

125 Years on the Mountain:
The History of Zion Lutheran Church
Augsburg, Arkansas

1883-2008

“The Lord dwells in Zion.”

Joel 3:21

125 Years on the Mountain:
The History of Zion Lutheran Church
Augsburg, Arkansas

1883-2008

“The Lord dwells in Zion.”

Joel 3:21

Acknowledgements

Any time a work like this is undertaken, there is always the possibility of errors and omissions. We have tried as hard as possible to include only information that we could verify by written documents. Whenever we included something from an oral source that we could not document, we always indicated the source so that the reader would know that this was someone's memory of an event.

We appreciate the help that all the members of the church gave us, especially the gathering of older members to answer questions that we had about a number of subjects. We think that they enjoyed the recalling of old times while they were providing material for this history.

We are also grateful to Cecil and Delores McDaniel, Regina Steuber, Melvin and JoAnn Dorn, Irene Eledge, Dorothy Birkhahn, and others for clarifying a number of points for us in telephone conversations. We thank all of those who supplied pictures. When we panicked when we were unable to find twenty years of Voter's Assembly notes, JoAnn Dorn came to the rescue and remembered where they had mistakenly been filed.

We are especially grateful to Pastor Thom and Linda Lakso who, with good humor, always answered

our telephone queries and left whatever they were doing to help us find some missing piece of information.

If we have overlooked something that should have been included, we take the blame for the error. It was our intent to cover the 125 years of history as completely as we could with the sources available. We hope that you enjoy reading this history and that it will help future generations to understand how this congregation was formed, how it grew, and how it has changed over the one and a quarter centuries of its existence.

125 Years on the Mountain: The History of Zion Lutheran Church

1883-2008

Change is almost imperceptible while it is taking place, but after 125 years, its cumulative effects are tremendous. If the founders of Zion were to join us at church one Sunday morning, to them it would be in many ways like visiting an alien world. True, the mountains would be vaguely familiar, but even they would be changed by the appearance of houses, roads, and electrical wires. The buildings would be new to them and might seem oddly flat. The cars and trucks, the paved highway, and the clothes today's members wear would be totally unfamiliar. The old Germans would admire the large, beautiful bell in front of the church, and some of them would recognize it with delight, remembering the way its rich, rolling peal sounded across the hills and valleys, but a few would wonder what it had sounded like; it would be strange to them. They wouldn't be able to talk with today's members unless they knew English or we know German, and even then accents and vocabulary changes would hinder any exchanges.

But inside the church the symbolism of the altar would stand out like well-known landmarks, though the altar itself differs from what the old Germans knew. Many of the hymn tunes would be familiar to the old Germans, though the words would be strange. The pews might strike the old-timers as nice, though perhaps not a good influence during worship, since they are soft and padded rather than plain hard wood. They would note that the congregation still stands up now and then, doubtless to show reverence or faith at certain parts of the service. There is still a pastor who leads the worship, delivers

the Gospel, and preaches the sermon. And the English word *God* is almost the same as the German *Gott*.

As you read this history, try to imagine how things were as time passed between 1883, the date of the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Zion Congregation at Augsburg, and the present. Changes in roads, travel, language, means of communication, laws, education, entertainment, and recreation, all subject to God's will, were at work with many other factors to bring about the changes that have taken place at Zion. As you read, ask yourself, What is different now? What has stayed the same?

Worship under the sky

According to Nelson Manfred Blake in *A History of American Life and Thought*, 951,000 German immigrants came to America in the 1850's. The bulk of these immigrants were farmers from Bavaria, the Rhineland, and other parts of southwestern Germany. Population growth in Germany meant that more and more people were trying to live off the same amount of land. Poor farmers were called upon by the government officials to surrender a portion of their crops or contribute eggs, hens, calves, and pigs. Louise Harms, a ninety-one-year-old member of Zion at the time of her 1983 interview, said "They wanted the Germans to get scattered out. They didn't have enough land in Germany. They had wars in Germany. The people had to give away their land."

German farmers were impressed by the passages in letters from the United States that told of the lightness of the taxes and militia duty and the freedom that Americans enjoyed to make a living without being regulated by the government. At this time, many Germans sold what they had, booked passage on

a ship, and embarked on the American adventure. Most of them had just enough money left to purchase modest-sized farms.

