

# The 1960s - A Time of Change

The 1960s were a time of significant change and turmoil and in the culture. They were marked by the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The Vietnam War and the anti-war movement were another mark of this turbulent decade. The decade was also the time of The Beatles and significant changes in music.

The 1960s were also a time of significant change and some turmoil for Immanuel.

In 1960, Immanuel had been using its new hymnal, the *Service Book and Hymnal* (“the red book”) for just two years.

1960 was the year Immanuel broke ground for a new church building and ended worshiping in its original building. Immanuel broke ground for its new building in August of 1960 and held its first worship service in the new building on Christmas Day.

1960 marked the end of Immanuel’s long parish relationship with Grace Lutheran Church — an almost four decade relationship. There would be a brief reunion with Grace near the end of the decade.

1960 marked the beginning of Immanuel’s parish relationship with Our Savior’s Lutheran Church. Pastor Lloyd Ziebarth served both congregations from 1960-1965.

1960 marked a merger of Lutheran Church bodies in the United States. Immanuel was now a member of The American Lutheran Church.

By 1963, Immanuel was discussing the possibility of calling its own pastor. That dream was realized in 1965 when Immanuel called Pastor H. W. Reinke as its first full-time resident pastor. A monthly subsidy was provided by The American Lutheran Church to help support the pastor’s salary. The congregation was not able to sustain the pastor’s salary even with the support from the ALC. Church. He served Immanuel for less than one year.

In 1966, Pastor Roy Gilbertson of Grace Lutheran Church in Sturgis became pastor of Immanuel. This relationship with Sturgis was temporary, so Immanuel began a hurried search to find another pastor as the relationship.

Immanuel considered the possibility of merging with First Presbyterian Church in Whitewood as a way to obtain pastoral services. That merger was rejected by the congregation in February of 1967.

Finally, the congregation found a way out of this difficult time when Pastor Jack Hill of First Lutheran Church in Lead agreed to serve Immanuel. Pastor Hill began serving Immanuel in June of 1967. The congregation formally called Pastor Hill a year later. Calling Pastor Hill also meant leaving The American Lutheran Church and joining the Lutheran Church in America.

## Pastor Lloyd Ziebarth 1960 - 1965

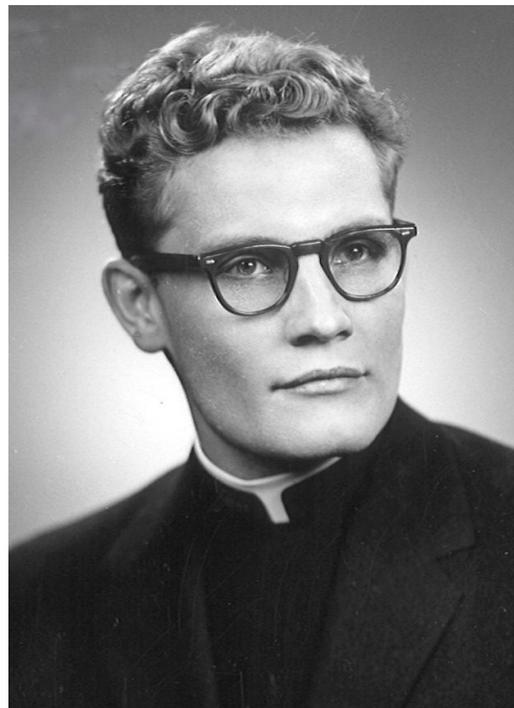
Immanuel became a part of The American Lutheran Church (ALC) which was formed in 1960 when the Evangelical Lutheran Church (the former Norwegian Lutheran Church of America) merged with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (the former United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church) and the American Lutheran Church (a church body of mostly German ancestry formed by a merger of church bodies in 1930). The Lutheran Free Church (of Norwegian background) joined The American Lutheran Church in 1963.

By early 1960, Immanuel was formalizing plans to end its parish relationship with Grace Lutheran Church in Sturgis and join with Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish. Our Savior's had been started in 1954 as a mission congregation of the American Lutheran Church. The merger that formed The American Lutheran Church meant that Our Savior's and Immanuel were now in the same church body.

The Rev. Lloyd Frederick Ziebarth was the pastor of Our Savior's in Spearfish. He was the second pastor to serve Our Savior's and began serving the Spearfish congregation in June of 1959.

On March 22, 1960, Immanuel completed plans to affiliate with Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Spearfish, and share pastoral services with that congregation, the booklet created for the dedication of Immanuel's new building reported. Pastor Ziebarth began serving Immanuel in May of 1960. Pastor Ziebarth was formally called to serve Immanuel in June of 1961.

Pastor Ziebarth was born August 17, 1930, in Scranton, North Dakota. He is a graduate of Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, and Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. He was ordained in 1956. He married Charlotte Bauer in 1956. He served a parish in North Dakota, before accepting the call to Spearfish.



*Pastor Lloyd Ziebarth*

In April of 1960, Immanuel requested that the Sturgis-Whitewood Evangelical Lutheran Parish be dissolved so that it could align with Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish. G. B. Anderson, Grace Lutheran Church president, wrote to Immanuel President Glen Westberg, "May God grant you growth in the future . . . so that you will eventually have the services of a full time pastor," The letter read as follows:

*Dear Friends in Christ:*

*To comply with your request in your letter of April 16, 1960, after services on May 1, 1960, we held a congregational meeting for the purpose of releasing you from any and all obligations to the Grace Lutheran Congregation of Sturgis, South Dakota.*

*After reading your letter, a motion was made: "At their request, we hereby release the Immanuel Lutheran Congregation of Whitewood, South Dakota, from their membership and all their obligations to the Grace Lutheran Parish of Sturgis, S. Dak. This dissolves the Sturgis-Whitewood Evangelical Parish effective May 1, 1960." This motion was unanimously accepted.*

*We rejoice with you that you are able to get more pastoral services by aligning yourselves with the Savior's Lutheran Church (sic) of Spearfish, and may God grant you growth in the future so that you will eventually have the services of a full time pastor.*

*We have enjoyed being associated with you, and may God bless your undertaking in building a new church. I am sure that a new church will add greatly to your growth in membership.*

Ground was broken for the new church building in a special service and ceremony. The bulletin for the service, dated August 24, 1960, included two announcements of the significance of the day:

*Plans that have been given much thought for Immanuel Lutheran Church, begin to materialize today, as we break ground for the construction of a new church. Let us always keep in clear focus our objective: this church is a means to better enable us to reach out into this community with the gospel of Salvation.*

*This is a historic hour for Immanuel Lutheran. And because our future is in God's hands, let us continually pray for God's blessing upon us.*

At the ground-breaking ceremony, following the reading of Scripture and prayer, the pastor turned over three spadefuls of earth. Other members were also invited to do the same.

