

Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

of

***The American Lutheran
Immanuel Parish***



SUNDAY, JUNE 5, 1955

Kaylor, South Dakota

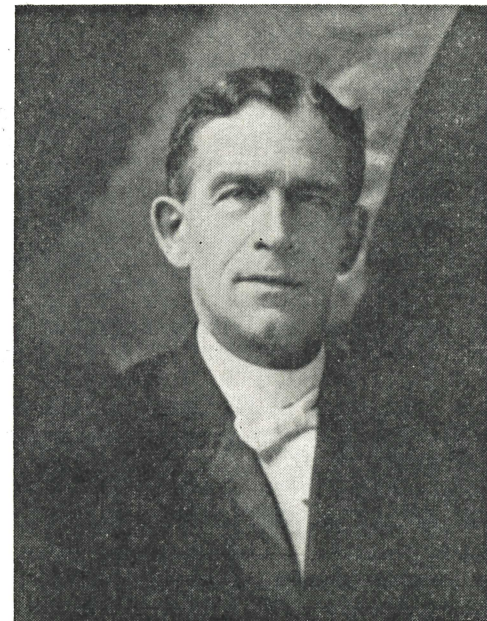
Part I

INTRODUCTION

This year the American Lutheran Church is celebrating the 25th anniversary. It is indeed a coincidence that the Immanuel's parish is also celebrating their 75th anniversary. This parish is the second-oldest American Lutheran Parish in South Dakota, the oldest one being Odessa, about twenty miles northwest of Yankton.

This pamphlet has been written for this occasion, that is for the celebration in Kaylor, on Sunday, June 5, 1955. The main part of the history is a talk, found in the archives of the Dennewitz Lutheran Church. This talk was given by Pastor August Bischoff, the founder of the parish. This talk has been translated into English, and is to serve the purpose of giving the history of the parish for the first 25 years. It was delivered in connection with the 25th anniversary, which was celebrated in the Kulm congregation in 1905.

The third part is a summarized history of the main developments in the parish.



REV. A. BISCHOFF
(Served Parish 1880-1896)

Part II

TALK BY PASTOR AUGUST BISCHOFF

(Delivered in 1905)

As I am about to tell you some of your history, particularly as it concerns Russia, I am mindful of the younger generation, most of whom were born or raised in this country, and know very little first-hand about Russia. Then too, the time is fast approaching when the number of those from Russia is becoming smaller and smaller; but I am sure they will also be pleased to once again hear of the days in Russia.

You, or your fathers, as the case may be, came to America from South Russia, more specifically, from the areas of the Black Sea, that is the provinces of Dinister, Bessarabia, Cherson, Crimea, and Jakatarislaw. Although a few came from the Caucasus, Rumania, and even Palestine, their number is so insignificant that this need not concern us.

Even though you were born, lived, and came from South Russia, you were neither Russians, nor pretended to be; rather you were German brothers who maintained your German customs and language for nearly a hundred years in Russia.

Why did your fathers come to Russia? Let's briefly recall the history of the period. The vast expanse of the steppes adjacent to the Black Sea was sparsely populated up to the nineteenth century. The Russian rulers, not knowing what to do with this land mass, meted it out to Generals and State Officials. This was similar to what happened in Germany much earlier. Alexander I terminated this, and got the idea of populating this area with Germans. Such a colonization could serve two useful purposes: one, the land would be brought under cultivation; two, it was to be an aid in educating the Russian people. This means that the German villages were to be models. The German governments of Prussia, Bavaria, and above all Wuerttemberg consented to allow the advertisement of this migration. The Russians, in order to tempt the Germans, consented to some sweeping concessions. These included a land grant of 60 Desjetin (150 acres) for every family, exemption from military service, ten years of exemption from taxation, further aid from the Russian government in the form of implements, and others. This lured many Germans who were disinherited and who could take most of their property in one wagon.

Some of the people came from Northern Germany (Pommeria, Brandenburg, West and East Prussia), and were detained for some years in Poland before going to South Russia. Since they lived among some Poles called "Kassuben," they were so nicknamed by their fellow Germans. The name remains even today, and in Russia some governmental circles call the Bessarabians, "Kassuben."

