

Calvary's Third Decade 1940-1949

The War and the wait.

That would define the third decade of Calvary's existence. World War II was raging, and the congregation sent more than 50 of its "boys" off to fight—a sacrificial number, considering the rostered membership stood at around 300 in those years. Three of those soldiers would not come home.

The "wait" refers to the seemingly endless delay in launching construction of the superstructure of the church. Lack of funding (and war shortages) meant that Calvary would remain a "basement church" many years longer than expected. But the parishioners persevered. The dream was delayed, but it would not die.

Leading the flock at this time was the Rev.



Rev. Emory Erlander

Emory Erlander, who wrote that he had called Calvary "home" five years prior to his 1940 return. There was no "easing in" to pastoral duties at his new calling: In the first few weeks, he would conduct five funerals, including those of two charter members who died

on the same day. Rev. Erlander's profound impact on the congregation would later be remembered in the naming of the downstairs fellowship room in his honor ("Erlander Hall").

The 1940's was a time of continued growth for Calvary, whose attendance increased from an average of 162 at the time of Rev. Erlander's arrival, to around 200 by the end of the decade. Calvary maintained its mid-week and Sunday evening services, even when most other area churches had discontinued theirs. But Rev. Erlander was saddened by the number of rostered members who did not attend worship regularly, especially those who seemed more interested in the social life of the congregation—that is, attending organizational events. "To stay away from church worship services is like staying away from the dinner table. If we don't eat, we know the body starves, and if we do not eat spiritual food the soul starves," he stated in his first annual report. The pastor was always one to

encourage a deeper commitment from his flock, noting that "church members are to be soldiers who owe their allegiance to the Risen Lord, and not Sunday morning pew warmers" (from the '48-'49 report). Another emphasis for Rev. Erlander was on evangelism efforts, especially for the church's 25th anniversary year in 1944. "We live amongst people, the majority of whom apparently have no time for the Lord," he wrote.

To reach others with the Good News, and better serve its community, Calvary completed an ambitious survey of 1,500 homes in the early 40's. It would also launch its first regular newsletter, the *Calvary Lutheran Messenger*, using stencils and a mimeograph machine. In addition, the members expanded their "tract ministry." Church volunteers would put thousands of inspirational leaflets in boxes placed around town, including Asplund's Barber Shop, the Old People's Home, Rosey's Ice Cream Shop, and, surprisingly, Buck's Tavern! The church also established a library and a book table to encourage religious reading. In his 1946 report, Rev. Erlander relayed this story of a person who had picked up a book through Calvary: "Recently a Greek girl working in a Moline factory bought Hallesby's devotional book, 'God's Word for Today,' with nickels won in some kind of gambling machine. We certainly do not approve of such methods of getting money, but let us remember this person, that she may receive a blessing from that book she purchased."

The Brotherhood, a men's fellowship, insured that the "Home Altar" devotional made it into the houses of parishioners, and Rev. Erlander encouraged Calvary members to create their own home altar—that is, a dedicated space for prayer and meditation. One of the highlights of this decade was acquiring a parsonage—another dream that took years to realize. A Parsonage Committee was formed and Calvary purchased a lot on 24th Avenue between 29th and 30th streets for \$900, according to the 1939-40 report. However, the following year, the committee decided not to go forward with construction of the home, perhaps due to the war. Things remained on hold until 1944, when member Anna Lofgren offered her house at 2307 19th St. in Moline for sale for \$7,000 at 3 percent interest. Calvary would have its parsonage.

Luther League at the home
of Bernice Sersig



As for the planned “building up” of the basement church, that would have to wait, and wait some more. Rev. Erlander had pushed for the project from the time he had arrived, insisting that it needed to be completed “as soon as possible. We need a more suitable house of worship in this area of Moline,” he said. For the church’s 25th anniversary celebration, he chose the theme “Let us rise up and build” from Nehemiah 2:18, again putting the focus on construction. “Opposition has hindered us from completing our church. We all know the story of the depression years, basement completed, heavy debt, low salaries, little work, etc., which hindered the completion of our church. Now we realize that war conditions hinder us from building.”

