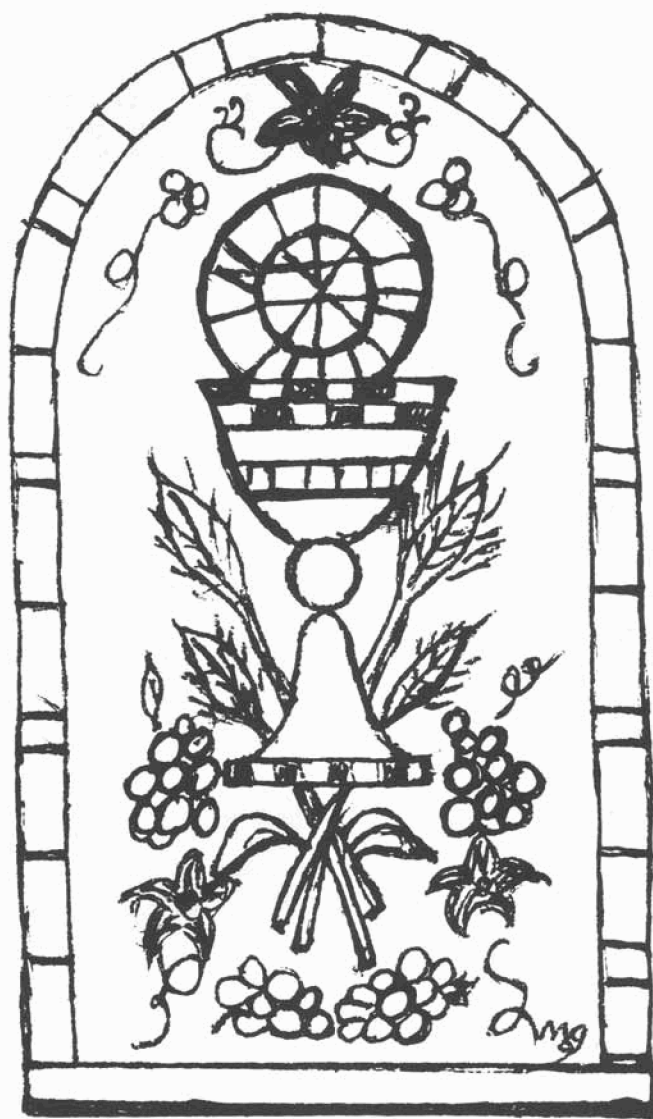


# Churches



*submitted by Marge Gansen*

### Congregational Church

On the west side of Elma sixty families lived who were of the faith of the Congregational church. In the year of 1888, Mr. Lemuel Potter donated land to build a church which was organized by Mr. Steel, state secretary of the Congregational church. From the Recorder's office in Cresco, it was found that the Congregational church purchased lots 11 and 12 in Block 34 on October 1, 1889. Ministers who served the Elma parish were Rev. McClairy, Rev. Cain and Rev. Potter. When the division point was in Elma, the church also had an active Ladies Aid. When the railroad shops moved to Oelwein, many members moved away and the congregation disbanded in the year of 1903, but Sunday school was kept two years after the closing of the church. This church stood where the County Shop now stands. It was remodeled into a house and in 1937 it was bought by Ward Cook and moved to his farm.

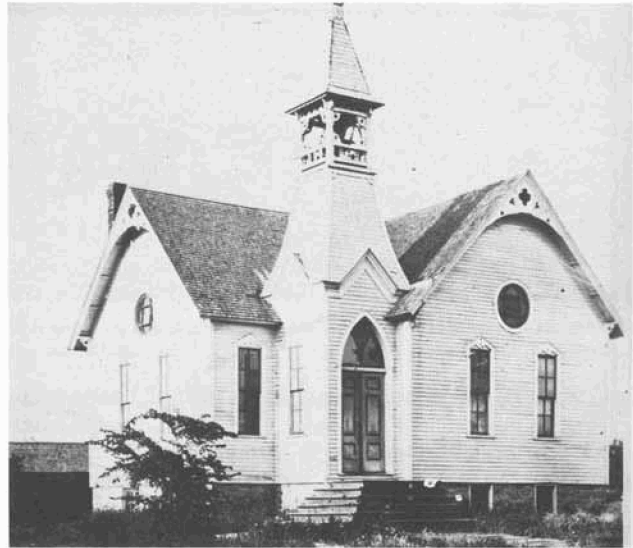


Congregational Church

### United Methodist Church

The first church organized in Elma was by members of the Union church (which organized in the town of Busti). In 1888, they met at the Town Hall for services. Soon they needed to have their own church building. Trustees chosen for the church's first year were R. L. Bowman, I. P. Trotter, Mrs. J. L. Bateman, T. R. Smart and John E. Light. Two lots were purchased just east of Busti Avenue and in 1889 a plain white framed church was built and dedicated. There were sheds along the north side of the lots to shelter the horses driven to church. During the week they often sheltered horses belonging to Elma shoppers.

The first pastor was Reverend S. C. Bretnall who



Methodist Episcopal Church

served for five years. According to Sunday School records, the church was still a Union church. In April 1891, records show a change. The Union Sunday School Constitution was reviewed to make it acceptable for the Methodist Episcopal Discipline and funds were turned over to a Methodist Episcopal Sunday School.

In 1921 a house on the west side of Elma was purchased and used for a parsonage. It was in use most of the time until 1970 when the church no longer had a resident pastor.



Methodist Church—Elma—after 1961 remodeling.

In 1941, a project was undertaken which included construction of the basement and installation of cupboards, running water and dining room facilities.

The church was completely remodeled in 1961. The exterior was sided with vertical redwood with a turquoise trim. A new entrance was located on the west side of the church and the former entrance was used as the organ room. A new altar and furnishings were highlighted by a large wooden cross reaching the ceiling; lighting and carpeting were new. Basement remodel-

ing included new kitchen and cupboards and the dining room redone. Bishop James S. Thomas consecrated the building on January 14, 1962. On November 28, 1965, all indebtedness had been paid and a dedication service was held at which time Bishop Thomas, District Superintendent Arthur Kindred and Reverend John Ling participated in the event.