The first years in Russia were hard. The Russian Government may have had good intentions in helping the settlers, but most of the aid was squandered by the intermediary officials. Then too, the pioneer conditions took the lives of many. Thus, in the year 1827 and 1828, the Russian army passed through the regions, and the Germans were faced with the problem of finding food and shelter for them. There were many crop failures, as in the years 1822, 1823, 1824, 1830, 1832, 1834, and 1839. Many years the grasshoppers did extensive damage, as in 1823 to 1827, 1836, 1841, and 1858-60. Likewise, in 1828-29, all the fruit trees were destroyed by frost, while in 1828, 1829, 1834, 1847, 1859, and 1860, many of the cattle were killed by a pestilence called "Rinderpest." Finally, the cholera disease broke out in three villages in 1829, and for three years the disease spread to all the villages, taking the lives of many.

From this list of misfortunes it may seem that the colonization was a failure, but despite all there was considerable progress and many settlers even became rich. Then too, because the settlers had such large families, the population grew so that new colonies had to be established. Statistics give us an idea of the rapidity of this growth, thus between 1840 and 1900 the population grew from 130,000 to over 600,000.

But what concerns us today is not these worldly circumstances, such as the growth of the colonies, but rather their religious and spiritual conditions. This doubly so since their religious development is a most interesting chapter. The first twenty-five years were not too favorable for spiritual growth, although the Russian government was supposed to provide for the religious needs of the settlers. Some pastors were sent and services conducted in school houses, houses of prayer, and primitive churches. But this was most inadequate as for some time there were so few pastors that one had to serve up to ten villages. Then too, it was most difficult to find faithful pastors, for at this time, the church was under the influence of rationalism, that is, the age of reason. These rationalists believed only what they could understand, an idea which chilled the churchly and spiritual life. Thus even though there had been twenty times more pastors, the result would have been spiritual degeneration had not our gracious God pitied the Germans in South Russia.

But God was merciful to your fathers, and this in a very strange way. In the year 1821, a Catholic congregation emigrated Bavaria with their priest, Lindl. They came to Bessarabia and founded the colony of Sarata. Lindl, although he belonged to the Catholic Church, was most sympathetic to Protestantism. (He was a personal friend of Pastor Goszner, and Martin Loos, who were also priests that turned Protestant.) There was a strong movement in the Catholic Church in which many became Lutheran. Lindl, although for some time true to Catholicism, did in Sarata what was denied in Bavaria, namely, preached the Gospel and even distributed Holy Communion in the Lutheran way. He was possessed with a strong faith and piety.

Before long his fame as a preacher spread over all the regions surrounding Sarata. At first people came from neighboring villages, but soon they came from far distances, even from Cherson. Many came already on Saturday, and Sarata was nicknamed the city of wagons. Thus Lindl was the inaugurator of a sweeping spiritual awakening, which caused a chain reaction in other colonies and finally throughout South Russia. Surprisingly, Lindl was only in South Russia two years, after which he returned to Berlin, where he openly became a Lutheran. But the awakening which was thereby begun, was a great blessing, for from his work dates the beginning of a new chapter of the history of the church, a revival which continued in Russia up to the present time.

But here, as so often elsewhere, where God builds a church the devil erects a chapel, yes, even within the very church of God. After the devil was forced to witness the revival of the dead bones of the church in South Russia, he was aroused to his fiendish wrath and sought to destroy it with poison from hell. Unfortunately, in this he was only too successful, for the awakening was in some aspects unhealthy. Many fell prey to a spiritual Phariseism which threatened to end the movement by an endless splitting up into small sects. By these people such books as those of Jacob Boehmes were widespread, and there was even a close connection with John Jacob Wirz of Basel, whose fanatic sectarianism is commonly known. While such noble and worthy books as Arndt's "Christentum," the sermons by Brastberger and Rieger, the "Shepherd's Call" by Kleinarts, the "Hymnlet" by Hiller, the pamphlets by Bogatzky and Goszner, were discarded and termed "babel" which one was to flee and avoid. Even the Bible was minimized.