The dedication program reports that ground breaking ceremonies were on August 6, 1960, and construction began on August 20. It also reports that cornerstone laying ceremonies were conducted on September 15, 1960, by the Rev. Dr. E. O. Gilbertson, president of the South Dakota District.

It is unclear on which date the groundbreaking actually happened. August 6 was a Saturday. August 24 was a Wednesday.

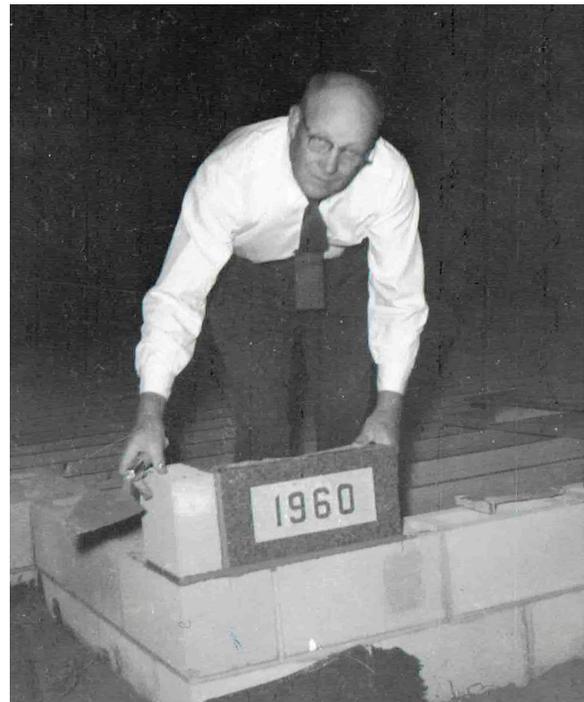
Cliff Jensen reports that he remembers his grandfather "Pete" Jensen purchasing a newspaper of the day to put inside the cornerstone.



*Glen Westberg, Alvin Jensen, Pastor Lloyd Ziebarth and Pete Jensen take part in groundbreaking ceremony for the new church building in August 1960.*

Total cost of the building was \$19,992. The congregation borrowed \$18,000 for the building — \$16,000 from Bear Butte Bank and \$2,000 from member J. P. Jensen. Donations of \$750 were received for the building fund.

“December 25, 1960, was a day of double rejoicing for Immanuel Lutheran. Not only did the congregation commemorate the Savior’s birth, but began holding services in the new church. Not only does the new church help the congregation to ‘worship the Lord in the beauty of His Holiness,’ but it also provides more adequate room and facilities, so that Immanuel can more effectively serve its community and people with the ministration of the Word and Sacraments,” the dedication program reported.

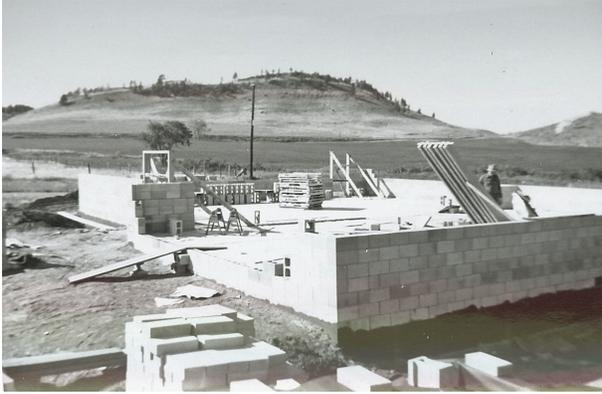


*Joe Opein laying the cornerstone*



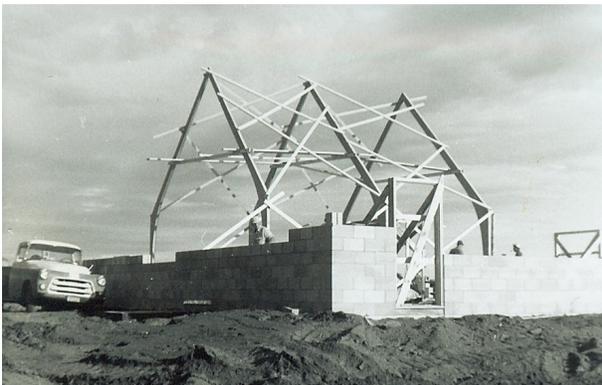
*Congregation at ground-breaking ceremony*

