

Calvary's Fourth Decade 1950-59

"Build the house ... and I will be glorified." Haggai 1:8

The decade of the 1950s saw the congregation of Calvary Lutheran Church at long last leaving the "basement" and edging just a bit closer to heaven.

After a quarter of a century of worshiping in a space that was built as a base for the "real church," the parishioners moved forward with the construction of the superstructure. The dream was finally coming true!

Fund-raising for the new building had been going on for years, and in March of 1951, it was determined that with \$50,000 in the bank, it was time to go out for bids. Unfortunately, the lowest bid was well over estimates—some \$175,000, including furnishings and other items. The Building Committee was instructed to review three possible options: 1) sell the current structure and start over somewhere else; 2) build a sanctuary on land adjacent to the church with hopes of eventually building a second story of Sunday School rooms on the basement structure; and 3) put the sanctuary atop the basement with "an absolute minimum of changes in the present walls." The Committee quickly rejected selling the building, as it wouldn't bring in enough money, and finding a buyer would be difficult. It was estimated that the third option (the no-frills sanctuary) could pare the price to \$115,000. The architect, Hugo C. Haeuser, agreed to do some drawings for the second option—the stand-alone structure—but passed away before he could complete them.

Suddenly without an architect, the Committee quickly secured the services of O.H. Thorson, who was able to complete new plans by May of 1952. A contract was awarded to Ericson Construction Company of Moline for an "upstairs" structure with a price tag of \$127,350. Groundbreaking occurred on June 29 of that year. It was reported that 200 people

attended the Sept. 14 cornerstone-laying ceremony, officiated by Dr. Albert Loreen of the Illinois Conference. On the stone, laid in the northeast corner, was a verse from I Peter 1:25: "The Word of the Lord abides forever."

During the construction phase, Calvary members donated hundreds of hours of labor to help keep costs down. Volunteers painted walls, varnished woodwork, assembled pews, and painstakingly cleaned mortar from bricks that were salvaged from



the basement building and reused in the new construction. The donated labor saved an estimated \$10,000 in building costs. As a result, some of the amenities the members feared they would have to forego—namely a church spire, new organ and new pews—would fit into the budget after all.

The construction process took 16 months, during which time classes for the Sunday School (around 300 strong) were shifted from space to space. Some groups even met in closets! During this upheaval, worship attendance went down, which the Rev. Emory Erlander found disheartening. "Are we so absorbed in building a church that we are neglecting that for which we are building a church?" he asked in his annual report.



Still, one could hardly fault the congregation for being caught up in things. Members of the Building Committee summed it up in the 1952-53



Laying of the corner stone

annual report: “In the Book of Nehemiah we read, ‘And all the congregation said, amen, and praised the lord.’ Our congregation is not of the ‘shouting’ kind, but we know that in many hearts there have been strong and sincere thoughts and feelings of ‘Amen!’ and ‘Praise the Lord,’ as we have seen the completion of our church building finally taking shape.”

On Nov. 8, 1953, the superstructure was dedicated, with the daylong celebration beginning with services in the basement in the morning worship (the farewell) and then moving to the new 400-seat sanctuary. Dr. C.O. Bengtson, president of the Illinois



Conference, was the featured speaker at the afternoon dedication service. On that grand day, maybe there was just a wee bit of “shouting” for joy.

Parishioner Lois Elizabeth Ridenour recorded some of her memories of the event in an article in the Jan. 20, 1954 edition of “The Lutheran Companion”: “There is a feeling of awe as we enter the sanctuary. We did not know it would be so beautiful. The fresh



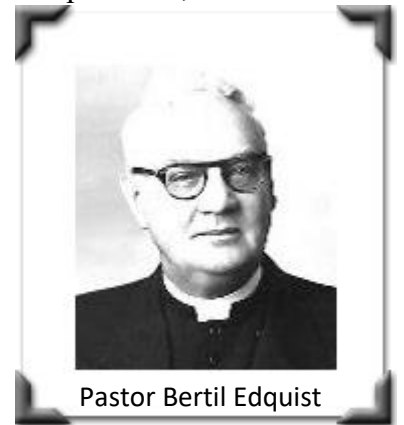
clean colors remind us of the beauty of God’s creation. The walls are lime green. The arches, purlins, rafters and furniture are finished in driftwood blonde. It is lovely beyond words. Our eyes follow the extremely high arches that reach toward heaven like

fingertips touched in prayer. Behind the altar, the lighted cross holds out its arms and we are reminded that Jesus spread out His arms on Calvary’s cross to draw mankind onto himself....”