The result was an inner break within the church, as it became ever clearer that the effects of this sectarianism could not be eradicated. For separatism had become so entrenched that there arose special fellowship groups within the congregations. One of these separatistic groups named a bishop, baptized, confirmed, and had communion without the formally ordained pastors. But later the St. Petersburg Consistorium was organized, which established a seminary to care for the spiritual needs of the people by educating pastors. In this way they succeeded in reincorporating this separatistic movement into the church, although many people still insisted that laymen and pastors had to have a conscious conversion before they could be Christians. This meant that a strange human element entered the spiritual. The result was much faking and sinful spiritual pride. For how was it possible that all the religious emphasis should be placed upon a sudden conversion in a moment's notice. And who can claim to be perfect in this imperfect world of sin!

Most of you know well the story of the coming to America, and so I shall not go into detail. But let us find out the reason for this leaving of South Russia. One of the Russian purposes for populating the Black Sea area was achieved as this area became a rich agricultural district, and the chief source of income for the Russian government. But the other, of educating the Russian farmers, proved futile. The Russian farmer remained the same, in fact, the

contacts with the Germans were the cause of much jealousy. This particularly since the Germans prospered and began to buy the vast tracts of land which the Russian nobility possessed. This jealousy was one of the reasons why the Russian government inaugurated a policy of Russification of these German elements, against which the promised privileges of the Germans in Russia were a constant hindrance; especially the German language, and the exemption from military service. On June 1, 1871, the Russian government took away all these exemptions, especially the exemption from military service. Those who opposed were given the opportunity of leaving the country within a period of ten years. This meant that by June 1, 1881, the Germans were to be governed by the very same laws as the Russians. This new attitude of the government caused many Germans to think of leaving. It was self-evident that families with sons for the army were the first ones to be so minded.

It is interesting to note that many thought in terms of migrating to Palestine, also an attempt was made by the authorities in Germany to guide the migration to Brazil. But eventually it was decided to go to the United States.

The first group, consisting of about 20 families, left in the fall of 1872 from the province of Cherson. They did not have any particular region in the United States in mind. During the winter they stayed in Ohio, near the city of Sandusky. After some speculation of the various regions opened for settlement, it was decided to move to the province of Dakota. One of the main factors in this choice was that they were told the Dakota prairies were similar to the steppes of Russia. The winter of 1872-73 was an unusually mild one.

One cannot say that the new settlers were too pleased with their choice. No sooner had they come than some thought of returning to Russia. But they did remain, and every year a new wave of immigrants followed. The first settlers came, as we noted earlier, from the province of Cherson, from the villages of Worms, Rohrbach, and Johannistal, and settled twenty miles northwest of Yankton, in Yankton County, calling it the Odessa settlement. Some of the other settlements were called Worms and Petersburg. The next wave of settlers came from Bessarabia and Crimea, and settled in Bon Homme, Hutchinson, and Armstrong Counties. By 1880 this colonization was in many aspects completed. The reason that they did not go to Hanson and Davidson Counties was because those counties had already been colonized by Americans and Germans. Although around the 1880's a group went toward the northwest, and settled in Douglas County.

Later, as the wave of immigration continued and some others moved, the settling process shifted to McPherson, Campbell, Wallworth Counties in South Dakota, and MacIntosh in North Dakota, up to the Northern Pacific and Soo Railways, then crossing the Missouri River to Morton and Mercer Counties. For a time it seemed the German Russians had become wanderers. By now (1905) they are living in many states. Omitting the settlements

in Nebraska and Kansas, there are some in Washington, Oregon, California, Texas, Arkansas, Colorado, Mississippi, Louisiana, Virginia, Maryland, and parts of Canada.