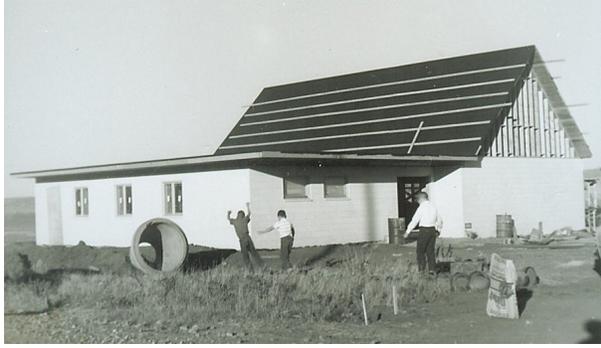




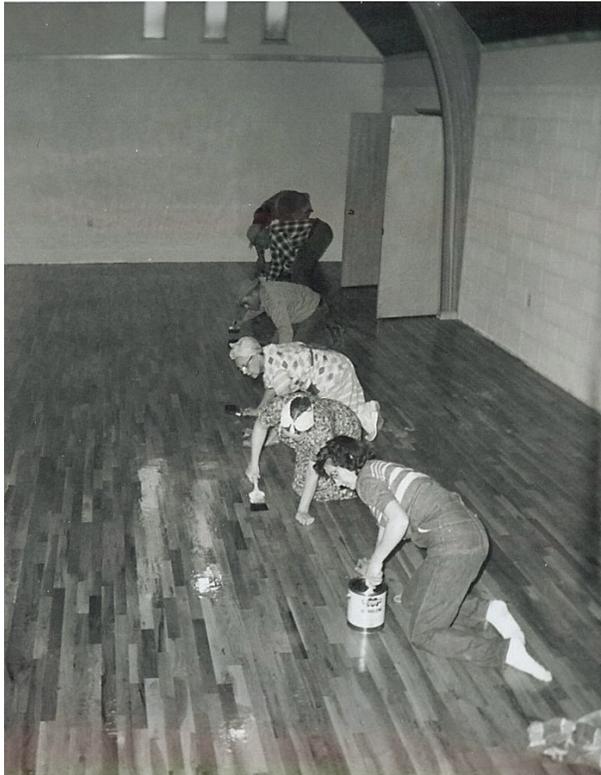
## Building the Church

1960





## Building the Church 1960

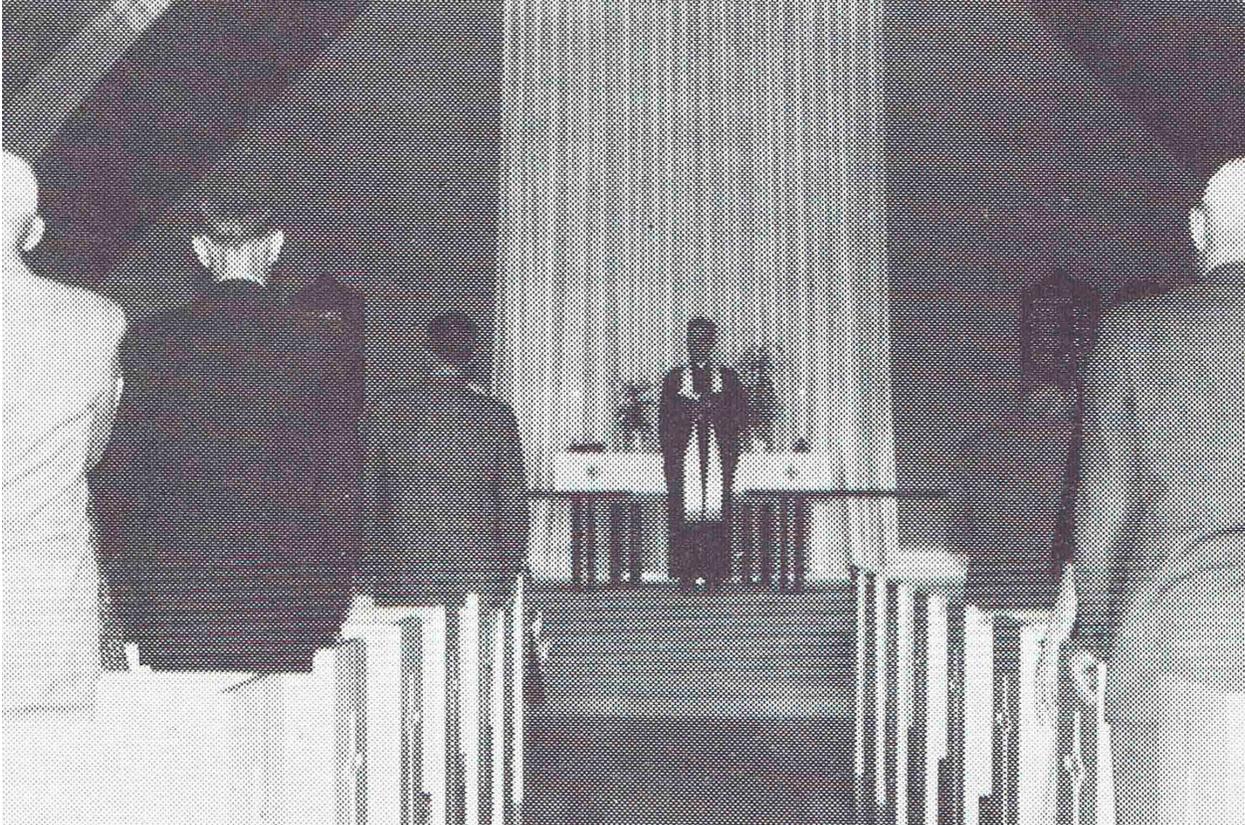


*Members of the congregation waxing the floor of the new church, front to back, Darlene Dana, Lucille Fagering, Katrina Jensen, Alvin Jensen, Robert Fagering, Ann Sogge.*





*The newly finished Immanuel Lutheran Church in 1960*



*Pastor Ziebarth leading worship in the new church building on Easter of 1961.*



*The congregation at worship on Easter of 1961*



*Pastor Ziebarth leading worship on Easter 1961*



*Altar of new church on Easter of 1961*

Immanuel reincorporated in 1960 and changed the legal corporate name of the congregation from Immanuel English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Whitewood to Immanuel Lutheran Church of Whitewood.

The new Articles of Incorporation include reference to the newly formed American Lutheran Church and its Confession of Faith. Article II states:

*The terms and admission and qualifications for membership in the corporation shall be provided for in the constitution to be adopted by the congregation of the above named Church, provided, however, that belief in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and correct rule of faith, and a belief that the Confession of the American Lutheran Church, especially the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, are correct expositions of the Divine Word, shall be essential to securing membership in this corporation. All questions of religious doctrine and practice of this corporation shall be in conformity with and based upon said canonical books of the Old and New Testament, the Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, also the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. As further elaborations of and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, the Church also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: the Apology, Luther's Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord; and recognizes them as normative for its theology."*

Article V of the Articles of Incorporation notes that “the articles of this corporation may be amended in manner and form authorized by law, but Article II hereof shall never be changed or amended.

The Articles of Incorporation list Glen L. Westberg, Alvin F. Jensen and J. P. Jensen as the incorporators. The first Board of Trustees were listed as Alvin Jensen, James Fabricius and Robert Fagering. The pastor is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. The certificate from the state creating the new corporation is dated May 27, 1960.