In the 1880's there was a wave of German immigration into Arkansas. It was then that the German settlers of Augsburg came. Another group settled not far away in Johnson County and called their settlement Lutherville. However, the immigration of the 1850's is surely the one that ultimately brought many of the early settlers to the United States. Most of them did not come directly to Augsburg from Germany, but went first to the Midwest (Illinois, Ohio, and Missouri), perhaps by way of Pennsylvania. While living in the Midwest, many of them read advertisements placed in German-language newspapers by the Iron Mountain Railway Company (also known as the Fort Smith and Little Rock Railroad Company). These advertisements described an area in Arkansas in which the weather was ideal, the farming excellent, and the land cheap - a veritable Garden of Eden. Many of these Germans came to Arkansas and settled, among other places, the community of Augsburg. Many of them purchased their land from the railroad company.

Katie Miller, the daughter of Johann and Anna Hinck, once said that the reason her father was so attracted to this section of the country was that there was good water here and that a man could grow two crops of potatoes in one season instead of just one. Others have pointed out that in Arkansas, by contrast to the Midwest where the main crop was wheat, whole families could work in the fields, tending corn, potatoes and cotton, the money crop.

An example of what was typical of the pattern of most of the German immigrations into this area is that of the Hinck and Harms families. Born in Hanover, Germany, Johann Harms and Johann Hinck came as young men to Benton County, Missouri, perhaps after having stayed awhile in Illinois. They were

married to sisters: the wife of Johann Harms was Adelheide Fiecken, and the wife of Johann Hinck was Anna Fiecken, both also from Hanover. Apparently these two men made a trip from Missouri to Augsburg to look for land and then returned to bring their families. The Harmses with their four children and Hincks with their two children made the trip over the mountains in horse-drawn covered wagons. Many times to lighten the load so that the horses could pull the heavily-laden wagons, the women and children got out and walked. When they finally arrived at Augsburg, Mrs. Hinck is reported to have said, “Johann, this is it. I’m not going any farther.”



Johann and Adelheide Harms

The two families must have arrived between 1881 and 1883 because the Record Book shows that daughter Anna Hinck was born in Benton County, Missouri, in 1881 and that son Heinrich Hinck was born in 1883 in Augsburg. Similarly, daughter Pauline Harms was born in Missouri in 1881, and her sister Adelheid was born in Augsburg in 1885.

The immigration of the Uellner family, who arrived a couple of years later, is similar. August Georg Uellner was born in 1861 in Hanover, Germany, and Antonie (Grosze) Uellner was born in 1863 in Bohmen (Bohemia, now a part of northwest Czechoslovakia). They came to Staunton, Illinois, where August applied for United States citizenship on February 24, 1883. Their first child, Anna, was born in Illinois. They apparently arrived in Augsburg in 1885, and their second child, Heinrich, was born here in March of 1886.

Most of these early settlers were poor and at first were able to build only very modest homes for their families. Katie Miller said that her father built a two-room house with an open upstairs, where all of the children slept. As the land was cleared, however, two-story houses reminiscent of the Old Country began to spring up, with their ornate upstairs-and-downstairs porches often painted in several bright colors. Even though these transplanted farmers had utilitarian purposes in mind when they built their houses and barns, they took the time to decorate them with fancy cornices, cutout designs, and beautifully cut overlapping shingles.

The Missouri Synod was mindful of the spiritual needs of Lutherans in the area. The synod sent Pastor F. W. Herzberger, a missionary-at-large of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, to minister to several groups of Lutherans in northern and western Arkansas, among them those at Augsburg and Lutherville. His eventual goal was to assist them in establishing congregations.

Thousands of miles from their homeland, these people were bound together by their common faith. Although many of them had probably worshipped in vaulted cathedrals in their native Germany, here they temporarily held their church services in an open field. The German families gathered near a grove of wild pecan trees not far from Piney Creek to give thanks to God, who had guided them safely to their new land. They sang, played the fiddle and horn, prayed, and read from sermon books which they had brought with them. They came down that steep hill to the pecan grove even when the hill was blanketed with snow. Some say a baby was born during this time and was baptized there. This may have been Marie Louise Martha Erfurt, the eighteen-day-old daughter of Robert and Marie Louise Erfurt, who was baptized on August 13, 1882, by Pastor Herzberger. (The baptism was performed the year before the church was built.) After a typical service, everyone had coffee cake and coffee with Johann and Adelheide Harms.