The Ladies Aid Society which later was known as the W.S.C.S. (Women's Society of Christian Service) and later as the U.M.W. (United Methodist Women) began with sixteen members in 1887.

The church has been served by many student ministers. One student, Raymond Grant, went on to become bishop in the Pacific Conference. The church also had the first woman minister in northern Iowa, Marjorie York Lipps. Several refugees have served as ministers—the Reverend Fritz Springis and his wife, who were Latvians and by Akos Papp of Hungary and Finland. John C. Ling was a native of the island of Borneo. He had gone to school in Singapore. He is now back in the Iowa Conference. Akos Papp, his wife, Inkeri and family returned to Finland when they left Elma. Reverend Papp is director of music at the Conservatory in Helsinki. He arranged a tour to the United States of his fifty-five voice girls choir, and Elma was included in his itinerary. They gave a concert for the public. The church members housed, fed and enjoyed entertaining the girls, many of whom could not speak English.

For many years the church women have sponsored the World Day of Prayer services. First alone, then gradually other faiths have joined, until now seven churches pray together and enjoy fellowship following the services.

In 1980 the Methodist church of Alta Vista closed; therefore, several members of that congregation joined the Elma church.

We are thankful for God's guidance and blessings through the years and that we are able to carry on the work started by our forefathers and keep the Elma church active.

The following ministers have served the Elma United Methodist church through the years.

Reverend S. C. Bretnell	1889-1890
Reverend P. N. Dwello	1890-1892
Reverend W. F. Wyatt	1892-1893
Reverend R. M. Winell	1893-1894
Reverend H. F. Wignall	1894-1895
Reverend R. C. Lusk	1895-1897
Reverend D. C. Perry	1897-1899
Reverend V. E. Hall	1899-1901
Reverend W. H. Stowers	1901-1904
Reverend T. H. Gallagher	1904-1907
Reverend J. K. Craig	1908-1909
Reverend R. Y. Wyant	1909-1910
Reverend G. M. Shoemaker	1910-1912
Reverend John C. Olson	1912-1913
Reverend F. G. Young	1913-1915
Reverend B. A. Davis	1915-1916
Reverend Ray Busenbark	1916-1917
Reverend Raymond Grant	1917-1918

(Bishop of Methodist Church)

Reverend J. M. Baumgartner	1918-1919
Reverend P. N. Dwello	1919-1921
Reverend C. R. Garland	1921-1923
Reverend M. L. Hill	1923-1926
Reverend George Mitchell	1926-1927
Reverend Lloyd Gustafson	1927-1928
Reverend R. A. Hallett	1931-1933
Reverend E. H. Schepple	1931-1933
Reverend H. P. Buck	1933-1934
Reverend R. M. Bell	1935-1939
Reverend B. G. Olson	1939-1940
Reverend S. V. Williams	1940-1941
Reverend Mrs. Marjorie Lipps	1942-1944
Reverend F. J. Hoffman	1945-1946
Reverend E. L. Meisenbach	1946-1947
Reverend J. W. Allsbury	1950-1952
Reverend Sherman Gale Hawhee	1952-1954
Reverend Fritz Springis	1955-1957
Mrs. Ruth Husband	1957-1961

Assisted by Mrs. Florence Hatch

Reverend Earl R. Streyffeler	1961-1962
Reverend John C. E. Ling	1963-1964
Reverend William G. Bohi	1964-1968
Reverend Akos Papp	1968-1969
Reverend Roy Hjelmas	1969-1970
Reverend Maurice Gunn	1970-1973
Reverend Dick Oehring	1973-1976
Reverend Paul Brown	1976-1979
Reverend Bob Barrick	1979-1982
Reverend George Weitzel	1982-1983
Reverend Roger White	1983-1985
Reverend Lyndon Roesler—Preacher	1985-
Reverend Donald F. Wooge—Pastor	1985-

#### Elma Methodist Sunday School

On January 2, 1887, a group of interested people of Elma and vicinity met for the purpose of organizing a Sunday school. Mrs. J. A. Ewing was elected president. Two gentlemen were appointed to solicit funds and at the next meeting handed in \$14.30. Song books from the Busti church would be used. On January 9, 1887, the first classes were held, but it isn't known where. There were teachers for four classes. Forty-two were present and the collection was 83¢. The school was given the name of the Pilgrim Sunday School. A pastor of the Union Church of Malone, Iowa, wrote offering use of an organ for as long as it was a Union school.

The attendance grew rapidly and note is made on November 6, 1892, that the school was under direction of the Methodist Conference. The Sunday school thrived for many years, but as families moved and scattered it became smaller. Classes have been held as a need is shown.

#### United Methodist Women

The Ladies Aid was begun on May 25, 1887, with 16 members. Mrs. Croft was president, Mrs. Bateman, vice-president. There has been a Ladies Aid Society continuously through the years since then. Many

times it was the women who got out to solicit money to pay the bills and keep the church going.

Many ways have been used to raise money—treat baskets were sent around, birthday calendars, cook-books, miniature aprons, banquets, and dinners.

The best money raiser and the hardest work was the food stand at the county fair. Pies and help were transported every day, for a day that began at 6 a.m. and lasted until midnight or later. These years not only added to the church treasury but also all gained by the fellowship of working together.

#### Rev. Lyndon Roesler Family



Rev. Lyndon Roesler was born in Waseca, Minnesota, where he attended school and graduated from the Waseca High School in 1966. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College, Deerfield, Illinois, in 1970. He received his Master's degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, in 1973. He was ordained through the Evangelical Church Alliance.

Before becoming minister of the Elma United Methodist Church in 1985 he served several Minnesota and Illinois congregations.