A special meeting of the congregation was held on January 23, 1961, to approve a resolution transferring the land where the original church was located from the old church name and corporation to the new church name and corporation.

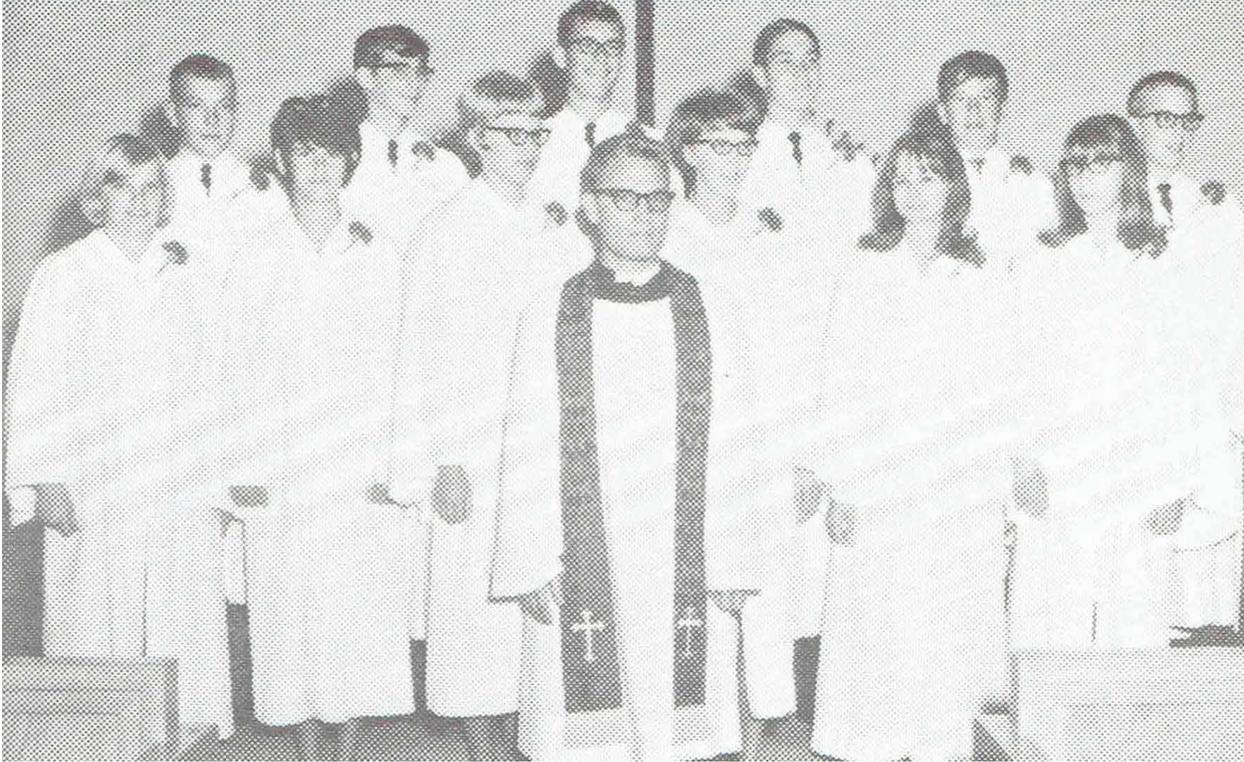
A Service of Dedication for the new church building was held at 8 p.m. on Sunday, May 14, 1961. The Rev. E. O. Gilbertson, president of the South Dakota District of the ALC, preached at the service and presided at the rite of dedication. Pastors from several area congregations took leadership roles in the worship service. Participating pastors included Pastor Ziebarth, pastor of Immanuel and Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Spearfish; Pastor Grote, former pastor of Immanuel but now only serving Grace in Sturgis; Pastor Herb Cleveland of Bethel Lutheran Church in Lead; Pastor Raymond Brien of Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City; Pastor Howard Bomhoff of South Canyon Lutheran Church in Rapid City; Pastor G. Landgrebe of St. James Lutheran Church in Belle Fourche; Pastor John Hopp of First Lutheran



***Lela Rittberger (1904-1987) served as Sunday School Superintendent 1961-1963 and as Ladies Aid secretary in 1976.***



***Kathy Westberg served as Immanuel’s organist 1962-1966***



***Confirmation 1966 took place in conjunction with and at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish. Front row, from left: Janice Revheim, Sheila Loughlin, Vicki Gorham, Carol Wickstrom, Joy Schurhardt, Dorothy Capp. Back row: Carl Edwards, Jeff Picasso, Brian Hardy, Paul Westrum, Karl Jensen, Joel Hallinan.***

Church in Newell and Vale Lutheran Church. The choir from Bethel Lutheran Church in Lead sang for the service.

The bulletin for the dedication noted significant gifts to the new church building: John Sogge built the chancel furniture. The William Allen family donated the candelabras. Mr. and Mrs. Jim Telford donated the dossal curtain which hung in the front of the church. John Grimsbo donated the church sign. Many people were acknowledged as giving toward church pews.

The annual report for 1961 noted income of \$1,900 from the sale of the old church and \$100 from the sale of roofing.

Lela Rittberger reported to the 1963 annual meeting that there were 78 people enrolled in Sunday School with an average attendance of 55 students. The meeting also decided to pay Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish \$125 per month for 1963 for the pastor's services. This was an annual increase of \$100. The meeting also voted to plant Lombardy Poplar trees on the east side of the church. This meeting also approved establishing a fund to raise money toward a bell tower and asked the trustees to get an estimate on construction costs.

The 1963 annual report noted that average worship attendance was 60 in 1962 and 66 in 1963.