Worship in the 1884 Church

The congregation wasted no time building a house of worship. They purchased forty acres from the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad for the token price of one dollar. By 1883, they were already having services in the new church, even though the property was not officially deeded to the trustees until June 10, 1884.

The first four pastors (Herzberger, Koch, Burkhart, and Toerne) served the dual parishes of Zion and St. Paul's. Today, we consider the distance between the settlements of Augsberg and Lutherville just a hop, skip, and jump, but such was not the case in the 1880's and 1890's, when the only transportation was horse and buggy and the roads were, at best, rude trails through the woods.

Pastor Burkhardt, who lived at Lutherville, traveled to Augsburg on horseback. When he got to Piney Creek, he crossed at John Crotts' ford. Some of the men had made a pen for his horse on the Lutherville side of the creek because the creek was too deep for the horse to cross. He took a little boat that was tied on the far side of the creek and paddled across. On the Augsburg side, he was met by boys with another horse for him to ride. After church, different families would invite him for dinner, and in the evening he would be taken back to the creek to paddle across, tie up the boat, and ride his horse back to Lutherville.



Pastor Burkhardt

The constitution of Zion Lutheran Church was adopted on the Second Pentecost Day in 1883, and the church building was dedicated on the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity (August 26, 1883). Pastor P. F. Germann of Fort Smith and Pastor

Herzberger conducted the dedication service. Pastor Herzberger was called as Zion's first pastor and moved to Augsburg, where he lived until 1885. (He had overseen the founding of St. Paul's at Lutherville in 1882.)

As points of reference, the Missouri Synod was only 36 years old (LCMS Lutheran Cyclopedia online) when the Zion congregation was formed, and Arkansas had been a state for only 47 years. Nothing around Augsburg was old or well established except God's sky and mountains. Compared to the countries of Europe, the United States was brand-new, and Arkansas and the rural Augsburg areas in particular were relatively undeveloped and unsettled. Certainly there was nothing like the centuries-old cities, churches, laws, and traditions the people of Augsburg or their parents had left behind them. Here they faced a new set of problems and a new set of possibilities. Perhaps they clung to some of their own traditions and customs so fiercely because of the flood of unfamiliar challenges they met each day.

Information about the next ten years of Zion's history is sparse. However, we can reasonably imagine that the years passed in hard work, devout and sincere worship of God, and fellowship with other church members. Life was difficult and shorter then than now, and far too many babies died before they reached three years of age. (The first recorded burial in the Zion Cemetery was that of Christine Kuehl, November 14, 1884.) But whenever there was hardship, neighbors came in to help and comfort, ready with a prayer, a hug, and dishes of food. Both sorrows and joys were shared. And there were many joys as well as sorrows. There were family and church gatherings, just as today, with plenty of good food, fun, and music. Weddings and baptisms provided occasions of celebration, as did mission festivals and the Fourth of July. The church year was little

altered, with Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter being celebrated, as well as saints' days and other special observances.

From the beginning, Zion Lutheran Church was the center of religious, educational, and social life in Augsburg. It was the site of the *Gemeindeschule*, or parish school, where children were instructed in basic subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as religion. It was where people gathered to mourn or to celebrate. Many of the Germans who settled Augsburg were related to each other, at least by marriage, and as time passed and children married children of other Augsburg families, kinships grew more and more entangled. Since the families in the community also made up a big part of the church, that meant that most of the church members were related—several ways, usually!—to one another. A few newcomers were not related to anybody else in the congregation, but they were definitely in the minority

In a 1933 article in the Russellville *Courier Democrat*, Pastor Martin L. Cook wrote, "The congregation was organized by the sainted Rev. F. W. Herzberger, early in the year 1883. Unfortunately, the early records have been destroyed; hence it is impossible to say who the charter members were. Among those who are known were Mr. Henry Steuber, who also taught the "Gemeindeschule" up to 1897; Mr. [Johann] Hink, Mr. [Johann] Harms, and Mr. [Gottfried] Riedel, to whom goes the distinction of having named this congregation Augsburg. Mr. Riedel, living with one of his sons in Missouri, is the only one of those mentioned that has not departed this life" ("Augsburg, Ark.").

