

HISTORY OF FRIEDENS EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Bonduel, Wisconsin

In 1878, three acres of land were given (for a sum of one dollar) by J.H. Bierbaum; a pastor who founded and organized the first congregation. The first church was built of wood and was located one and a half miles south of Bonduel on old Highway 47.

Though many of the records were incomplete, there were thirty charter members listed that first year. Two young ladies were confirmed that year, one child was baptized, one marriage performed and one burial.

Pastor Bierbaum remained pastor until 1883 when J. G. Oepke was installed. In April of that year the congregation decided it was time to build a parsonage. Sometime during that year Pastor Oepke began serving a group in the Township of Angelica, marking the beginning of a sister congregation, St. Paul's of Zachow.

On April 29, 1884, the congregation adopted a constitution in which they formerly became "the Evangelical Lutheran Friedens Church". In November the council signed papers of incorporation as a religious society.

When Pastor Oepke accepted a call to another parish, Gustav Press was assigned to fill the vacancy. A teacher was hired and was given \$25 a month plus travelling expenses to travel to Watertown to go to school. A Sunday School was then started.

Mission Festivals were started about 1896. Mission money was sent to help support the Wisconsin Synod.

It is interesting to note some financial figures from the notes of 1897. Total receipts for the year were \$394.77 and total disbursements were \$390.96, with a balance of \$3.81 at the annual meeting of January 3, 1898 where 26 voters were present.

In 1901 Reverend Ernst Haese of Peshtigo was installed. He stayed one year. During this year some additions were made to the parsonage.

The next pastor was Rev. J. Pohley (1902-1904). During this time the congregation decided to build a new church. The new building was 34 X 66 feet, and cost \$4,000, not counting furnishings.

Pastor L. Kasper was installed in 1910, and during the three years that he remained, the first Ladies Aid was started. Rev. Kasper's wife died in 1912, and on January 1, 1913, this pastor accepted another call.

For the next 27 years, Pastor A. Haberman led the congregation in worship.

In June, 1922, lightning struck the steeple of Friedens church. There was considerable damage, but it did not burn. The congregation repaired the damages; rebuilt the tower; added electricity and lights; and installed new art glass windows. The edifice was then rededicated in November of that year. The steeple was omitted; because it seemed to draw lightning.

In 1940 Pastor V. J. Weyland became pastor. At this time a new parsonage was built on the same site as the old one (after tearing the old one down). Total cost for this project was \$5,800.

The congregation's 70th anniversary was observed in February 1948. For this occasion, the church was partly remodeled and completely redecorated on the inside. A new two manual Wurlitzer organ was purchased and new carpeting was installed.

According to the records of the church, English services were not begun until Pastor Weyland served the congregation.

Pastor J. J. Wendland was installed in May of 1948. During his tenure, some big changes were made. A forced air conversion type oil heating system was installed; the entire interior of the parsonage was redecorated; and the entire church basement was completely remodeled and modernized. Rev. Wendland left in April of 1954 to go to St. John St. James Ev. Lutheran Church in Reedsville.

Pastor Irwin Schewe succeeded Wendland in July of 1954. German services were discontinued. The church was re-roofed and an outdoor bulletin board was purchased. Pastor Schewe stayed until May of 1962 when he accepted a call to Friedens of Kenosha.

Rev. Larry Zwieg was installed on July 28, 1963, after over a year with Rev. Wood of Black Creek acting as vacancy pastor and during which time twelve "calls" were made.

During this tenure, the church looked into the possibility of remodeling but after some study and much consideration, it was decided to build a new church. Five acres were then purchased on the north east side of Bonduel.

Pastor Zwieg also began holding services in Shawano in 1965 which eventually was the start of a new congregation, Divine Savior. Zwieg left for a pastorate at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Merritt Island, Florida in September of 1968.

Rev. Roland Zimmerman was installed in June, 1969. In 1970, final plans were approved by the congregation for the new church, the building was completed and on May 14, 1972 the worship service of 'Thanksgiving and Praise' began at the old church and ended in the new.

The new church was wheelchair accessible, and was completely carpeted. It had a modern kitchen and very adequate Sunday School accommodations in the lower level.

Pastor Zimmerman left to serve Bethlehem of Menominee Falls after preaching his farewell sermon on New Year's Eve, 1972.

Pastor Philip Geiger was installed on May 20, 1973.

The parking lot was blacktopped in 1977.

The 100th Anniversary of the Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church was celebrated on June 18, 1979. Two pastors were present to help in the service: Pastor Luther Wendland, of Hillsboro & son of former Pastor J. J. Wendland, and Pastor Rodney Busch of Memphis Tennessee, former member of Friedens parish.

The anniversary book that year (1979) reported that in the past 100 years, there were about 940 baptisms, 85 confirmations, 268 marriages and 401 burials.

14 years later, as of 1993, the statistics were as follows: 1112 baptisms; 910 confirmations; 302 marriages; and 451 burials.

In 2003, Friedens Congregation celebrated 125 years of God's abundant blessings. The Lord has truly blessed Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church with faithful pastors and congregations throughout the years. Since 2003, we have redecorated the church with a new paint scheme and pew upholstery.

Recent improvements to our church: Speaker system, new carpeting, new roof, repaved parking lot, new Rogers organ, new windows, air conditioning, electric piano, Carillon bell system elevator, new furnace, new lights in parking lot, and many other blessings which are too numerous to mention here.

In 2010, we are hoping to upgrade the sound system and integrate it with a new computer to aid in our radio broadcast recording and hope to eventually make this available on our website.

Also, as of 2010, Pastor Geiger has faithfully served Friedens for 37 years. This is truly a blessing of dedication to our congregation.