Let us take a look at the spiritual development in South Dakota. At first the settlers desired to live together in small villages, as was the custom in South Russia. One of the reasons being the desire to have a common church and school. For the people were religious, as was apparent in the great respect for the keeping of Sunday. Thus, even though there were no pastors, the custom developed of meeting together on Sunday in a home, having some one read a sermon, and continuing by discussing a religious topic. The settlement of Odessa started the first congregation; and as far as I can ascertain, the first church was erected there in 1874. The church was built on borrowed money, and the repaying was a difficult thing for the small group.

The first settlers came from Cherson, where there was a close intermingling of the various denominations (that is, Lutheran and Reformed). Thus even though there were two distinct congregations, one pastor would in many cases serve both Lutheran and Reformed congregations. This did not work in America, as it resulted in much wrangling and misunderstandings. Many in America wanted to continue this unionism, and the first congregation was a union church, served by a former Catholic priest who had become Protestant. Unfortunately, the man was known to drink, and it was reported that at one time he conducted church intoxicated. He stayed there only eight months, and upon his leaving the congregation had to pay his salary of about \$800.

He was followed by a Missouri Lutheran pastor by the name of Doescher, who served the people from Fort Dodge, Iowa. He visited the colonists before, and in 1874 settled in Dakota. He served the congregation south of Scotland and in Yankton for two years.

During this time, some in the congregation had become acquainted with the Iowa Synod. This came about in the following way. The congregation, being hopelessly in debt, sent some delegates to raise funds. They came to Dubuque, Iowa, and became acquainted with Pastor Luz of that city. When tension arose in the congregation and Pastor Doescher had to leave, the congregation turned to Pastor Luz for advice and begged him to visit them. As soon as time permitted he came and later sent also his assistant Rechnage. Later arrangements were made that Pastor Pfister should also visit. When it seemed that the congregation would fall into the hands of the Methodists, and that only a resident pastor could avoid this, action was taken. Pastor Beckmann, of Nebraska, was called. He accepted and served the congregations of Odessa, Worms, Petersburg, Friendensfeld, and Yankton. His mission activities extended also across the James River into Hutchinson and Armstrong Counties. Although Pastor Beckmann was not on the roster of the Iowa Synod, he did serve the congregations for the Synod.

Because he was an elderly man, and the work was expanding, he contacted Professor Sig. Fritschel of the Wartburg Seminary,



REV. A. HAHN (Served Parish 1896-1900)



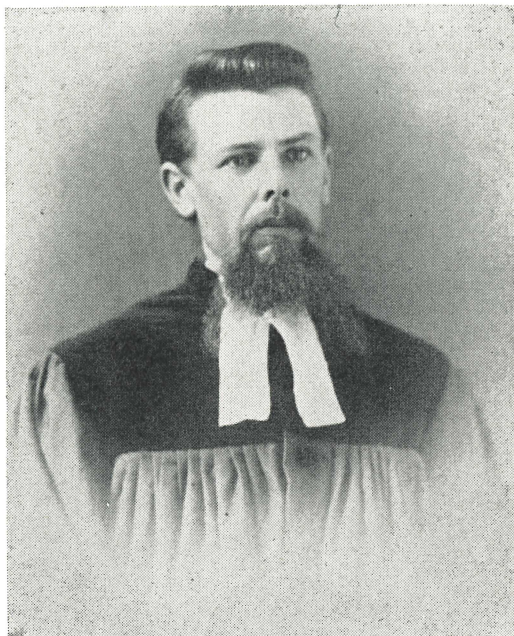
REV. GRUEBER (Served Parish 1902-1906)



REV. C. GOEKEN (Served Parish 1906-1916)



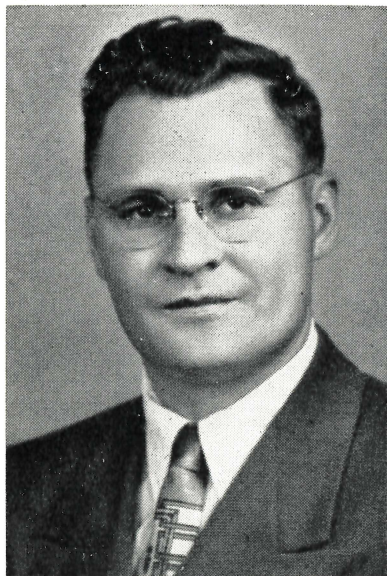
REV. P. BRIEST
(Served Parish 1928-1939)