Despite all that, a Church Building Committee was formed, and noted church architect Hugo C. Haeuser of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was hired to draw up preliminary plans, according to the ‘44-‘45 report (a lot next to the church on 23rd Avenue was also purchased at this time). But to date, only \$6,000 had been raised to fund construction, which was estimated to cost at least 10 times that. A year later, the committee was still waiting for those architectural drawings and estimates to be completed—and still hoping for more donations. (To aid fund-raising efforts, a coin bank in the form of a miniature church was placed in a prominent spot for parishioners to drop in their loose change.) Finally, on March 19, 1948, the architect presented his final plans at a general meeting of the congregation. Another year would pass, and the total raised was still less than \$30,000—not even *half* of what was needed. Would Calvary’s building ever be “complete”? Anxious to launch the project, the committee had even solicited funds from Moline

businesses—taverns and some others being excluded from the list. Committee Chairman John Aasland summed up their frustration in his report: “Possibly there are those who have become discouraged and who feel that we may as well let down again and prepare to sit in our basement for another seven years.” But he encouraged members to find strength in the words from Haggai 2:4: “Be strong ... and work ... for I am with you.” The decade would close with \$47,000 in the bank, and a suggestion to “leave out parts” of the proposed construction to get things moving forward. What “parts,” they did not say.

Although these were challenging times, Calvary’s various church organizations continued to remain vital. The Sunday School grew with help from members of the Lutheran Missionary Society, who transported children “from Fruitland Addition and Third Street Hill” to Sunday School. Around mid-decade, an anonymous donor provided a bus to gather in more children. And they *did* come! It was reported that a 1949 Christmas program drew 491 attendees—a record for any event at Calvary up until that time. During these years, Calvary continued to partner with other area churches to present a summer Vacation Bible School at public school buildings. Also, no fewer than four youth choirs were formed at the church. While the children came to church, their parents often did not. At one point, two-thirds of those who attended Sunday School were from non-member families, making that a field ripe for harvest.

Calvary continued its strong support of missions through offerings and service projects of the church groups. Among those who benefited were former Calvary members Ella Heerde, who became a missionary to Columbia, South America in 1943, and Harold and Louise Faust, who brought the Gospel to Tanganyika, Africa. Support also went to Bethphage Mission in Axtell, Nebraska; Christian Friendliness; the Jewish Center and the Leper Mission, both in Chicago; and the Andover Children’s Home, among others.



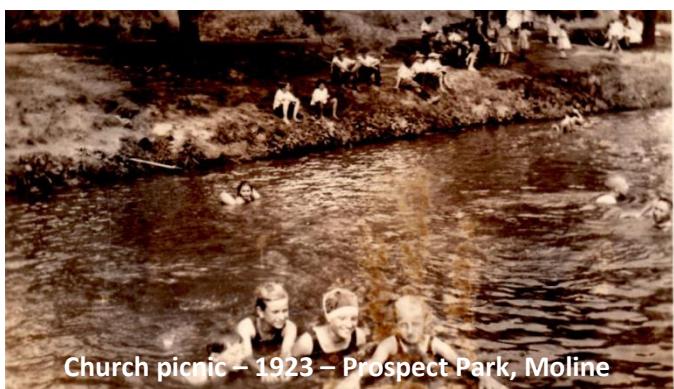
During this time, the Brotherhood established a new boys club called “The Good Fellows,” who visited the “Y” once a month for basketball and swimming. In

1948, this men's group also laid the groundwork for establishing the first Boy Scout Troop at Calvary. In addition, they sponsored a basketball and a softball team, the latter of which reportedly played against teams from the Rock Island County Boys Home and "the Negro church in Silvis."

It was reported that the Women's Missionary Society adopted a "Little Sister" program to encourage the girls in Confirmation classes, and took on a variety of service projects in conjunction with the Lutheran Friendship Circle, the Ladies Aid and the new group for girls called Willing Workers. Group members reportedly rolled bandages, sent care packages to our troops, made tray favors and water bottle covers for patients at Lutheran Hospital, and conducted services at the Rock Island T.B. Sanitorium, to name a few.