His family consists of his wife, Tonia, and seven children—Joel, Terri Leah, James, Andrea, Joshua, Tellef, and Tanner.



Rev. Donald Wooge

Rev. Donald Wooge, New Hampton, co-pastor of Elma United Methodist Church.

#### St. Peter Lutheran Church

"Call to remembrance the former days." Hebrews 10:32.

At the time when Howard County had but a small

population, itinerant preachers made the rounds and called upon the early settlers of the Lutheran faith, chiefly among the German speaking people. These men were sent by their fellow Christians and requested by the settlers to look after their spiritual needs, baptize their infants, console the sick and dying and to bury the dead.

One of the first Lutheran preachers of German descent to minister to the German Lutherans in this neighborhood was Pastor Edward Wachtel, who came from New Hampton and preached to the various settlements in Howard County. This happened in the "horse and buggy days." After the advent of the first railroad track being laid in the Elma area, the serving of the congregations and preaching-places was simplified and made possible in all kinds of weather. Thus pastors were able to come from Sumner and Westgate.

Prior to the year 1889, Lutherans were scattered in the vicinity of Elma, but had no church home nor organized congregation. The first meeting of members of the Lutheran faith was held on March 2, 1889 at the home of Mr. William Unger. In this meeting, Julius Lindemann was temporary chairman and Mr. Leo Wachtel, secretary. A constitution was presented by the Reverend Theo. Haendschke of Sumner. This was unanimously adopted after a few minor changes had been made. Wm. Unger and G. Heinmiller were elected as trustees. Thus the St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized and came into being.

On March 30, 1889, lots were purchased from Messrs. Robison and Burgess and the so-called Union Church, a community church building, was moved from Busti to Elma. In the same year, work was begun on a parsonage, to measure 16' x 26', next to the church. The Reverend Karl E. J. Schmidt was called to become the first resident pastor of the church. Elected to the first Church Council on April 5, 1890, were Chairman, Philip Gross; Secretary, Wm Buchholz; Treasurer, Leo Wachtel; Trustees, Julius Lindemann and D. Weers. These early founders recognized the value of Christian training for their children and in 1890, it was resolved to also have school sessions in the church building.

In a special meeting held January 25, 1896, it was decided to gather pledges for the building of a new church. It was also resolved that the building should be 34' x 56'. The Building Committee consisted of D. Weers, W. Diekmann, C. Gesell, H. Wolf, F. Streich, Wm. Buchholz and W. Lubitz. It was determined to purchase another lot upon which to move the old church building to be used as a school.

In 1912, a new school building was erected. Changes and improvements were also made in the church and parsonage, including electric lighting. In 1917, a bell was placed in the belfry. April, 1921, marked the introduction of English services, English instruction classes, and English hymn books to the congregation in Elma.

During the first twenty-five years of its existence as a congregation, 219 were baptized; 124 were confirmed; 38 entered Holy wedlock with the pastor of the

church officiating; and 58 were accompanied to their last resting places. The congregation at that time was composed of thirty-five families and five widows.

In 1928, the renovation of and a new addition to the parsonage was undertaken. On May 15, 1932, a lightning bolt struck the church steeple, slashing out a part of the top and cracking the base. It was resolved to take the steeple down.

In 1936, the congregation agreed to turn away from the custom of providing huge amounts of floral bouquets at funerals and instead introduced the "Abiding Monuments." Many of the church furnishings have since that time been provided through these memorials. Also in the 1930s the excavation of the church basement was begun and a hot air heating system completed. Young and old helped with the excavation and a large assembly room was created where the Sunday School, the Ladies Aid, the Youth Society and Mens groups could now gather for discussion of the "Lord's Business," and sociability.

On November 30, 1947, members and friends of St. Peter's were permitted to participate in the happy occasion of the dedication services for a new organ.

In the year 1948, the name of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church was changed to read just St. Peter's Lutheran Church. In 1951, the congregation reached an all-time high, when the number of baptized souls stood at 327. Plans were underway for a new addition to the church. In September of 1955, an enlarged, renovated and modern church home was dedicated to the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1968, the replacing of the amber-toned window glass with new colored glass windows added a new beauty to our house of worship.

St. Peter's congregation celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 1939; its Diamond Jubilee in 1964; and God willing, we look forward to a Centennial Celebration of our existence in 1989.

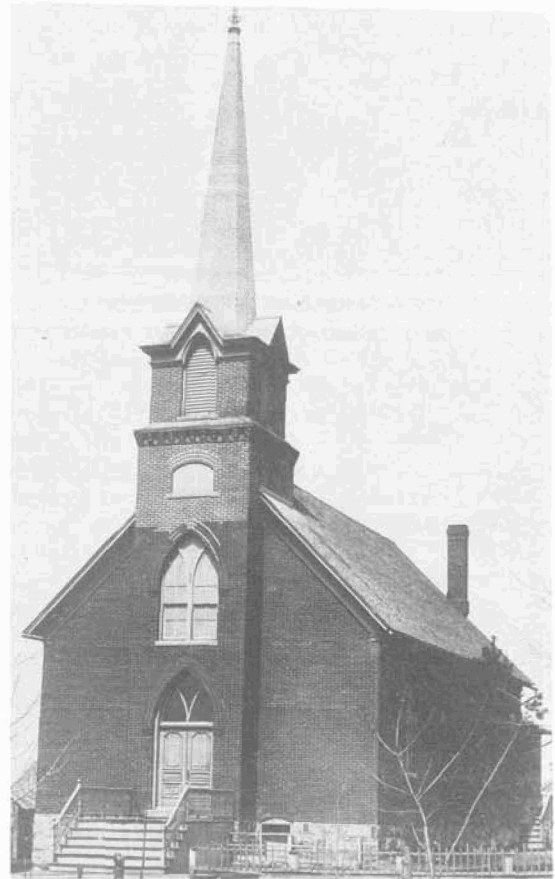
The following Pastors served St. Peter's since its organization:

Karl E. J. Schmidt	1889-1895
A. Hemann	1896-1898
Martin Brueggemann	1899-1904
L. Traub	1904-1905
Otto Gurschke	1906-1908
A. Merting	1908-1910

It has been noted in our church records that in these early years, the severity of the climate in Howard County usually was the reason for a pastor to seek and accept a call elsewhere!

