

WORSHIP LIFE AND MINISTERS

October 25, 2007

Presented by Peter Scully

Lutheran worship in the St. James area dates back to 1905 when services were held in both German and English when St. James Lutheran Church existed only as a mission station. It wasn't until December of 1923 that the first official worship service for St. James Lutheran Church was held.

The congregation was served by a group of Circuit Pastors for the first 4 months until Pastor Herman Reinke was installed on April 29, 1924. He was called to serve two churches in addition to St. James. When Pastor Reinke left St. James to serve Saint Paul's Lutheran Church in E. Northport, Pastor Walter Heintze was installed in June of 1926, to serve both St. James and St. Paul's in Port Jefferson. St. James paid \$45.00 toward the Pastor's salary and Saint Paul's contributed \$35.00.

On July 29, 1928 the new church building on Woodlawn Avenue was completed and dedicated to the Glory of God. Five months after that dedication Pastor John Mital was installed as the first full-time Pastor of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church.

On November 29, 1931 Pastor August Herbert was installed. It was during his Pastorate that the heating system saw a significant upgrade. No longer would Marius Olsen need to get to church by 6 am on a Sunday morning to fill the coal furnace before service.

Pastor Herbert retired in December of 1959 and Pastor Albert Abel, Lois Rudin's father, was installed March 13, 1960. On the 35th anniversary of the church an ambitious reconstruction project began under the supervision of the late Deacon, Ed Hoffman.

Pastor Abel increased the number of worship services, began celebrating Holy Communion at every service and initiated the use of lay assistants in worship. Women of the congregation were invited to join the Church Council and were given the right to vote on Church affairs. Female acolytes and female lay assistants made their appearance in the late 1970's. In 1992, Janet Vetrano, who had served on the church council for 16 years, was elected the first female president of the church council.

In 1967 Pastor Abel resigned and Pastor Kenneth Hansen was called as the 6th Pastor of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church. For more than 30 years, Pastor Hansen continued to build the congregation by establishing and leading many new forms of worship. Pastor Hansen's use of the arts and creativity further entrenched St. James Lutheran Church as a true center of the community in Saint James.

In November of 2001, Pastor Hansen retired, at that time St. James was served by Pastor Henry Schriever as the interim Pastor until December of 2005 when Pastor Jeffrey Skopak was installed as the 7th Senior Pastor of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church.

We seek to honor and thank God for all those Pastors and ministers of the Gospel who have faithfully served and continue to serve Saint James Lutheran Church. Through out the years the church has been served by Assitant Pastors, Associates in ministry, Vicars, Deacons, assisting ministers and other pastoral staff.

Tonight, we take a moment to honor our current Ministry staff, first I ask our Pastoral Staff to please rise – our Senior Pastor, Jeffrey Skopak – Our Associate in Ministry, Chaplain Steve Unger and our Vicar – Justin Vetrano. On behalf of the congregation, We praise and thank God for your service and ministry at St. James Lutheran Church, thank you!

While they remain standing, I ask our Commissioned Deacons and Deacon in training to please rise. We thank you for your efforts in Ministry.

At this time I ask any other paid staff members of Saint James Lutheran Church or our preschool, past or present to please rise. We thank God for the tireless effort you put forth to proclaim to the Gospel through the use of your gifts and talents at Saint James Lutheran Church, (applause) thank you!

God has truly blessed us with your commitment to His ministry. In the words of Pastor John Mital, the 3rd Pastor of Saint James, “the Lord has lead us thus far, and will continue to lead us. For all His countless mercies and goodness, all praise be to Him forever, May He always lead us in carrying on His work until our work is finished here below and others take up where we leave off.”

I pray that Pastor Mital and all the founders of Saint James Lutheran church would be as proud as we are to see how all of you have carried our ministries where those Pastors and ministers of the past have left off.

Please join me in word of Prayer...

Heavenly Father, throughout history you have raised up leaders to guide, direct, and bless your people. You have filled them with faith and knowledge, love and understanding, vision and the mission of our Church. We thank you for the Pastors who have served St. James Lutheran Church throughout these many years. We also thank you this night for all of those other staff members who have partnered with St. James Lutheran Church in sharing the Gospel with the World. For those who have served in Youth ministry; for those who have served in administration; for those who have brought to life our worship through music and those who have assisted in our worship services; and for all of those other people that you have brought to this congregation to serve and direct our steps in the Great Commission of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Continue to bless the spiritual life, growth, and development of our congregation that we may be “Salt” and “Light” not only to this community, but to the whole world. In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.