REV. J. KOEPEL
(Served Parish 1917-1927)



REV. J. SCHMITT
(Served Parish 1939-1952)



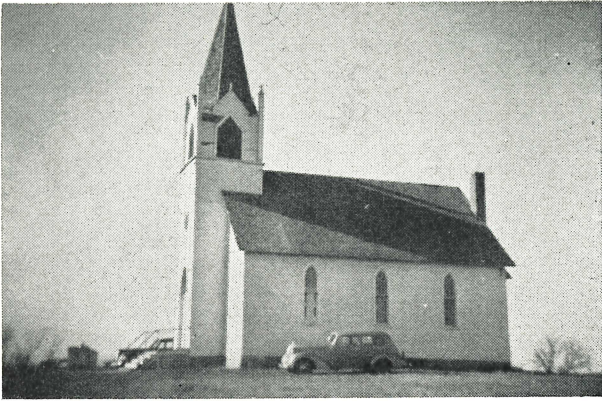
REV. R. LANG
(Served Parish 1953-1955)



DENNEWITZ CHURCH — BUILT IN 1888



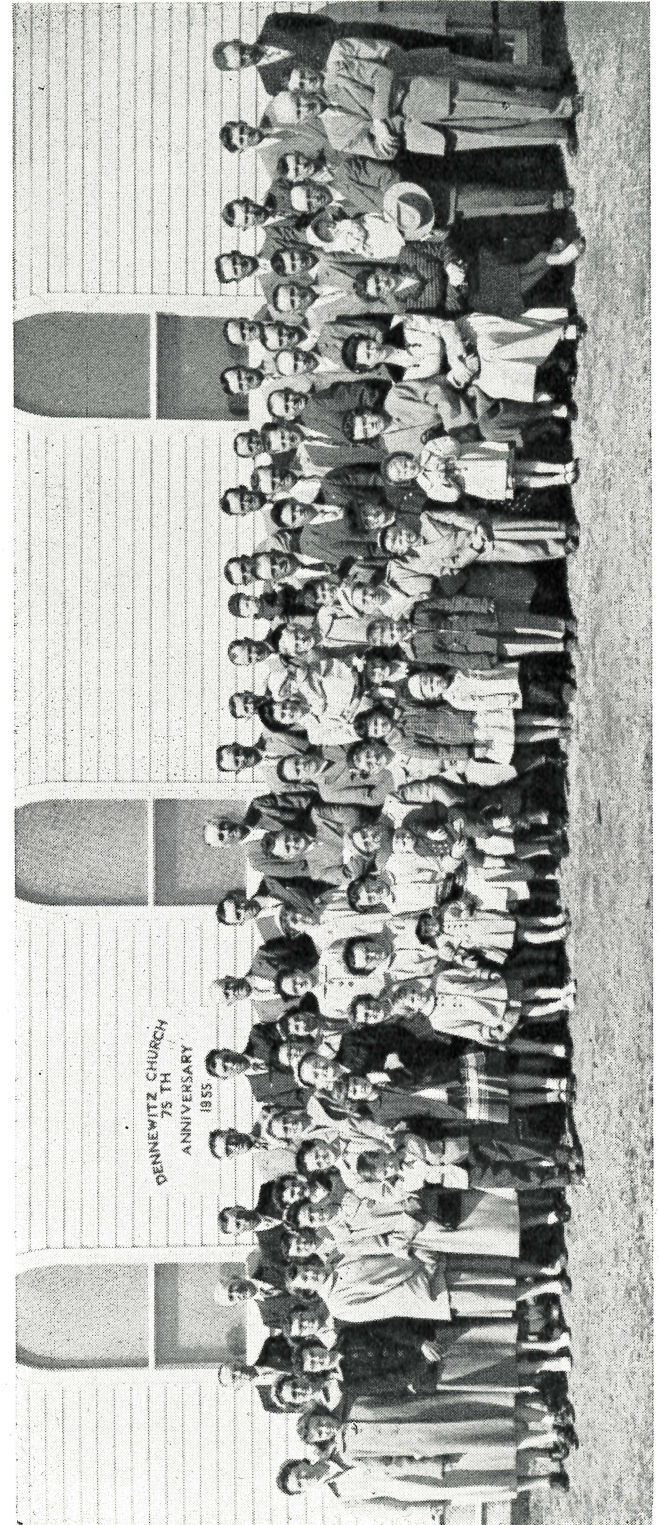
DENNEWITZ CHURCH
(Renovated in 1945)