Rev. Erlander observed that it was “almost like a dream” that Calvary would at last be worshipping in the new sanctuary, built at a final cost of \$157,000, including furnishings. “Our new church is beautiful, worshipful, uplifting, and challenging,” he said in his 1953-54 annual report. “May the Lord consecrate us as members in the use of this equipment. Let us seek by the grace of God to become ‘new people for a new church.’”

Around that time, the Calvary Ladies Aid Society also set about obtaining new equipment to upgrade the kitchen (basement renovations were sorely needed), and its members were able to obtain two large coffee makers “by saving stars from coffee cans.” A refrigerator was donated, as well as a coffee server. Apparently coffee and Calvary have been inexorably linked in this congregation that traces its roots back to the area’s Swedish immigrants.

Not long after the congregation moved into its new space, the Rev. Erlander decided to accept a call to La Crescenta, Calif., ending his 14-year tenure as Calvary’s pastor. He was succeeded by Rev. Bertil Edquist, who took over the reins in September of 1955. In Edquist’s first report to the congregation, he encouraged members to “press on,” now that the building project was completed. “It has taken much ... effort to carry out this task; there could easily be a tendency on the part of many to rest on their oars and be content with looking back in self-gratification,” he warned.



Pastor Bertil Edquist

Rev. Edquist noted that a new church of another denomination was going up very nearby (First Baptist, we assume), and could impact Calvary’s mission. “We know that it will be an influence for good, but we should also believe deeply that we have the clearest grasp of the Gospel message ...,” he wrote. (Just a few years later, Calvary would help neighboring First Baptist Church host a major convention for their denomination, with more than 300 Baptists converging on Calvary and enjoying a dinner served by the Young Married Couples.)

Despite the “competition,” Calvary continued to grow, and so did Edquist’s expectations for congregational giving. He prefaced his 1958 report with the statement that Calvary’s “non-pledgers” would be mad at what he was about to say to them concerning their lack of stewardship. People seem to have money for all kinds of things, he wrote, “but church? That comes last and is least, and, in fact, doesn’t seem to matter at all to these people... . Are your excuses valid? Are they altogether becoming a Christian?” he asked.

But Rev. Edquist had a lighter side, too. His sense of humor would often show through in his “Pastor’s Portfolio” section of the “Calvary Messenger” newsletter. Some examples: “The church is full of willing people. Half are willing to work and the rest are willing to let them.” And, in commenting on a pancake supper fund-raiser, “I don’t know if they made anything on it the way Gunnar Hellberg and Ben Johnson ate, but there was an abundance of good will”

He added that his ministerial musings were being typed “on a very beautiful and built-for-efficiency Smith-Corona portable typewriter. It is one of their finest models.” It was purchased by the Ladies Aid Society to replace a typewriter that had been stolen during his recent illness. Rev. Edquist promised to bring the marvel of a machine to the group’s next meeting so everyone could get a look at it. Around that time, there was also the purchase of a new “whirligig lawn mower,” which reportedly made church sexton Martin Hertz very happy.

The “new” red hymnal (“The Service Book and Hymnal”) was launched in 1958, and its



introduction spawned just a little bit of fear among a congregation somewhat resistant to change. Twelve years in the making, the hymnal was praised even

by non-Lutherans, who said it was “the best ever published,” according to Edquist. The church purchased 250 copies at \$4.60 per copy, including the imprinting, and encouraged members to cover the cost of a hymnal as a gift or memorial.

Lutherans are known for their musical tradition, and just a few years before the launch, a Choir Music School had been formed by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Copley (director and organist, respectively), drawing some 50 students.

Also in 1958, the church began sponsoring its first Boy Scout Troop (Troop 64), perhaps as a way of retaining its church youth, something Pastor Edquist viewed as a major challenge. “We have heavy losses after Confirmation; some say that as many as three out of four drift away from us during their teen-age years.” He believed that making connections through Luther League was another way to combat this.

The League was quite active mid-century. Youth activities mentioned in this decade included “Kidnap Parties,” where Leaguers who didn’t show up for a meeting were picked up at their homes and taken to the church; youth participation in the Sunday evening services; creating the Luther League’s own newsletter, “The Visitor”; attending Easter sunrise services held at Wharton Field House in Moline;



holding a “Hobo Hike”; going to local Lutheran youth rallies; and listening to a talk on dating. Other interesting events around Calvary: The Brotherhood hosted a Father and Son Bean Supper; the Young Adult Bible Class held a “Pigeon Party” (a gentleman brought his prize-winning birds); and the Ladies Aid held a picnic/fund-raiser, where “each member was weighed, and gave a penny per pound, clearing a nice sum.” In addition, Calvary fielded some baseball teams, one of which took second place in the National League in the early part of the decade.