Gustav Deubert	1910-1915
F. Bonovsky	1915-1923
H. A. Bentrup	1927-1940
Clemens Schroeder	1941-1950
Harvey Michels	1950-1954
Wm. F. Hilst	1954-1957
Clarence Stenbeck	1958-1961
Walter B. L. Strandes	1961-1964
Edgar Schroeder	1964-1968
Thomas Manteufel	1969-1978
Dr. Ernest Yunghans	1979-

The names of Walter Schroeder and Bertrand Hinrichs are also familiar to many as they each have served our congregation as vacancy pastor in recent years.



St. Peter Lutheran Church prior to 1932.



Interior view of the Lutheran church in its early years.

#### Ladies Aid

The exact date of the organization of the Ladies Aid Society of St. Peter's Lutheran Church here in Elma cannot be fixed, since, unfortunately, the early records



St. Peter Lutheran Church and parsonage



St. Peter Lutheran Church after 1955.

have been destroyed. There seems little doubt that the women of the parish were active in charitable works within a few years following the organization of the congregation in 1889. Among the first members were Mrs. William Unger, Mrs. Louis Keding, and Mrs. John Gesell.

The object of the society was to serve as an aid to the church. With due concern for spiritual life, provisions were made to have the "Portals of Prayer" sent regularly into the home of every member of the congregation.

Of great value to the congregation, has been their care of the altar and other church furnishings. The Sunshine Committee remembers the sick and shut-ins with symbols of thoughtfulness and cheer cards. Gifts of charity are made to various institutions and also to missionary enterprises.

Social activities of the parish are supervised and

served by the ladies. Improvements made to the church and parsonage are assisted by the ladies of the parish.

The ladies sponsor bake sales and clothing drives periodically and prepare meals and lunches for various groups as the need arises.

#### St. Peter's Sunday School

During the pastorate of the Rev. Gustav Deubert, the present school building was erected in 1912, and a day school was begun. Later classes were held on Saturday forenoons. Prior to the introduction of English language in the services, the Sunday school was conducted in the German language and the class of 1919 was the first to be instructed and confirmed in the English language.

In the early years, Sunday School classes were held within the church auditorium, due to the lack of facilities. Following the remodeling of the basement in 1955, the Sunday school and Saturday school classes were held there with sufficient room to house all classes. In recent years, Vacation Bible School sessions have been conducted.

A loyal and devoted staff of teachers has served the classes through the years. It can be seen that the members of St. Peter's hold a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of their children.

#### The Reverend Doctor Ernest E. Yunghans

Pastor Yunghans was born in Cedarburg, Wisconsin on May 27, 1913.

Following graduation from Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois, he earned degrees from Butler University, Western Reserve University, and Indiana University. Additional undergraduate and graduate work was undertaken at the University of Northern Iowa, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Iowa.

Following nearly thirty years of service to the church as a Christian Day School teacher, principal, director of education, and district education executive, Dr. Yunghans moved to Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, as Associate Professor of Psychology and Education. At Wartburg College he organized a program for the education and training of day school teachers for the American Lutheran Church. During the last several years at Wartburg College he served as Director of Special Education.

Retiring as Emeritus Professor of Psychology in 1978, Dr. Yunghans entered Concordia Seminary in St. Louis to prepare for the Holy Ministry via the Synods colloquy program. After completing his formal studies at Concordia Seminary, he was assigned as vicar to St. Peter Lutheran Church in Elma, Iowa, where he assumed the pastorate.

The service of his ordination and the installation as Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church was held in the church on Sunday, March 2, 1980. Participating in this service as Liturgist was the pastor's son Rev. Charles E. Yunghans. The Lector was the Rev. Norman E.



Pastor Ernest Yunghans

Betke, pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Ansgar, Iowa. The presenter was the Rev. Kit Belk pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Osage, Iowa. The preacher was Rev. Eugene Kramer pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Iowa. The Ordinator was the Rev. Doctor John C. Zimmerann, at the time President of Iowa District East, The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The organist was Doctor Warren Schmidt, Professor of Music, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa. Soloist was Jim Johnson, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Elma, accompanist was Mrs. Max S. Schmidt, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Elma. All Lutheran clergymen of the area participated in this service as attending ministers.

Following the service all present were invited to the reception for Pastor Yunghans and his family.

Pastor Yunghans was married to Eleanore Kirchner in Sargeant, Minnesota, on August 10, 1940. This marriage was blessed with two sons, Charles Ernest and Paul Arthur. Paul was called home by his loving Savior at the age of four-and-a-half years.

#### Immaculate Conception Parish

The Catholics who first lived in the Elma community were without a church, so they attended services in the log church at St. Cecelia, west of Elma, where Rev. F. J. Gunn was pastor. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered in Elma, first in the Afton House, one of Elma's hotels and from 1890 to 1895, in a hall. Father Gunn was appointed resident pastor at that time and he began to plan the building of a church in which he could house the congregation. Mr. Lemuel Potter made a generous donation of sixteen lots to Father Gunn. These, with additional land purchased at a later date comprised the parish grounds which covered six acres. Here it was that first the church and rectory, and later the school were built.

Work was begun on the foundation of the church in 1892. After the completion of the church it was decorated by the master artist, George F. Satory. The newly completed church was dedicated on June 24, 1902, by Archbishop John Joseph Keane. The church was constructed of Saint Louis hydraulic pressed brick, perhaps the only church in northern Iowa constructed of this celebrated material at this time. The trimming was of white stone, and the roof was slate.