**KULM CHURCH, NOW AT KAYLOR
(Remodeled in 1950)**



FIRST KAYLOR CHURCH (at Fiftieth Anniversary, 1930)



CONGREGATION OF DENNEWITZ CHURCH (1955)



CONGREGATION OF KAYLOR CHURCH (1955)



MISSION CIRCLE OF KAYLOR CHURCH



LUTHER LEAGUE OF IMMANUEL PARISH

and asked for a younger man. Professor Fritschel had toured Dakota from Mendota, Illinois, and was overwhelmed by the sincerity of the German Russians. Some of you will remember him. Through the contacts with this professor, I was sent to Dakota in 1879, after I completed my studies. At first I was to be an assistant to Pastor Beckmann, who needed a vacation. A call was issued through Pastor Beckmann to the settlers of Hutchinson and Armstrong Counties. And during Holy Week 1880, I came to these new territories.

I (Pastor August Bischoff), served the congregation until 1881, and during this time the parsonage which had been in Yankton was moved to Scotland. Scotland, which for some time was only a mail center, had become a town after the Milwaukee Railway was built in the spring of 1880. At that time a Lutheran congregation was formed, which became the center of a Lutheran parish. The following pastors served the Scotland parish:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1882 | Pastor Wiederanders |
| 1885-93 | Pastor Mueller, who was Lutheran, but at one time had been Methodist |
| 1893-6 | Pastor Roesch, who joined the Iowa Synod, from the Texas Synod |
| 1901-1904 | Pastor Wilk |
| 1905 | Pastor Wiederanders again. |

In 1882, the first parsonage was built in Scotland, and in 1883 the church was erected, being dedicated on July 8, 1883.

On April 1, 1880, the Immanuel's parish of Hutchinson County, was organized. The parish consisted of the following congregations: Kulm, Eigenfeld, Friedenstal, and Hoffnungstal. Later on, in the same year, Blumenfeld and Dennewitz were organized. There were as yet no churches or schools, not even a parsonage. The services were held in private homes, and the pastor stayed with other families. The pastor stayed with other people for two years, even after he was married.

In the year 1883 the parish was able to build their own parsonage, and during this time there was considerable desire to build churches. Thus, in the fall of 1883, Rosenfeld began building, with dedication in May, 1884. The following year Eigenfeld and Kulm built, with dedication in October, 1885. From the Friedenstal congregation the church in Tripp developed, which retained the name Friedenstal for some time, but in 1887 it built a church and the name was changed to the congregation of Tripp.

In 1889 the congregation of Dennewitz undertook a building project. Then Parkston and Tripp built. In Douglas County a small congregation developed which was not connected with Immanuel parish, but with Flensburg parish (later known as Hillside), although for a brief time in 1888 the congregation belonged to our parish before becoming independent in 1901.

Before long there was also a desire to erect schools. This was the case because of the desire to retain the German language, and

for the purpose of confirmation instruction. Since it was impossible to build schools in all the churches it was decided that there should be one central school building to serve for lodgings and classroom. At first a summer kitchen was used. When the parsonage was built, a room was added in the second floor, then later an addition was added in the ground floor for teaching purposes. But when this proved inadequate, plans were laid for a central school, to be located in Dennewitz. This was done in 1890. Although the school was a great blessing, some 70 pupils being enrolled every year during those years, it was also the cause of considerable friction. It seems that God gave the parish a box on the ear by the school. The reason being that it departed from the way of humility. In the year 1903 God Himself made an end of the school by a bolt of lightning, and it was burned to the ground. Fortunately, it was now also easier to do without it, since by now other schools had been built.