Immanuel began to consider the possibility of calling its own pastor around 1963. The congregation's annual report for 1964 included the following update on the life of the congregation:

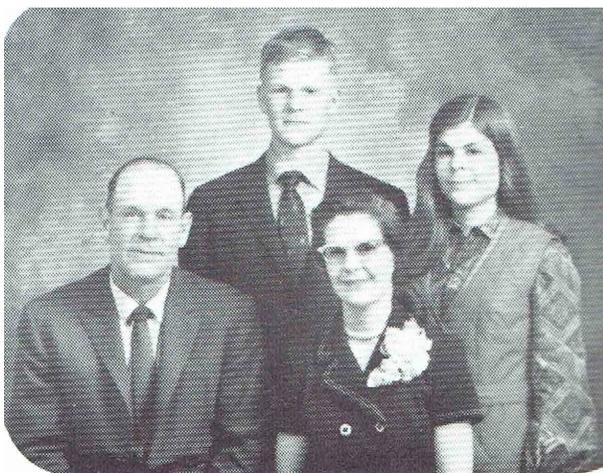
*Members of Immanuel Lutheran took a big step forward in 1960 when it was decided to build a new church. We have enjoyed this new house of worship these past 4 years. And it has enabled our congregation to serve the community better spiritually.*

*Now another big step lies before the congregation: that of calling a resident pastor. Again, this will allow the congregation to better serve the community in a fuller way spiritually. It will mean greater faithfulness, loyalty, service, commitment, on the part of all. But for the most part these larger efforts should be made in the service of Christ and His Church. And larger efforts in the name of Christ will not bring burden, but blessing.*

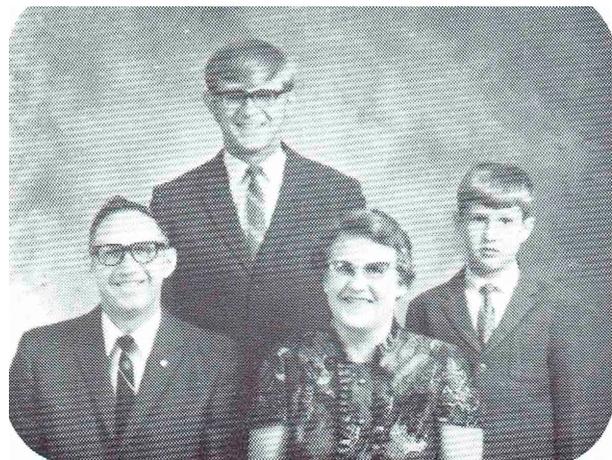
*So before Immanuel lies greater opportunity, greater challenge, calling for greater commitment, loyalty, service. May God grant you the grace to meet the challenge, so you might experience the joy and blessing of greater harvest for the Kingdom.*

At the 1964 annual meeting, treasurer Glen Westberg reported that \$1,680 had been budgeted for Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish — "half to be paid to the church and half to Pastor Ziebarth."

At their May 15, 1964, meeting, the trustees asked the pastor to "get in touch with the Lutheran Mission Church to have a survey make in order to see if the church and town could support a full-time minister."



***Don "Bat" Ridley (1919-1989) and Rosie Ridley and their children Andy (1952-2012) and Wanda. Bat Ridley served as a trustee 1963-1965.***



***John Cooper (1923-2017) and Anna Louise Cooper (1928-2015) and family. Louise was secretary of the Ladies Aid 1960-1961.***

Mr. Berkland, a representative of The American Lutheran Church's Home Mission Board met with the Board of Trustees at a November 13, 1964, meeting. "Mr. Berkland showed charts on the growth and future of the church and the importance of the church serving the area around Whitewood. Mr. Berkland thought it had a possibility we would be able to put out a call for man to minister to us at Immanuel Lutheran Church," the meeting minutes state.

The 1965 budget for the congregation was \$7,480.24 with \$3,760 designated as pastor's salary, \$400 for the retirement fund and \$650 designated for the ALC as benevolence. It was reported that in 1964, the congregation had an income of \$4,252.39 — considerably less than the proposed budget for the next year.

The annual meeting approved the budget and approved an "agreement between Immanuel Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Mission Board regarding the subsidy to guarantee the congregation with a Resident Pastor and a Resident Counseling Service Stewardship and to support the congregation in all phases of its program." The congregation also voted to extend a Letter of Call to the Rev. H. O. W. Reinke.

The *Bethel Bible Study*, an in-depth Bible overview course, came to Immanuel in 1964. George Jensen reported to the 1965 annual meeting that there were 17 people in the Bethel class.

The annual meeting in 1965 also learned that \$13,023.55 was still owed on the new church building. The Ladies Aid reported that they had made one month's payment on the church loan. It appears that the church women made a month's payment on the debt each year. The payment for 1965 was \$135.02.

Pastor Ziebarth shared these memories of his time serving Immanuel:

*I had my first service at 8 in Spearfish, second in Whitewood at 9:30, and third in Spearfish at 11. One Sunday the road was washed out between Spearfish and Whitewood. So how do I get there? Members from Whitewood met me on my side with a boat and took me over to the other side. So all services were conducted without a hitch!*

*What a glorious day it was when Immanuel had its first service in the new church! Quite an undertaking for a small congregation to build a new sanctuary. I brought my organist, Mary Repass from Spearfish, along to play for the first service. She remarked of the pulpit: "I think anyone could preach a sermon from there!"*

Pastor Ziebarth continued to serve Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish until September of 1968. He served congregations in Ohio, Michigan and Illinois before retiring. He currently lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Pastor Ziebarth returned for Immanuel's centennial celebration in 2021.

## **Pastor H. W. Reinke** **1965 - 1966**

Immanuel called a full-time resident pastor on its own in 1965. The Division of American Missions of The American Lutheran Church agreed to provide a subsidy of \$208.30 per month to the congregation to help support the pastor's salary. The congregation was not able to sustain the pastor's salary even with the support from The American Lutheran Church. He served Immanuel for less than one year.

The Rev. Hellmuth Otto Wilhelm Reinke was called to serve as pastor of Immanuel. He served the congregation from May 23, 1965, to March 31, 1966. Pastor Reinke studied at Wartburg College, Luther Theological Seminary, Wartburg Theological Seminary, and the University of Omaha. He had served congregations in Nebraska and Minnesota and as a chaplain for the U.S. Army and Air Force prior to his call to Immanuel. He married Evelyn Johnson in 1930.

Pastor Reinke was installed at an evening service on May 23, 1965. The Rev. Herbert B. Cleveland, a chaplain at Fort Meade Veterans Administration Medical Center, preached and presided for the installation service.