The congregation had no new resident pastor until 1897. P. Koch, C. Burkhart, and Gerhardt V. Toerne served successively from Lutherville. In 1897 Zion became an independent parish and the congregation enjoyed its first resident pastor since Herzberger in the person of August

Graebener, who remained until 1905. There is some proof that a parsonage was built during that time.



Pastor Graebener & Family

After Pastor Graebener came W.J. Kaiser, a vacancy pastor who served from 1905-1906. Next came Pastor H. M. Schreiner, who served as Zion's pastor from 1906-1917. He had a tremendous effect on the church and the community. It was during the pastorate of Pastor Schreiner that Zion Parish School had its most successful period, the congregation attaining to its

greatest numerical strength up to that time during his ministry. He served the parish until early in 1917.

Worship in the 1907 Church



Under Pastor Schreiner's leadership, the members of Zion fulfilled the need for a new, larger church. *The Courier Democrat* carried the following article: "On the 24th of November [1907] the Lutheran congregation at Augsburg, about 15 miles northwest of here, will dedicate their new church to the Lord. At 10:30 A.M., the resident pastor, Rev. H. M. Schreiner, will deliver the dedication sermon in German and in the

afternoon, at 2 o'clock, Rev. W. J. Kaiser of Lutherville, will deliver an English sermon. The new building is a fine structure, 50 feet long and 28 feet wide, the tower being 60 feet high. [The interior ceiling is said to have been 18' high.] The bell weighing over 1,000 pounds. The interior of the church is nicely finished in oak. The edifice was erected by Henry Suedmeyer [the master builder] assisted by Charles Mueller and Otto Steuber" ("Church Dedication at Augsburg," November 21, 1907, p. 2).



Henry Suedmeyer and Wife

On June 14, 1908, the 25th anniversary of Zion was observed, with Rev. W. J. Kaiser of Lutherville preaching the sermon and Pastor Schreiner giving a history of the congregation.



Pastor Schreiner's 1907 Confirmation Class

The mammoth bell which hung in the steeple of the 1907 church building for seventy-one years (until the building was destroyed by fire in 1978) regulated the lives of Zion's parishioners and, indeed, the lives of the entire community. The bell's sonorous pealing at 5:00 P.M. on Saturdays signaled *Feierabend*, "time for leaving off work." As the sound of the pealing bell filled the countryside, the German farmers stopped their plowing, hoeing of cotton, or cutting of timber in anticipation of the Sabbath. The women started doing Sunday cooking and getting organized for Sunday. "We didn't do anything on Sunday," Irene Eledge said. Many others have confirmed that Sunday was devoted to worship, rest, and visiting.

On Sunday morning the bell rang out three times: the first time one hour before church service, then again thirty minutes before church service, and finally as service began.

Once inside the church, the men went to one side of the church to sit and the women and children to the other side. Most had “reserved seats,” places where they sat every Sunday. The 1907 church was lighted by kerosene lamps which later, when electricity came to Augsburg in 1947, were wired for electric receptacles. The four-lamp chandeliers could be pulled down from the vaulted ceiling to be lighted. The sermons were, of course, in German. Although Pastor Schreiner did preach a few sermons in English, it was difficult for him.

The offering was collected in a *Klingelbeutel*, a velvet bag with fringe around the top. When it was not in use, the *Klingelbeutel* stood propped in the left corner of the front of the church. The bag was attached to a long rod. This curious device was stretched down each pew by the usher, lifted over the heads of the people in that pew, and passed down the next pew. In a 1983 interview, one member recalled, “The men paid the preacher’s salary, and kids just got change to throw in. The children didn’t have any way of making money. The man, when he sold cotton, would pay the preacher’s salary. They just got a couple of hundred dollars, but let me tell you, they didn’t go hungry. They got fed good. They got ham, sausage, potatoes, cabbage.” Another remembered that Pastor Schreiner’s starting salary (1906) was \$400 a year, a house, and a cow. And another added that it was Clara Steuber’s responsibility to milk the cow!

The organ was an ornate pump organ which stood near the front of the church to the left of the tall Pastor’s lectern. The first organist was teacher Heinrich Steuber.