We have already noted that for some time, nine congregations belonged to the parish, that is, during the time the school was built. This was too many churches, and a change had to be made. But the pastor was mistaken in believing that any change could be made in a peaceful way—the developments were far from peaceful.

Thus in the year 1892, Parkston left Immanuel's parish, calling their own pastor, Pastor Walther. This process of independency continued, when Pastor Schumacher, the successor of Walther, served Rosenfeld, and then his successor began serving Eigenfeld and the congregation in Douglas County. The latter has by now become independent when they called Pastor Goeken in 1901. Thus now the Parkston parish consists of three congregations: Parkston, Rosenfeld, and Eigenfeld. It has its own parsonage, with schools in Rosenfeld and Eigenfeld. The oldest congregation is Rosenfeld, which can also celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary. Parkston had already built the second church, since the first one was too small, while Eigenfeld was forced to rebuild after a storm destroyed the first one. The following pastors have served Parkston:

- 1892 Pastor Walther, stayed only one year
- 1893-95 Pastor Schumacher, who was forced to resign because of ill health
- 1895-99 Pastor Pett
- 1899-1903 Pastor Weber
- 1903 to the present (1905), Pastor Ottersberg.

In 1896, I resigned as pastor of Immanuel's parish, at which time the congregation in Tripp became independent and called Pastor Koepp. After he left, the congregation was vacant for some time, and I occasionally served it. But in July, 1900, they called Pastor Hein. The congregation owns a church, a small school, and a parsonage. Tripp is entirely independent.

At the present time the Immanuel's Parish consists of Dennewitz, Kulm, Hoffnungstal, and Posttal. The parsonage is in Dennewitz, all have their house of worship except Posttal. There is a school in Dennewitz and Kulm, and the teacher lives in Dennewitz. Since I left, the following pastors have served the parish:

- 1896-1900 Pastor A Hahn
- 1900-1901 Pastor Kurtz
- Since 1901 Pastor Grueber.

So much for the physical side of our history. Let us briefly recall the inner developments.

The first years were years of much doctrinal dispute. It is true that our constitution has an article in which fidelity to the Lutheran confessions is avowed, but for some time this was only on paper. The separatistic movement which began in Russia was still here to plague us. There it had been overcome only on the surface, that is, by law rather than gospel, by the government rather than the sword of the Spirit, namely, the Word of God. This residual of sectarianism was still to be withstood and overcome. The differences became especially apparent in the teachings of the means of grace. The question being whether the Word of the Gospel, that is, absolution, had the power to forgive sin; again, whether Holy Communion bestows forgiveness; and finally, whether baptism is really the new birth. These were the targets of the disputes. Unfortunately, the majority of the members denied all these truths, which means that the orthodox group was outnumbered. Then too, the larger group was aggressive in their insistence that the others were unconverted dead Christians, who were still belonging to this world. And they contended that those who desired salvation had to deny their former faith.

The task was a herculean one, since these false teachings were conversed and spoken in private and in small conferences. Little was accomplished, for although many conferences were held, some lasting for hours and hours, there was generally more heat than light.

It was only the Grace of God and the power of His Word that proved victorious. The work was tedious, sometimes one step ahead and two backwards. Thus after four years the groups had a nightly conference in which the chief question was whether baptism is really the new birth. This was a good topic, for now the people realized what was at stake. Slowly the errorists were overcome, and the truth which was at first only on paper was translated to the heart. Of course, not for all. Many left for other denominations. May the congregations grow, outwardly and inwardly, and be reminded of the Apostle Paul, "Continue steadfast in the faith."

This is your twenty-fifth anniversary. We have gone through the history of the parish, and of course this is the chief reason for this celebration. A quarter of a century lies behind the parish, and her history is one of God's grace counteracting human sin and foolishness. One can say that God's grace disciplined the parish, but He did not forsake her. Therefore, with rejoicing hearts, let us raise our voices and sing hymn number 455, verses 5-8.