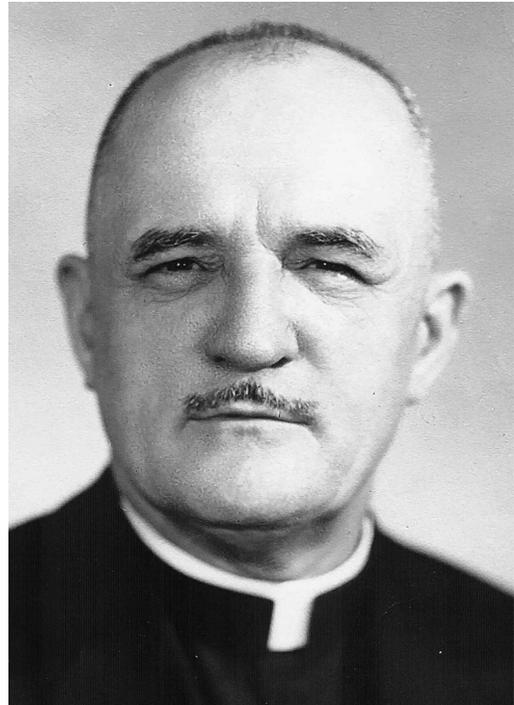
The bulletin for the service included these announcements:

*Welcome to our service of Installation this day for our new, and first resident minister, Pastor H. W. Reinke This is indeed a joyous occasion for Immanuel Lutheran Church and we are happy you are here to share it with us. May God bless this day and hour unto our hearts and lives.*

*And welcome to you, officially that is, Pastor Reinke. May God's Spirit and blessing rest upon your ministry in our midst. May you be an instrument of God to produce much fruit in our hearts, lives, community.*

The installation service bulletin also included this biographical information about Pastor Reinke.

*Pastor and Mrs. Reinke come to Whitewood from Gordon, Nebraska. Prior to entering the parish ministry, Pastor Reinke served 23 years as a Military Chaplain, U. S. Air Force.*



***Pastor H. W. Reinke***  
***1907-1978***

*The Reinkes are originally from Minneapolis. They have three children, two sons and one daughter, all married and living in the mid-west.*

*Pastor Reinke attended college at Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa. He received his seminary training at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. Prior to World War II the pastor served as an Army Chaplain on Civilian Conservation Corps duty in the Black Hills. He lived in Custer serving eight camps in the southern Hills.*

The trustees decided in May of 1965 to have a telephone installed in the church office for the new pastor. It was also decided that the congregation would pay Pastor Reinke an allowance for rent on his home and he would pay the rent himself.

The financial difficulties faced by the congregation were noted in the June 24, 1965, minutes. Treasurer Glen Westberg reported a negative balance of \$34.99. The minutes report that “it was decided that Glen Westberg should talk to the congregation on the coming Sunday in order to raise money to build up our bank account for the coming summer.” The council also decided to purchase a mimeograph machine from memorial funds. Pastor Reinke reported that he wanted to start an adult Bible class. The trustees also decided “to show movies during certain parts of the year.”

The November 11, 1965, minutes note that the John Zwingelberg family was received into membership. Many from the Zwingelberg family remain members of the congregation to the present day.

Pastor Reinke reported that at the end of 1965, Immanuel had 134 baptized and 74 communicant members.

Pastor Reinke submitted his resignation on January 16, 1966:

*I herewith submit my resignation as Pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Whitewood, South Dakota. I have accepted the Lutheran Service Commission appointment as Service Pastor of the Lutheran Service Center, Seoul, Korea. Let me assure you that I am grateful to God for blessing my efforts during the past months in bringing to Immanuel Congregation and to the Whitewood community the means of grace — God’s Word and the Sacraments.*

*My resignation will become effective, tentatively, May 1, the first Sunday in May, on which day I shall, God willing, conduct my farewell service.*

*Dr. Gilbertson has been notified of this action.*

*With every good wish and God’s blessing, I am*

*Sincerely,*

*H. W. Reinke, Pastor*

Pastor Reinke's departure was hastened by a decision at the February 10, 1966, meeting of the Board of Trustees. "A motion was made that we stop paying the salary of the Pastor." The motion carried 4-1. The board also decided to have the telephone at the church disconnected. Willard Sieloff, the congregation's secretary, must have been the dissenting vote, as future minutes note that he resigned from the board and transferred his membership from the congregation.

Pastor Reinke was paid a portion of the salary he was due from the congregation by giving him the amount of the subsidy checks from the ALC. Minutes for March and April record that the \$208.30 subsidy amounts were given to Pastor Reinke. The March minutes reported a decision "to give check from mission to Rev. Reinke and to try to make up difference if possible." The April minutes report that "it was decided by the board to write letters to the Mission Board and Dr. Gilbertson (ALC South Dakota District President) stating our financial condition and why we are unable to pay Reinke at this time."

An April 19, 1966, letter from Glen Westberg, Immanuel's treasurer, and John Grimsbo, Immanuel's secretary, reports the congregation's financial situation:

*This letter will acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 31, 1966 and inform you of action taken by the board the night of April 12th, 1966.*

*We paid Lt. Col. Reinke his salary at the end of January. We gave him the subsidy check for February in March and the board voted to send him a check for \$208.30, which is the amount of the subsidy we received for March, and which has been sent to his bank in Omaha. According to a letter which we received from Lt. Col. Reinke this leaves a balance of \$383.40 owing him which we definitely are unable to pay, as our records show a March 31st balance of \$46.76 out of which must come utilities and other sundry bills.*

*Enclosed with this letter are your copies of our monthly report for January, February and March. Please note from monthly reports enclosed that our attendance had a very drastic drop.*

*Rev. Gilbertson of Sturgis is serving our church at the present time on an interim basis. We feel it would be well to meet with someone from your office in the not too distant future and discuss our future plans.*