Heinrich Steuber

Will Steuber, a talented musician who played many instruments, was the second organist at Zion. Dorothy Steuber Birkhahn said, "My uncle Will Steuber played the organ at church as long as he could. So that is when my dad [Charley Steuber] took over, and he played until he got sick and couldn't do it any longer. I think he played for many years. He did play the most beautiful wedding march you ever heard. I don't think anyone could play that but Dad. I don't know if he played that for many weddings, but he would if they asked him to."

Zion's early parishioners celebrated Holy Communion only four times a year. The men took communion first, and then the women. Most of the pastors did not take communion with the congregation, but instead waited until another pastor could administer it to them.

The most vivid memories of early church holidays are those of Christmas and Easter. Advent services of course led up to the celebration of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The Christmas tree was always tall, about 16'. Since it was hard to judge the exact height of the tree before it was cut, once in a while an additional length of trunk and perhaps some lower branches had to be removed before the tree would fit inside. Because of its height, it was decorated while it lay flat on the floor and then was carefully lifted to an upright position. (If glass ornaments were used, a few always bit the dust during the latter process.) The Christmas Eve service was the crowning activity, at least in the minds of the children. Heinrich Steuber often played the fiddle as accompaniment to the singing of the Christmas hymns. The huge tree had already been placed in the handmade oak stand and was decorated with homemade ornaments and with candles prior to the Christmas Eve Service. Elders lighted the candles one by one as the congregation sang "Silent Night." The elders also prudently stood by with buckets of water in case the tree or something else caught fire. In a 2008 interview, Irene Eledge said, "When the program was over and we got our sack of candy, it was Christmas! We got a tablet and a pencil. Enough candy to last two or three weeks. English walnuts and pecans and Brazil nuts. That was the first thing you looked for!"

Easter Sunrise Service with breakfast following has been held at different periods in Zion's history. For many years there have been Easter egg hunts after the Easter service.

Mission festivals have been a very important part of the church year almost from Zion's beginning. The first recorded Missionfest was an all-day celebration, observed jointly by Zion and St. Paul's and held in Lutherville on August 21, 1889. Many of these spring and fall Missionfests were held in a wooded area east of the Augsburg church, where a bandstand

had been erected. Food was plentiful, spread out on tables under the trees. The pastor and the elders sat on the bandstand and the congregation sat on board seats built for that purpose. The band, composed of musicians from Augsburg and Lutherville, played for the Missionfests both at Zion and St. Paul's.

The church provided not only the spiritual guidance for the congregation, but the intellectual guidance as well. The church conducted the school, and much of the schooling centered on Christianity. The *Gemeindeschule* was conducted as an additional duty of the pastors until the arrival of Heinrich Steuber, Zion's first and only called teacher. He had previously taught at a parochial school in Luzerne, Iowa. A talented musician, he played the organ and the violin, and he was a member of the Augsburg band.

Pastor Schreiner re-opened the *Gemeindeschule* with an enrollment of 41 children. (The 1884 church building, which faced the highway just west of the 1907 church, was used as the school house.) He was apparently a strict disciplinarian. He kept order in his classroom with a stern look and carefully chosen words. Pastor Schreiner brought inattentive students to attention by rapping them on the head with his pencil; Mr. Steuber was supposed to have achieved the same end by using his fiddle bow.

The classes were entirely in German until about 1910, when English was introduced into the curriculum. The young students began with a *Deutsche Fibel* (German ABC or primer).

Each day began with prayer and with song. In the morning, the classes were in German; confirmation instruction came during this time and was part of every day's work. If the students of confirmation age finished the catechism before Palm Sunday, they started through it again for the second time. The afternoon sessions were in English, during which time reading and arithmetic were taught.

The older students had the responsibility of readying the church for services on Sunday. The pastor let the older girls out of school early on Thursday afternoons to clean the church. The older boys were responsible for moving the pews. There was no school on Friday, when the pastor prepared his sermon and visited the sick.

The school term was not a continuous term as it is in public school nowadays. Instead, there was a split term; as one member said, “We had school when we didn’t have cotton to hoe.” The first part of the term began after the cotton was picked and ran roughly from November to Palm Sunday. Then there were six weeks or more of school in the summer. A complete school year ran a little short of seven months.