Part III

A SUMMARIZED HISTORY OF THE PARISH

The parish was served by the following pastors:

1880-1896	August Bischoff
1896-1900	A. Hahn
1900-1901	Kurtz
1902-1906	Grueber
1906-1916	Goeken
1917-1927	J. Koepel
1928-1939	P. Briest
1939-1952	J. Schmitt
1953-1955	R. Lang

Chronological history:

- 1871 Russian government passes law which attempted to Russianize the Germans in Russia.
- 1872 First settlers leave Russia.
- 1873 First settlers arrive in South Dakota, in Odessa—20 miles northeast of Yankton.
- 1874 Seems to have been the year when the first church was erected in Odessa.
- 1874 Pastor Doescher, a Missouri Lutheran pastor, visited the settlers several times from Fort Dodge, Iowa, and in this year moved to Yankton.
- 1879 Pastor A. Bischoff comes to Scotland, South Dakota from Wartburg Seminary.
- 1880 Bischoff is called to Hutchinson County, and founds Immanuel's Parish.
- 1883 The parish builds their first parsonage.
- 1884 Rosenfeld erects a church.
- 1885 Eigenfeld and Kulm erect churches.
- 1886 Congregation in Tripp is organized.
- 1888 Dennewitz builds a church.
- 1890 School is built in Dennewitz.
- 1892 Parkston becomes independent.
- 1896 Tripp becomes independent.
- 1896 Pastor A. Bischoff resigns.
- 1903 Lightning destroys school in Dennewitz.
- 1905 Celebration of 25th anniversary in Kulm congregation.
- 1906 Posttal erects a church.
- 1926 Kulm church dedication. This church was first in Parkston, then moved to Kulm, and is now the Kaylor church.
- 1927-8 Parsonage moved to Kaylor, as well as Posttal church.
- 1930 Parish celebrates 50th anniversary in Kaylor.
- 1936 Hoffnungsthal unites with Pottsal and Dennewitz.
- 1945 Dennewitz renovates the church.
- 1949 Kulm disbands and unites with Dennewitz and Kaylor.
- 1950 Kaylor enlarges church.

- 1952 Parish introduces English on a 50-50 basis.
- 1953 Luther League, and Kaylor Mission Circle organized
- 1955 Celebration of 75th anniversary in Kaylor, Pastor E. Bischoff in charge.

The following is a list of pastors from the parish:

Edmund Mueller
Immanuel Mueller
Edward Grosz
Leonard Schultz
Simon Reiman
Geo. Goeken
John Goeken
Edward Bischoff
John Reiman

There are two pastor's wives from the parish:

Mrs. George Landgrebe
Mrs. J. Grueber (nee Doering)—Died several years ago.

At one time or another, the parish included these congregations:

Parkston
Eigenfeld
Blumenfeld
Friedental (Tripp)
Dennewitz
Kulm
Hoffnungstal
Posttal
Congregation north of Delmont
Wittenberg

The following is a list of sons of the parish who served in the United States Army:

1917-18 (First World War)
Edward Bietz
George Bietz
Gotthilf Bietz
Otto E. Bietz
Emil Bietz
Edward Dobler
Herbert Fuerst
Herbert Fuerst
William Bertsch
Friederich Bertsch
Adolf Grosz
Otto Grosz
Johannis Kurtz (killed in action)

1941-45 (Second World War)

Eugene Jerke
Eugene Friederich
Bernhard Bueber
Alfred Ziegler
Reinhold Ziegler
Elmer Weisz
Ray Fuerst
Leo Bietz
Alvin Bietz (killed in action)

After the World War II

Ray Bueber (Korea)
Ray Bietz (Germany)
Leonard Friederich (Korea)
Melvin Friederich (Germany)
Roy Weisz (Korea)
Clinton Fuerst (U.S.A.)
Maynard Bietz (Korea)

Thus we see that two gave their lives for God and Country:

Johannis Kurtz
Alvin Bietz

(The attempt was made to get the list complete. However, it may have been that someone was overlooked. If so, just write his name in.)