The Luther League, too, stayed strong during the 40's. Monthly activities ran the gamut from a "New Year's Eve Wake" to a "hamburger fry" to a "taffy pull." In the '45-'46 report, it was noted that Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Krack had donated their home on the Rock River to the youth to be used as a recreational camp. It would become known as El-Beth-Eden Camp. Many youth also attended Bible camps and conferences at Archie Allen, Camp Abe Lincoln, Medicine Lake and Mount Carmel. In 1949, the League adopted a unique outreach program: Members would wrap religious tracts, together with a Calvary business card, in red cellophane and throw them out the window when they were on road trips.

The decade ended with uneasiness in the nation, as fears grew of an atomic war that could wipe out millions. And closer to home, there was apparently a polio scare for the Erlander family, who were very appreciative of the congregation's support during that difficult time. "Thanks for so remembering us when the boys were stricken with polio," Rev. Erlander wrote. "Thank God for deliverance, and may the Lord help us to better serve him."



Church picnic – 1923 – Prospect Park, Moline



Thought the motorcycle looked pretty neat!

THE Theme for the 25th:

Let Us RISE UP and BUILD

Bulletin dated August 27, 1944

25th Anniversary Suggestions for Prayer

1. That Christians may be deepened in their spiritual life.
2. That backsliders and defeated Christians may experience new life in Christ.
3. That gifts may come into the building fund.
4. That plans for our completed church may soon be made.
5. That we may earnestly long to bring Christ to lost souls.
6. That we may be given a world-wide missionary vision.

Let us use these prayer suggestions in the Quiet Hour, at the Family Altar, and at the regular prayer services. Let us also take time to pray these petitions at each organization meeting this year. At the same time let us be willing to work that they may be put into practice. PRAYER and WORK always to hand in hand in the Kingdom of God. They cannot and must not be separated.

CALVARY and PICNICS

Going through the bulletins of the 1930s & 40s it became clear that during the months of July/August, Calvary held Sunday school and Church picnics. Their favorite place? Prospect Park, Moline; and, they were held *rain or shine*. They asked people with cars to bring those without to make it a "family day" after the morning service.

You were asked to bring table service and sandwiches with other food provided by potluck. The picnic was followed by games and usually another service. By looking at the picture, looked like the children were having fun!

In Remembrance: Gold Star members for WWII are:



★
PFC Carl Adolf Wickstrom
age 22 killed in combat for
possession of the Gilbert
Islands.— 11-27-1943.

He was returned in 1947 after
being interred on Tarawa.



★
PFC Glenn Robert Kroeger
age 26 - MP Escort Guard
KIA in France – 8/15/1944

He was returned in 1948



★
SGT. Reginald Eugene Berg –
age 24 was KIA on Peleliu
Island in the Paulaus group on
10/25/1944.

He is interred on Manila,
Philippine

From the bulletin of April 29, 1945

Letter from Eric Carlson

Dear folks:

Thank you for your prayers...Thank you for
the Home Altar, the bulletins and papers.

Some time ago I saw a church blown apart,
but standing in the damaged church a statue of Christ,
arms outstretched and the statue not injured in any
way, but all around were laying bricks, etc. from the
damaged building. To me that left this one thought
that Christ is living, standing at every one's heart
with arms outstretched to take and bless them with
many blessings, to give them new life. He is the
same today as He was so many years ago. That
picture I will never forget. It is too bad that the
people in America aren't like the Belgians. Every
one attends a service every day. How lax we are in
U.S.

Sincerely, Eric

From the bulletin of October 21, 1945

The executive committee of the Calvary Missionary
Society suggests that we put forth more effort to
memorize hymns. Learn these two stanzas this week.
Next week we shall add the third. The hymn?

What A Friend We Have In Jesus.
Aren't you glad no one has suggested this for a while.