The bell which was blessed and placed in the tower weighed 2,780 pounds. It was molded by the M. C. Shane Bell Foundry of Baltimore, Maryland, and inscribed with these words:

Dedication of Church and Silver Jubilee of Organizer and Pastor Rev. F. J. Gunn—June 24, 1902  
Immaculate Conception Parish Organized 1887  
Laudate Dominum omnes centes  
(The Latin inscription means "Praise the Lord Forever").

The celebrant of the Solemn High Mass on the day of dedication was the pastor, Father Gunn. Father Saunders of Cherokee acted as deacon and Father O'Brien of Riceville as sub-deacon. Father Nelson of Lourdes was the Master of Ceremonies.

From our sources, it is unclear who the first assistant to Father Gunn was, we have listed Fr. Felder and Fr. Tibeau. From time to time, Father Timothy Nolan of Saint Cecilia and Father A. N. Nolan of New Haven helped Father Gunn.

Feeling the need of Catholic education for the children of the parish, a parochial school was erected on parish property not far from the church in 1906. The school was opened by the Sisters of Mercy and contained eight grades plus high school.

After thirty years of faithful labor, Father Gunn passed to his eternal reward on June 22, 1920. He is buried in the Calvary Cemetery. Father Gunn had the comfort and consolation of knowing that the entire debt resting on the parish was practically liquidated at that time.



Immaculate Conception Catholic Church

Under Father Farrelly, the parish made improvements and purchased and remodeled the double store and parochial hall on Main Street. A grand opening was held February 19, 1925. A Hammond all-electric organ was donated in October of 1935 by Mr. Nick Graf and installed in the choir loft of the church. In 1949, St. Cecilia became a mission parish.

In 1948, the church hall was destroyed by fire and plans were made to erect a new hall. In 1952, a new

parish hall was erected near the school. It had gym facilities as well as a cafeteria and kitchen equipment for school lunch programs and other parish and school functions.

In 1954, Father O'Donnell died after serving the parish for 17 years.

A one-story convent for the Sisters of Mercy was built in 1964 and dedicated in 1965. Previously, the sisters had living quarters in the upper floor of the school. In 1966, a two-story parsonage was erected and dedication was in 1967.

In May, 1968, a devastating tornado struck Elma and destroyed the Catholic Church, and slightly damaged the school and parish hall. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered in the parish hall until the church could be rebuilt.

In the fall of 1968, the high school closed, and the grade school remained open for the 1968-1969 school year, when it too closed. In 1968 C.C.D. (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) was begun for students attending the public schools. With the closing of the school, there were no longer sisters living in the convent. The furnishings from the convent were sold at an auction in 1969 and the school facilities were sold in the fall of 1970. Destruction of the school began in November of 1970. The new church was erected on this site and dedicated on January 30, 1972, by the Archbishop James J. Byrne of Dubuque. The sister's convent and the parish hall are now owned by Comprehensive Systems of Charles City.

On June 19, 1978, a ceremony to bless the bells and the statue of St. Joseph was held. The old bell in May of 1978, was incorporated into the church marker which includes the bulletin board. The new bells were purchased in November of 1977. This fine electronic



Catholic church and parsonage around 1909.



Interior of the Catholic church around 1909.

#### Pastors and Assistants of Immaculate Conception Parish

Pastors		Assistants	
Rev. Francis J. Gunn	1892-1920	Rev. Nicholas Keiffer	1912-1913
		Rev. Fred McKinley	Feb. 1913-Sept. 1913
		Rev. J. J. Hennesy	1913-1915
		Rev. Bowen	1915-1920
		Rev. Farrelly	1920
Rev. Michael Farrelly	1920-1926		
Rev. P. E. Donnelly	1926-1937		
Rev. Joseph Schemmel	June 1937-Sept. 1937		
Rev. Edmund O'Donnell	1937-1954		
		Rev. Francis Mulcahy	1937-1942
		Rev. John P. Smith	1942-1944
		Rev. Ronald Axen	1944-1947
		Rev. Leo Logan	1947-1949
		Rev. Peter Bodensteiner	1949-1954
		Rev. John Moran	1954-1959
		Rev. Thomas Purtell	1959-1964
		Rev. Thomas Bisenius	1964-1965
		Rev. Thomas Carpender	Feb. 1965-Aug. 1965
		Rev. Robert Ament	1965-1967
		Rev. Warren Werner	1966-1969
Rev. Urban Churchill	1954-1957		
Rev. Francis Cassidy	1957-1963		
Rev. Joseph Weber	1963-1967		
Rev. Robert Kalb	1967-1970		
Rev. Claude Norton	1970-1973		
Rev. Herbert Tegeler	1973-1980		
Rev. Leander Reicks	1980-		



system reproduces the bell sound of six different bells. The bell tower was built of brick to match the church standing almost 25 feet high, adding prominence to the church building.

A statue of St. Joseph the Workman donated by the Joseph Ptacek family in memory of Michael Ptacek was also blessed at this time.



Immaculate Conception Church dedicated in 1972.

### Monsignor Reicks

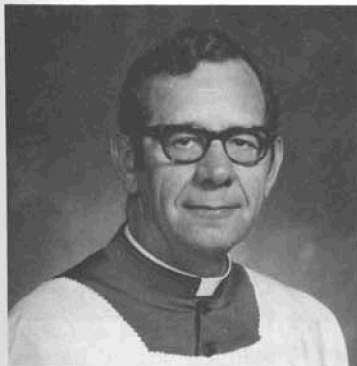
November, 1917, Victor and Mary Reicks became the parents of a son, Leander Henry; later they became the parents of fourteen other children.

His first school days were spent at St. Luke's in St. Lucas. Father Boeding, pastor, exerted much influence in his early education. Other influential people were his teachers Sister Theola and Sister Cussilda, who was known for her famous saying "Dum heit un stultz-vuckst auf ein stick holtz." Translation is, "Stupidity and pride grow side by side."