Calvary continued its emphasis on missions in 1950s. The Junior Missionary Society made gifts of stocking dolls, head scarfs and paper pads for African children; the Ladies Aid set up a visitation program at the State Hospital; and several groups supported former Calvary members Ella Heerde and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Faust, missionaries to South America and

Africa, respectively. (One Christmas, the Women's Missionary Society reportedly sent Ms. Heerde some silk hose as a gift.)

There apparently was some dissension in the ranks in the second half of the decade. Rev. Edquist was rather dismayed about that, as well as the number of inactive members. But he chose to focus on the "positives" happening, including the tiling of the first floor by the Sunday School, the creation of a parking lot laid with crushed stone, the addition of kneelers and a "splendid carpet for the center aisle" of the sanctuary, and the establishment of a nursery by the new Young Married Couples group. On one Easter, Calvary had its largest attendance ever, with 550 worshippers.

The decade that began with the uncertainty of the Korean conflict (where member Jack Anderberg reportedly "met accidental death") ended with a new sense of hope for the congregation, despite Edquist's announcement that he would soon be leaving. Calvary was "complete," a new parsonage had been purchased (the dedication was held May 17, 1959), the church marked its 40th anniversary, and things were looking up financially. In the 1959 report, the treasurer noted that the church was staying current on its bills and benevolences, a welcome turn-around. He stated: "I remember so well in 1957 when the treasurer reported on Sept. 1 that we had 97 cents on hand, and someone said, 'Well, we're improving. That's the most we've had for quite some time.'"



In Remembrance: Gold Star member for Korea:



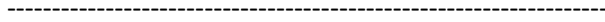
PFC. ANDERBERG



PFC Jack Duane Anderberg
age 21 killed by accident
10-9-1951.

**THIS and THAT from
1956...must have been good...**

August 1956 – Darrel White drives a nice new 1956 Plymouth. He hinted that its color was a bit more respectable than that of the Pastor's car, but the Pastor didn't agree!...and there was no battle!



June 24, 1956 – On display this morning in our narthex, is the trophy won by the Calvary Softball team for placing second in the 1955 softball tournament. The team is doing very well so far this season.

And from the Dispatch... "In a National League game, Calvary Lutheran blistered First Baptist, 16-5, with homers by Clyde & Robinder, triples by L. Hodge and Ruud, Batteries were Copley and Robinder." Well!! The date?...June 7, 1956.

The list of eligibles for our softball team reads as follows: Walter Carlson, Elmer Copley, Dewey Dyer, Jeffrey Petersen, Bill Hodge, Gary Hawkinson, James Salmonson, LeRoy Chase, Omer Jackson, (he's the one who put the fixtures in the office and figured out the parking lineup south of the annex), Sid Robinder, Melvin Robinder, (who just started his job with the RI lines as fireman on a diesel locomotive), Warren Strandlund, (manager) Eric Carlson, Loyal Hodge, (director), John Clyde, Dale Winter, Jerry Kruger, Bill Hurst, Larry Ruud, Don Strandlund, and Ted Jackson, (who is now in Reserve Officer's Training Camp in Aberdeen, MD). They play each week at Riverside Park, 5:45 PM. We rather think that our interest in our youth should be proved by a fine rooting section from Calvary....Each Week!!!!

Sept. 1956 - Our Choir School is being sponsored and financed exclusively by our Senior Choir and a fifty cent registration fee paid by the registrants. The forty-seven children, divided into three age groups, attend three classes. They learn music history and theory. In their choral class they receive not only choir training but also class voice lessons with individual attention for each child. The children, too, have a class in handicraft and recreation.

November 1956 - The Calvary Choir School is proud to announce the following members as having attained the honor of being the nucleus of its very special Merit Choir: Sandra June, Lynne Pearson, Gregory Lofgren, Jeffrey Carlson, Susan Bobb, Karen DeBates, Barbara Guild, Ruth Ann Smith, Carol Beyer, Carol Brissman, Adena Peterson, Phyllis Sellers, Diana Guild, Cheryl Westerdahl and Karen Pearson. (by 1958 – became Jr. Choir)