For the people of Augsburg prior to 1936, confirmation was a milestone, almost a coming-of-age rite. People talked of events in their lives as having taken place before or after their confirmations. Most girls were not allowed to go to parties until after they had been confirmed. One member said that her family moved to the bottoms “after my youngest brother was confirmed.” They apparently stayed near the church until the children could complete their Christian education.

Confirmation was on Palm Sunday. The confirmands were seated in chairs in a row in front of the altar. Then the questioning in German began. Lucy Dietrich, who was confirmed on March 16, 1913, clearly remembered the first question that Pastor Schreiner asked her on her confirmation day. These older members were very proud of the fact that “very few of the children would miss a single question.” The confirmands took Holy Communion for the first time on Easter Sunday, or, prior to 1906, during the first communion following confirmation – frequently on the second Sunday after Easter.

The early wedding customs at Augsburg are fascinating. Prior to the wedding, the family would select a *Hochzeitsbitte*, a

person to be the official “inviter.” This man could be a member of the family (perhaps a brother of the bride), or he could be a friend of the family. (The *Hochzeitsbitte* for John and Louise Harms was her brother; the “inviter” for the wedding of Lucy Dietrich and for that of her sister was Charlie Harms, a friend of the family.) It was his responsibility to ride to the houses of those to whom the bride wished to extend an invitation and formally invite them to the wedding. When he stopped at a house and issued an invitation, someone would go into the house, bring out a ribbon saved for just such occasions, and tie it onto the bridle or into the mane of the horse. Every family invited to the wedding contributed a ribbon. The young horseman, wearing his Sunday suit, must have created quite a festive sight on his homeward journey with the brightly colored ribbons whipping in the breeze.

Most of the church weddings were held on Sundays. This practice probably began of necessity since Zion shared a pastor with St. Paul’s from 1883-1896. The bride and groom walked down the aisle together instead of the bride’s being accompanied by her father as is the practice nowadays. In the earlier weddings, women wore colored dresses (often finely crafted in dark colors) instead of white ones.

After the wedding, which immediately followed the Sunday church service, all of those who attended would go to the bride’s home for the wedding dinner. Lucy Dietrich said that, when her sister was married, her mother baked bread for a whole week and cooked several hams in the big black iron wash pot in the back yard. The festivities lasted all day and well into the night. The *Hochzeitsbitte* was the person responsible for passing around the celebration drink. It was not uncommon for many of the guests to remain until daybreak.

The huge bell that hung in the steeple of the 1907 church is now on display in front of the church. If you examine it, you

will see that it has a tolling hammer as well as a clapper. The clapper was used for summoning people to Sunday services; it produced a rich, rolling sound, quite pleasant to hear. The tolling of the bell was much different. It sent hollow reverberations over the valley, a sad, bereft sound that was well suited to its purpose. When the bell tolled during the week, it was a signal that a member of the congregation had died. There was one type of ring for an adult and another type for a child. Some bell-tollers tolled it once for each year the deceased person had lived. When the bell tolled, people went out into the neighborhood to learn who had died or guessed from the number of tolls.

In the early days, death was the responsibility of the family and the community. Neighbors went to the home of the person who had died and helped to wash the corpse and lay it out. Friends brought in food so that the bereaved family and those with them would have plenty to eat. Often members of the family and close friends “sat up” with the body during the night. On the day of the funeral, friends and relatives gathered at the home of the deceased person and held a short service or said a prayer. Then the group went, as a group, to church. When the group of mourners and the wagon carrying the corpse came within sight of the church, the bell ringer began the slow, solemn tolling of the death knell, which continued until everyone was inside the church.

After the funeral was over, friends and relatives accompanied the family to the cemetery behind the church as they still do today. However, in those days the family remained while the grave was being closed. As the grave was filled, people sang a hymn at the graveside.

Most things didn’t change noticeably at Augsburg during the productive ministry of Pastor Schreiner, which ended in 1917. People still walked, rode a horse, or rode a wagon to get

where they went. The whole world was changing, and Augsburg was changing too, but the community was more self-contained and self-reliant than most. It didn't accept change easily.

After Pastor Schreiner resigned in 1917, four pastors and one vacancy pastor served for short periods of time:

B.F. Noack	1917-1919
H.F. Meyer	1919-1920
Alexander Wagner	1921-1923
H.M. Hanson (Vacancy Pastor)	1923-1925
Henry D. Wagner	1925-1929

In the 1933 *Courier Democrat* article "Augsburg, Ark.," Pastor Martin L. Cook wrote, "Since that time [1929] the congregation has been served from Russellville by Pastors C.H. Neuhaus and A. Behnke. The latter received the assistance of Candidate Martin Rothe in the fall of 1932 for the duration of the five months school-term."