After attending high school for two years in St. Lucas, he went to Amarillo, Texas, where he completed his high school education. In 1940 he entered Francis de Sales Seminary in Milwaukee.

February, 1944, he was ordained into the priesthood by Archbishop Beckman at St. Luke's Church, St. Lucas. He celebrated his first Mass February 6. The title of Monsignor was bestowed on him in ceremonies at St. Raphael's Cathedral in Dubuque.

Previous to coming to Elma he served as pastor in the Assumption Catholic Church, Cresco. In 1980 he



Msgr. Reichs

was transferred to the Immaculate Conception Church, Elma.

Memories of Msgr. Reicks include his white Cadillac, his white Stetson hat, and his warm sense of humor.

### Rosary Society

The Immaculate Conception parish had two societies, the Rosary Society and the I.C.C.C.—the Immaculate Conception Church Circle. The Rosary Society was organized in the early days of the parish for the purpose of taking care of the altar and having Masses said for the deceased members. The I.C.C.C. was also organized in the early days of the parish, probably about 1921, by Father Farrelly and Miss Anna Mulick, the society's first president. Its purpose was to assist the pastor in caring for the financial and social needs of the parish.

In 1925 the double building on Main Street was purchased for use by the parish. After this the ladies of the parish were divided into bands under a hostess. Each band was to put on some kind of entertainment to raise money for the parish with the big event being the bazaar.

Throughout the years many social functions have been planned and served by the ladies of the Rosary Society. Currently all ladies of the parish are considered to be members. The rosary is said at the wakes of members, and also before Masses in May and October. Funeral dinners are served for members of the parish by members of the Rosary Society. The ladies of the parish do work for the missions, particularly sewing items, rolling bandages, and making up layettes. Parish activities rely on members of the Rosary Society to organize and to serve at, such as the graduation reception, First Communion breakfast, Confirmation reception, special sessions of CCD classes, and special parish events. The ladies continue to take care of the altar supplies, kitchen supplies and spring and fall church cleaning and the temporal needs of prayer and giving through our missions.

### Howard Cemetery Association

On February 21, 1871, a meeting was held at a schoolhouse in Howard. (This was the town of Howard which was located near the current site of the Howard Cemetery.) These men met under the name of the Howard Cemetery Association for the purpose of procuring and fencing a suitable place for the burial of our dead. Articles of incorporation were signed by: Joseph Burgess, Willis Mead, F. B. Pooler, A. J. Griffin, N. A. Axtell, J. N. Mosher, G. C. Chambers, J. N. Cotheran, J. T. Trotter, A. O. Rowley; Notary Public was Darius E. Potter. Trustees were: Joseph Burgess, Willis Mead, and F. B. Pooler; Treasurer, C. G. Chambers; Sexton, Truman Robison.

Officers met at the house of Joseph Burgess on April 14, 1871, and purchased land from Augustus Beadle for \$31.00. County Surveyor, T. N. Glathart, proceeded to lay out and plat the grounds. Twenty-four lots or three tiers were reserved across the west end of the

cemetery for a potters field. Lots were to be sold for \$6.00 per lot.

First purchasers of lots were: Sarah Griffin, D. E. Potter, Conrad Shulz, F. B. Pooler, Joseph Burgess, G. W. Ostrander, James Cotheran, Joseph Zeigmann, and John Hurlbut.

In May of 1887, land lying south of the enclosed cemetery was offered sold at public auction on June 4th to assist in raising funds to build a fence and improve the grounds. This land was bought by Willis Mead for \$38.

Evidence shows that burials took place before the cemetery was incorporated. In 1858, Eliza Davies, the wife of Rev. Ben J. Davies died and was buried here. This is the earliest known burial.

At a meeting on September 27, 1890, the prices of lots were set at:

Front tier of lots—\$10.00

Second tier of lots—\$8.00

Third tier of lots—\$6.00

The first meeting in Elma was at the city hall in 1892. Other locations for the meetings were the post office, Dr. Dunn's office, U. C. Newcombe Harness Shop, and the Farmers Bank.

The sexton in 1898 was J. Steele.

At a meeting April 16, 1898, Dr. Dunn offered land west of the original cemetery and east of the creamery containing  $3\frac{3}{4}$  acres more or less for \$450. The association met at A. A. Carter's store and accepted the contract for land as drawn by Florence H. and Eli H. Dunn.

Trustees in 1907 were: William Buchholz, Charles Robison, Joseph Ervin; Treasurer, S. B. Despres; Sexton, H. J. Trunkey.

Trustees in 1912 were: John Gesell, John Watson, John Ervin.

A charge of \$5.00 was set for digging graves and cleaning up the ground.

In 1912 Mrs. E. Brandmill petitioned for the heirs of Lemuel Potter to use the alleyway between the lots for the purpose of placing a monument there.



Howard Cemetery in 1912

#### Ladies Cemetery Association

The Ladies Cemetery Association was permitted to clean up, improve, and beautify the cemetery. They

had a play in 1920 to raise money. "District School" was a success and made \$272.98 after expenses. An Ice Cream Social cleared \$47.90.

In 1921 officers were: President, Mrs. Dan Fallgatter; Vice president, Mrs. J. Watson; Secretary, Mrs. Tidgwell; Treasurer, Mrs. H. Trunkey; Superintendent, Mrs. Irving.

Articles of incorporation were signed on June 3, 1921.

In 1922, Dinsmore Brandmill received 30¢ an hour for cemetery work.

#### Calvary Cemetery

The land for Calvary Cemetery was donated by Charles Keefe and his wife Susan. His son, Charles J. Keefe, had the donation put into writing and the cemetery was plotted in 1892.

The oldest known stone is that of Willie Gaughan, age 4 years, who died in 1871.

Found in the records of interment in Immaculate Conception parish was an entry by Father Gunn: First burial in new cemetery—Margaret Madden died March 7, burial March 8, 1894; place of birth Elma, Iowa; age, 3 hours. First burial after plotting—William Kuff died May 10, burial May 11, 1894; place of birth New York; age 71 years; disease, paralysis.

