seminar in southern California and were excited about the possibilities for St. Paul. Dave Lundin named Director of Youth on a part-time basis.

**October 1999** - Pastor Eisberg took a medical leave for health reasons.

**January 2000** - Interim Pastor Chuck Brehmer installed while Pastor Eisberg was on medical leave.

**June 2000** - First VBS in City Parks initiated at McNamara Park. Three churches participated: Gateway, Yosemite, and St. Paul.

**June 2001** - Second VBS in city Parks. Three parks and eight churches participated.

**October 2001** - Pastor Eisberg resigned after 22 years of faithful service to the Lord and His people at St. Paul.

**January 2002** - Interim Pastor Peter Alexander accepted the call to St. Paul. Cottage meetings were held with good attendance to discuss goals and the future of St. Paul congregation.

**June 2002** - Third VBS in City Parks. Eight churches and three parks participated. Yosemite Church donated a modular building to St. Paul.

**January 2003** - Revision of Constitution and Bylaws studied by the Council.

**April 2003** - Pastor Alexander completed his interim service. Dedication of modular building called, “Outreach Ministry Center.”

**May 2003** - Revised Constitution and Bylaws accepted by Voters.

**September 14, 2003** - Pastor Jonathan Lange installed.

**May 2004** - Policy Governance accepted by Voters. Ends Statements adopted.

**June 2004** - DCE student Sina Williams is consecrated for service as an intern.

**September 2004** - Call issued and accepted by Pastor Kou Seying for HMong church part in the Central Valley.

**October 31, 2004** - Pastor Kou Seying’s installation at St. Paul.

**January 2005** - Deacon Vang Thao resigned after more than six years of service among the HMong members of St. Paul.

**September 2005** - Modular building approved for occupancy.

**September 2006** - St. Paul school enrollment at an all-time high of 126 students.

**July 2006** - Voters approve the motion to enter escrow on 6.8 acres adjacent and to partner with PathWay Lutheran Ministries for spiritual growth and stewardship renewal.