Sometimes unforeseen problems occurred. Nobody got overly excited. In the December 1, 1930, *Courier Democrat* article "Augsburg," Lydia Harms wrote, "Quite a few people went to church Sunday morning, but the preacher didn't come, so they went back home."

On October 22, 1933, Zion celebrated its 50th anniversary, which served a couple of other purposes as well. Pastor Cook (in the same *Courier Democrat* article) wrote, "Dr. R. Kretzschmar arrived from St. Louis amid torrents of rain, to be Augsburg's festival speaker at a triple celebration—the congregation's Fiftieth Anniversary, its annual Mission Festival, as well as the installation of its newly-called pastor, Martin L. Cook. The scheduled morning service had to be dropped because of the weather. By noon, the sky had cleared

somewhat, and people nearby soon arrived to serve dinner in the school house.” Apparently at this time, and probably much earlier as well, the school house—the 1884 building—also served as a parish hall.

Pastor Martin L. Cook is remembered as an active, productive pastor. His articles in the *Courier Democrat* served several valuable purposes. First, they gave the church and the community a voice to a wider, largely non-Lutheran audience. They made people in the Russellville area aware that Augsburg existed, that Zion Lutheran Church existed, and that both were alive, well, and active. They gave the people of Augsburg something to point to with pride (printed in English, by the way). And they provide a valuable historical record for us. Pastor Cook’s November 2, 1933, “Augsburg” article reads, “Last Sunday morning the new pastor [Cook himself] preached his first sermon, the occasion being the Festival of the Reformation. October 31, 1547, Martin Luther posted 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg for debate. These theses so gripped the imagination of the people that they were really the starting point of the Reformation, freeing the people from the spiritual oppression and tyranny of that day and making possible the religious liberty which we enjoy. May we value this liberty highly and not abuse it.

“Monday morning Zion Lutheran school opened with an enrollment of 38. By next Monday an additional 8 or 10 pupils are expected. Our school is operated by the congregation and taught by the pastor in order that the children might devote more time to the study of Bible truths than would be possible in Sunday School.

Next Sunday we shall celebrate Holy Communion. The service will be in the German language. Confession service, 10 A.M.; regular morning service, 10:30 A.M.”

According to those who remember, the Confession service was a group confession by and for adult communicant members, who gathered in the church with the pastor while the children stayed outside. This service was of course preparatory to receiving Holy Communion in the later service.



Pastor Cook and Family

In the November 9, 1933, edition of the *Courier Democrat*, Cook wrote, “The pastor and his family were agreeably surprised Wednesday night by a “chicken shower” by members of the congregation. Besides chickens, potatoes and some canned goods were most appreciated gifts.” It was the usual thing for pastors to receive chickens, pigs, garden vegetables, canned goods, and so on as part of their salary (or, in hard times like the Depression, in lieu of it).

As another effect of the Depression—part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal—Jaulina Peterson remembers that for a while mattresses were made in the church. (Most of the Augsburg children slept on shuck mattresses.) The government

furnished all that was needed. “People would come and make their mattresses here and we would help them. We made lots of mattresses,” she said.

Pastor Cook’s November 16, 1933, *Courier Democrat* article says, “The parsonage now enjoys the convenience of a telephone. Give us a ring.

“The past Thursday evening the pastor rode with Louis Harms to Sand Gap to preach to the C.C.C. boys encamped there. He intends to go back” (“Activities at the Augsburg Church”). He repeats the information about Saturday night Bible class and Sunday morning worship in English, apparently the routine while he was pastor.

Dorothy (Steuber) Birkhahn, her sister Esther, and their father Charley Steuber sometimes went along with Pastor Cook to the CCC camp about once a month to sing as part of the service there.



Charley & Clara Steuber

An otherwise undated 1934 article of Pastor Cook's in the *Courier Democrat* reported the monthly April meeting of the Zion Lutheran Ladies Aid, which had organized in January of that year with nine members. They met that month at the home of Mrs. Louis Harms. The article continues, "Of the thirteen members which the society now boasts, only two were absent, in spite of swollen branches that had to be crossed, and a constant drizzle that turned into down-pours at intervals. One of the elderly women showed her devotion to the cause by wading

knee deep water in order to get there. We hope that others might be inspired by her example.