In 1928 a beautiful memorial was erected at the grave of Rev. F. J. Gunn. The memorial is a large bronze crucifix. The cross is 18 feet high, and is of reinforced steel covered with pure copper. The image of the Savior is of bronze. On the cross is a tablet with the words "In memory of Francis Joseph Gunn," the date



Calvary Cemetery around 1912 with hitching posts in front.



Avenue of Flags

of his birth, date of his ordination, and the date of his death.

The tornado of 1968 destroyed the pine trees on the west and some of the fence. New pine trees were planted and new chain link fence installed.

A permanent altar was placed in front of the Crucifix in 1985 to be used for special occasions. An "Avenue of Flags" was initiated in 1985 when the first flags were set up and donated by the Shannon family in memory of George Shannon, a WWI veteran, and Jerry Shannon, a WWII veteran. It is hoped the entire avenue can eventually be lined in memory of our servicemen and their families.

#### St. Patrick's Church, St. Cecilia



St. Patrick's Catholic Church, St. Cecilia

The first church in western Howard County was the Catholic Church at St. Cecilia, which was built in 1860, on a site now forming part of the St. Cecilia Cemetery. This church was constructed from logs and measured 16 x 24 feet in size. Because of the growth of the congregation, very soon thereafter a boarded addition was built. The cemetery has a tombstone erected in 1857 to the memory of Fergus Madden, who died December 8 of that year.

Holy Mass was celebrated in the St. Cecilia community some years before a church was erected there. From 1855 until Father Gunn was appointed resident pastor, the parish was served by clergy from other towns.

A Mr. James Roche gave the ground on which was erected the log church in 1860. In 1865 a new church took the place of the log church. That church was erected by the members of the congregation. Father

Feely came from Waverly to celebrate Mass in the new church. The parish rectory was constructed in the summer of 1878, in the pastorate of Father Kiernan who moved in that September.

The church that was constructed in 1865 was destroyed by fire in 1912, and the new church that replaced it was erected in 1913.

The parishes of Elma and Alta Vista originated from St. Cecilia. The first marriage on record was that of Charles Keefe and Anne Burchell on July 23, 1878.

The parish became a mission parish of the Immaculate Conception church in Elma in 1949. The rectory has been rented throughout the years and remains in use. The church is closed throughout the winter months but Mass is held there throughout the summer months and for Christmas services. The interior has been redecorated several times, the last time being in recent years. It maintains the beauty of a country church sitting where it does nestled among the pines. The cemetery situated across the road has been maintained by members of the congregation.

Priests who served at St. Cecelia:

Father Clement Lowery from Decorah 1855-1860

Father John Shields of Waverly

Father Feely

Father Gaffney

Father Kiernan 1878-1882

Father Francis Gunn became resident pastor and remained until 1892.

Father Timothy Nolan 1894-1912

Father J. J. Collins 1912-1928

Father E. J. McDonald 1928-1929

Father James Roche 1929-1937

Father Stephen Tushak 1937-

In 1949 St. Cecilia became a mission parish of Immaculate Conception Church of Elma.

#### Our Lady of Lourdes

In the immediate locale of Lourdes, the first settlers were mostly of Irish descent. It was some years later that a Frenchman—Francis Guyette, who operated a general store—changed the name of the village to Lourdes after the famous shrine in his homeland.

Mass was offered here once a month in private homes and later in a little schoolhouse across the road



Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church



Our Lady of Lourdes Church.

from the present church. Father M. A. McCarty was assigned to the parish of Cresco in 1872 with out-missions at Lourdes and Plymouth Rock.

In 1875 the parish, then numbering about 75 families, built the first church—a frame structure with a seating capacity of about 250. The grounds were granted for church property by Barclay and Bridget Naughton. The church was named “St. Mary’s.” The first rectory was built in 1878 by Rev. J. J. Garland.

A new church in the Gothic style, with a seating capacity of 650 was erected, and dedicated in the fall of 1901, by the Most Reverend John J. Keane, Archbishop of Dubuque. The church was to continue under the title of The Immaculate Conception as was inscribed on the cornerstone, but during the dedication ceremonies, the Archbishop promised to obtain a statue of “Our Lady of Lourdes” from France and that this statue should be placed above the main altar. This statue remains there to the present day, and the church has been called Our Lady of Lourdes. The bell installed at the time of church’s erection, weighing 2,300 pounds still calls the congregation to worship.

The original church was moved into a field north of the new church and dismantled.

In 1908 a school was built, this also housed the parish hall, classrooms, dormitories, and convent. This building was destroyed by fire on January 14, 1938. That same year the cornerstone of the new school was blessed on August 4 and plans formalized for a new convent. In the fall of 1967 the school closed due to the lack of teaching nuns and necessary remodeling expenses.

In 1935, a new rectory, a beautiful red brick structure was built and is still in use.

## Lourdes Cemetery

On September 29, 1870, a Catholic cemetery was established. Mr. Clement J. C. Lowery granted the land, a six-acre plot, to the Bishop of Dubuque. The plot is a half-mile south of the present church. Anna Griffin, whose death occurred in 1873, was the first person buried there. In later years, a beautiful life-size crucifix donated by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Navartil was erected near the main entrance of the cemetery.

## Priests Who Have Served the Lourdes Parish

Father M. A. McCarty—1872–1877

Father J. J. Garland, the first resident pastor of Lourdes—1877–1882

Father Eugene O’Keefe—remained only 4 months

Father J. J. Nelson—1882–1904

Father J. J. Norris—1905–1917

Father Patrick Hogan—1917–1923

Father F. J. Renier—1923–1950

Due to Father Renier’s illness as assistant, Father Wilmer Keiffer was assigned in 1944.

In 1948 Father Keiffer was ill and Father Mark Moore was assigned new assistant.