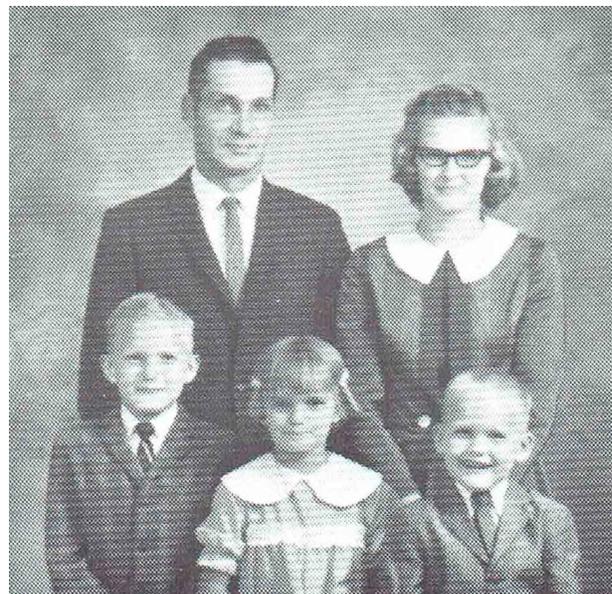
Immanuel was still struggling to pay Pastor Reinke's salary a year and a half year later. At a congregational meeting on September 24, 1967, the congregation voted 18-1 "to get a bank loan to pay the deficit" of Pastor Reinke's salary. At its October meeting the council was still dealing with Pastor Reinke's salary, "our alternate plan if the bank refuses to grant us a loan was ... to authorize the treasurer to write a check for \$100 along with a letter offering to pay \$50 per month on the delinquent salary of Pastor Reinke." It was reported in November that Pastor Reinke's salary had been paid.

Records indicate that the congregation continued to struggle to meet its obligation to support Pastor Reinke’s pension with the national church — a total of \$576 for his time of service to Immanuel. Several letters over several years from church officials noted Immanuel’s failure to meet that obligation and asked the congregation to pay its commitments — including a 1969 letter from ALC South Dakota District President E. O. Gilbertson to Pastor Jack Hill, Immanuel’s new pastor. Dr. Gilbertson came to meet with Immanuel’s Church Council on October 12, 1969, to discuss the non-payment of Pastor Reinke’s pension with The American Lutheran Church. “Dr. Gilbertson was advised that payment of pension would hurt Immanuel Church Unity. He was of the personal opinion that Pastor Reinke would refuse pension payment rather than hurt our church,” the minutes report. At the October 30, 1969, Church Council meeting “a discussion of the pension fund of Pastor Reinke was held. It was decided to write him a letter asking his forgetting of bill and his understanding.”

After leaving Immanuel, Pastor Reinke served as a pastor in Seoul, Korea, and Metropolis, Illinois, before retiring in 1970. He died in 1978. His grandson, Martin Reinke, was a high school classmate of Pastor David Baer at Rapid City Stevens High School.



***Lloyd Loughlin (1928-2004) and Elizabeth Loughlin and family. Lloyd served as secretary 1961-1963 and 1972 and as a trustee 1966-1968. Liz served as Ladies Aid president 1965-1966 vice president for three years and secretary for seven years.***



***Mr. and Mrs. DuWayne Schoon and family Du Wayne served on Church Council 1971-1972.***

## **Pastor Roy Gilbertson**

### **1966 - 1967**

The Rev. Roy Warren Gilbertson became pastor of Immanuel in March of 1966 when Immanuel returned to sharing a pastor with Grace Lutheran Church in Sturgis. Immanuel had given up its alignment with Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Spearfish in calling Pastor Reinke.

Pastor Gilbertson was a graduate of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and Luther Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1949 and had served congregations in North Dakota and Montana prior to being called to serve Grace Lutheran Church in Sturgis in April of 1964. He continued to serve Sturgis until April of 1968. He married Gwendolyn Haugen in 1948. Pastor Gilbertson was the brother of the Rev. E. O. Gilbertson, president of the South Dakota District.

During this time, Immanuel considered the possibility of merging with First Presbyterian Church of Whitewood.

On October 19, 1966, a congregational meeting was called "for the purpose of discussing a merger with the Presbyterian congregation.. Questions pro and con were discussed and answered by A. Jensen and Pastor Gilbertson." The congregation decided "to give the church board approval to meet with the Presbyterian board to work out joint services prior to Jan. 1, 1967.



***Pastor Roy Gilbertson***  
***1923-1988***

The Church Council met "to discuss possible joint meetings with the Presbyterian congregation for Sunday worship. It was decided that the Communion Services would be held in our own separate churches. It was decided we suggest having the first service of the month in our own church and the second and third Sundays jointly for the months of November and December.

At the annual meeting on February 5, 1967, Immanuel's congregation voted 20-11 against merger with the Presbyterian church.

John Grimsbo, president of the congregation wrote a letter to the congregation, dated March 13, 1967, outlining his concerns about the congregation's future:

*To the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church:*

*The letter to follow is not necessarily the thoughts or opinions of the Church Council, but it is written by me, the President, to state how I feel about the Church.*

*First, the Church is on the verge of “going under” because of lack of support and interest. There were only 31 voting members at the Annual meeting of the congregation. Of this number, 20 voted against the merger with the Presbyterian Church, but on Sunday, March 5th, there seemed to be few of those 20 in Church to support the conviction they voted for.*

*At this same meeting I was elected President of the Council, which after the merger vote was like being handed the reigns of a dead horse and told to ride on to victory. But regardless, I made a pledge to myself that I would do the best I am able to lead our congregation forward. But you all know this is not a one man job, or even a six man Council job; it will take the cooperation and support (moral & financial & attendance) of all members of the congregation.*



***John Sogge (1927-2006) and Ann Sogge served Immanuel in various ways over many years. Ann and John served as Sunday School superintendents in the 1950s. John served as congregational secretary 1957-1960 and as a Church Council member for several terms from 1974 through 1994. John also sang tenor in the church choir. John was an expert woodworker and built the pulpit, altar and baptismal font. He also made many wood carving pieces throughout our church building.***

*To date, our progress has been slow — on March 1st the Whitewood Council met with the Sturgis Council, and we were informed at that meeting that the services of Rev. Gilbertson would cease as of the 1st of April.*

*On March 4 we met with Rev. Ziebarth, and he said he would present our need for a minister to conduct services on Sundays to the Black Hills Conference ministers meeting on Monday. There are three ministers, Rev. Lenander, Rev. Okland, Rev. Ziebarth, who can*



***Mr. and Mrs. John Grimsbo. John Grimsbo was president of the congregation in 1967. He served as a trustee 1962-1966.***

*conduct services for about a month at a time on Sunday mornings. Two others, Rev. Hunt and Rev. Kaste, could give afternoon services.*

*So we will have regular Sunday Services after April 1st. But if we are to maintain this Church and serve our community & children, we must have more than Sunday Services for one hour. Thus, we are planning a visitation of all listed members and friends, to find out if you favor Immanuel Lutheran Church continuing whether you will thus give us your interest and support. To have more than Sunday services means that our attendance and budget must be increased. And that means everyone must be faithful and dig deeper, and give more of their money & time.*

*If we have sufficient interest and support, we will explore the possibility of more services & leadership from a minister from another Lutheran Synod, if our own cannot possibly supply it at this time. Various pastors of our Synod agree that this would be a proper thing to do.*

*But we want to make sure that there is sufficient backing and interest, before we take that step. I am only one human being, and I have been given the responsibility of leading this congregation. I cannot do this unless I have your help. So I beg for the life of the Church, & for our Christian benefit and that of our children, won't you please give me your utmost, that we may accomplish what the congregation voted to do: continue as Immanuel Lutheran Church of Whitewood, that we, our children and community may benefit from a fuller Christian life.*

On March 16, 1967, the council decided to appoint John Grimsbo to contact the Rev. Jack Hill of First Lutheran Church in Lead "with the possibility of joining the L.C.A. The council also decided to have a joint Vacation Bible School with the Whitewood Presbyterian Church.

On April 16, 1967, a congregational meeting and potluck supper was held. A progress report was given by congregational president John Grimbo "on trying to get a minister." Six options were presented:

1. A pastor in Rapid City who was considering a call to a congregation in eastern South Dakota.

2. "Joining the L.C.A. The minister of the First Lutheran Church at Lead agreed to conduct services in Whitewood every Sunday and spend one day a week on visitations. He would take care of all the congregational needs."

3. To call a part-time pastor who would teach part-time at Black Hills State College in Spearfish. (The minutes noted that this option was "previously discussed with Pastor Ziebarth who was opposed to the idea.")

4. "Putting advertisement in Lutheran paper in the East for retired minister who would like to take over a small congregation."

5. Contact a pastor in North Dakota who had “once stated he would like to come to Whitewood if the need arose.”

6. Pastor Herb Cleveland from Fort Meade “could possibly have Sunday services only if the hospital board would allow it.”

It appears that the congregation was most interested in the option of working with Pastor Hill from Lead even though the minutes did not mention a decision at the congregational meeting. The May 4, 1967, Church Council meeting minutes noted that “John Grimsbo was appointed to contact the First Lutheran Church of Lead and arrange for a meeting with their council.”

That joint meeting between Immanuel and First in Lead took place a week later on May 11, 1967. The minutes provide this report:

*The council members of Immanuel Lutheran Church met with the council members of First Lutheran Church of Lead and discussed a possible merger of the two churches.*

*Pastor Hill stated the Lead congregation could double in size before any complications would arise. He also thought we would have a better chance of getting a minister with the addition of Whitewood rather than as one church.*

*All the agreements made with the Lead Council are on a temporary basis of three months. At which time a congregational meeting will be held to vote on the merger. The Lead congregation will also vote on the merger. If both congregations agree on the merger, it would take an act of the Synod to disband the two churches. The merger would not be permanent until the L.C.A. Synod accepted us at their annual meeting in April or May of 1968. The A.L.C. would also have to approve of the merger. John Grimsbo presented a letter from Dr. Gilbertson from the A.L.C., who favored the merger.*

*Services for Whitewood will be at 8:00 or 8:30 during June and 10:00 or 10:30 during July and August. At the end of that time the Congregations will decide what they like best.*

*A motion was made by Lloyd Loughlin to accept the idea. Second by Glen Westberg.*

*A motion was made by Glen Westberg. Second by Art Ankerson to pay Pastor Hill \$50 per month for car expenses.*

*Motion by Westberg. Second by Loughlin to pay Pastor Hill \$150 per month salary.*

*Thursday would be the day for visitations. Communion would be Second Sunday of the month. Pastor Hill will bring church bulletins from Lead and have the Whitewood service schedule on them. There will be a joint council meeting of the two churches June 18 at Whitewood. 7:30 p.m.*

*The L.C.A. pension board should be contacted in regard to the pension fund. Presently, Lead pay 8% of his salary and the minister 4% into the fund.*

*Pastor Hill will hold his first service June 4, 1967.*

Alvin and Georgia Jensen and family left Immanuel during this time — perhaps as a result of the conflict happening in the congregation at this time including Pastor Reinke’s departure, the proposal to merge with the Presbyterians, or the decision to join with Lead. Alvin had served as Immanuel’s president during much of the conflict — 1962 and 1963 and 1965 and 1966. Alvin was the son and grandson of charter members of Immanuel and the first person baptized in the congregation. The Jensen family’s transfer to Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Spearfish was approved in January of 1968. His mother, Catherine “Katrina” Jensen, remained a member of Immanuel until her death in 1986.

Pastor Gilbertson continued to serve Grace Lutheran Church in Sturgis. He accepted a call to First Lutheran Church in Williston, North Dakota, in April of 1968. He later was elected the district president (bishop) of the Western North Dakota District of The American Lutheran Church. He retired in 1987. He died on August 13, 1988.



*Glen Westberg (1917-2001) served as president of the congregation 1956-1961 and treasurer 1963-1966. Millie Westberg (1918-2016) was missions treasurer for the congregation and Sunday School Superintendent and Sunday School teacher. She was involved in the Ladies Aid and served as president for seven years and treasurer for five years.*



*Alvin Jensen (1922-2010) is the son of charter members Catherine “Katrina” (Weisman) and Jens Peter “Pete” Jensen. Alvin served as president of Immanuel for seven years 1949-1951, 1962-1963, 1965-1966, as congregational secretary 1954-1956 and as a trustee 1959-1961. Georgia Jensen (1925-2011) was involved in the Ladies Aid and served as treasurer for eight years. She also served as Sunday School superintendent and as a Sunday School teacher.*