Father Keiffer died in January of 1950 and Father Renier died in February of 1950.

Father D. T. Noonan was assigned 1950–1963

Father Maurice Tracy—1963–1967

Father Peter Bodensteiner—1967–1973

Father Henry Dunkel—1973–Present



Father Dunkel  
Our Lady of Lourdes  
Catholic Church

## Reverend Henry Dunkel

Reverend Henry Dunkel was born in Dyersville, Iowa.

He was ordained in the Holy Order of the Priesthood on July 28, 1945, by Archbishop Henry P. Rohlman at St. Raphael’s Cathedral in Dubuque. He read his First Mass at St. Francis Xavier Basilica in Dyersville, Iowa.

Father Dunkel spent 10 years in the air force—from 1951 to 1961—serving in Germany, Italy and Greenland, as well as in the United States.

He came to Lourdes in July of 1973, after serving eight years in Parkersburg, with service to Allison and New Hartford missions.

At present, Father is still pastor of Our Lady of

Lourdes Catholic Church at Lourdes and the mission parish of St. Stephen's in Chester. The parish honored him last year on the occasion of his fortieth anniversary to the priesthood with a special celebration.

### St. Paul's Maple Leaf Lutheran Church

Upon examination of old record books it was found that several of the early settlers of this area were in the habit of meeting together for worship, apparently in their homes, or in the old school building which was located across the road south of the present church property, as early as January 3, 1892. In 1893, they started making plans to build a church. On May 29, 1893, there was a Warranty Deed issued to St. Paulus Gemeinde (translates to St. Paul's Congregation) by Charles Krueger and Louise Krueger of Bremer County, Iowa, for this parcel of land. The total purchase price of this land was \$125.00. Now with a 4.9-acre parcel of land and a growing community with new people coming every year, they built the first church building in 1894. Records kept by the secretary of the church at this time show that the first church building was erected for a total cost of \$1,195.09.

The cornerstone for the Evangelic Lutheran St. Paulus Church was laid in an appropriate service in the name of the Triune God on the 15th of April, 1894, with Johannes Pless as pastor.

The first church had dimensions of 24' x 36' x 14'. We can only imagine the disappointment and frustration that must have gripped this little band of pioneers when on the night of September 13-14 in 1895, this structure was struck by lightning and destroyed by fire. A new structure was built with the same dimensions as the first church. A 68-foot steeple was erected and a 1,000-pound bell was placed in the belfry.

The parsonage which had served as a home for the pastors of St. Paul's throughout the years was replaced with a new three-bedroom home in 1975.

As it was built in 1896, the pulpit and organ were on opposite sides of where they are today. This area was the west wall of the church and so the altar protruded into the main auditorium area. There was no basement and heat in the winter was provided by a big black and chrome "Round Oak" heating stove which was in the approximate middle of the church and offset to the south of the center aisle. If you were cold when you got

to services, and you probably were, you were probably still cold when you left. Two huge gold colored chandeliers holding six or eight kerosene lamps each were suspended from the ceiling. These were very seldom used, usually just on Christmas Eve.

In 1910, a schoolhouse was erected north of the church. It was in this building that those who were confirmed before 1939 received their religious instruction.



Interior view of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

In 1939, the church was completely remodeled, an extra twenty feet was added on the west end for a chancel room. The old structure was set on blocks and the dirt was excavated from underneath for the basement. Horses hitched to slip scrapers were backed under the west end and along with much hand shoveling, a seemingly impossible job was accomplished. The schoolhouse was then sold and removed and a coal and wood furnace was installed in the new basement along with electric lights in both the church and parsonage.

The latest remodeling of the church was done in 1961, when a 24' x 36' addition was completed on the east end of the old building. The church is now entered on ground level with inside steps leading up to a large overflow room. Also on the main floor a large classroom or meeting room and the ladies restroom are in the new addition. In the basement a large kitchen and mens restroom were completed at this time. The 1,000-pound bell was again placed on the second floor. Our local Rural Electric Co-op used their winch truck to lower the bell from its old position and also to replace it in the new addition. One must again marvel



St. Paul's Lutheran Church and parsonage

at how our forefathers accomplished the task of placing the bell in the steeple.

In their years of history as an established church, two of their sons have taken up the work of the ministry. Reverend Carlton Rohr was baptized in 1919, is now deceased. Reverend Orval Friedrich, who was baptized in 1922 and confirmed in 1937, is presently living in Elma.

During the earlier years of the church all the services were held in the German language. As time passed by, the change to English was accomplished very gradually. In the 1940s English was used exclusively. In earlier days, the men and older boys sat on the north side of the church and the ladies and younger children on the south.

This congregation has been an active and growing group throughout its entire history. Approximately one-half of our adult members have called St. Paul's Maple Leaf Lutheran their home church for their entire life.

Following is a list of pastors serving St. Paul's Maple Leaf Lutheran Church through the years.

1894-1897	Reverend Johannes Pless
1897-1900	Reverend Wagner
1900-1902	Reverend Paulsen
1902-1910	Reverend Alberts
1910-1911	Reverend Preu
1911-1920	Reverend A. Matthias
1920-1923	Reverend L. Schultheis
1924-1924	Reverend Reu
1924-1953	Reverend Sauerbrey
1953-1957	Reverend Floy

1957-1959  
1960-1961  
1961-1962  
1962-1980  
1981-

Reverend Koschade  
Reverend Redman  
Reverend Lerud  
Reverend H. E. Mountain  
Reverend Bernhardt Polesky

#### Reverend Bernhardt Polesky

Reverend Bernhardt Polesky, minister at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Maple Leaf, has served the congregation since 1981.

He grew up on a farm near Hector, Minnesota, and served in the Lutheran ministry throughout northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota. His family consists of his wife, Mary, and five children.

He will observe his 40th year as an ordained minister in June, 1986.



Rev. Polesky



Elma in 1909 taken from a "Bird's Eye View," looking from the east towards Elma's east side.