“At this gathering, the ladies completed a quilt which is to be sold to raise money to plant shrubs in front of the church” (“Augsburg Notes”).

Lydia Harms (Doepel) submitted a June 10, 1935, *Courier Democrat* item which reported, “Rev. Martin L. Cook attended the conference on Petit Jean Mountain several days last week and after returning filled his regular appointments at Camps Ft. Douglas and Moore” (“Augsburg”).

When Pastor Cook left Zion in 1936, the doors of the *Gemeindeschule* at Augsburg were closed, never to open again. With the closing of the parochial school, a part of the old lifestyle passed from existence. No longer would there be that intimate daily influence of the church school on the minds of the young people. The tiny community was becoming less self-contained, less autonomous. New ways, new customs were replacing the old, and, since the church was such an integral part of the community, it could only reflect these changes.

Both the community and the church were gradually to lose the unifying influence of the German language. The last pastor to conduct services in German was Pastor Adolph Kollmorgen (vacancy pastor from 1940-1949). The last minutes of the Voter’s Assembly recorded in German appear in the January 30, 1944, entry (Minutes of Voter’s Assembly, p.42, Charles Miller, Secretary). The first year Voter’s Assembly notes were taken in English was 1948. Even in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, some members remained who could speak German, and many descendants of the old families know a great deal of German vocabulary. And every Christmas Eve, with a nostalgic look at the past, those of us who can do so still sing one verse of “Silent Night” in German. But for the most part the

1940's and 1950's put an effective end to German as the functional language of the community and the congregation.

It was not a smooth or painless transition. The community as a whole resisted change every step of the way, both in language or in culture. For example, one member of Zion recalled that well into the last century a person was "almost shunned if you married outside the church." Yet some recognized what must happen. Lucy Dietrich remembered an experience that Melvin Dorn's grandfather had when he went into an English store and asked for a *Bügeleisen*, a flat iron. The storeowner couldn't understand what he wanted, and the German was understandably frustrated.

Inevitably, the changes took place. New members came in from other communities; members married outside the community. (The newcomers were welcomed, of course, but the effect was that the insular German community was being Americanized.) English was spoken more and more.

The changes in the spelling of some family names of early members are testimonial to the trend toward Americanization. The Sudmeyer name provides a good example. Originally Südmeier, it changed to Suedmeier, then to Suedmeyer, and finally to Sudmeyer.

Zion's congregations have faced many hardships during their long history. The war years (both WWI and WWII) were especially difficult because our country was at war with Germany. For example, during WWII there was a rumor that members of Zion were secretly gathering arms and hiding them in the basement of the church. Ironically, the 1907 church had no basement!

Seventeen years passed after Pastor Martin Cook's departure in 1936 before Zion again had a resident pastor. Rev. H. M. Hansen served Zion in conjunction with the Lutherville parish until May 1940. In 1939 Zion again became a dual parish

with St. Paul's at Lutherville. There followed a succession of vacancy pastors:

Adolph Kollmorgen	1940-1949
Martin Gassner	1949-1951
Julius Dahms	1951-1953
D.D. Schiebinger	1953-1955
E. Schroeder	1955-1956
R.C. Jahn	1956-1957



1950 Wedding of Lawrence & Regina Steuber
Officiated by: Pastor Martin Gassner

Pastor John C. Kaiser was installed as Zion's new Pastor during a service July 21, 1957, at 4:30 P.M.

In October 1957 Zion celebrated the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the 1907 church. Special services that drew a large number of people from many different states were held.

The 75th anniversary of Zion's organization (1883) was observed in special services on October 19, 1958. In the Rev. H. M. Hanson spoke, and following the noon meal Rev. Richard Jahn of First Lutheran Church in Little Rock addressed the crowd.

Upon Pastor Kaiser's departure from Zion, the Mission Board suggested that the members of Zion join St. John's in Russellville, that is, to disband the congregation. In the June 3, 1960 Voter's meeting, that suggestion was soundly rejected. For the next three years (1960-63), Zion was served by Pastor W. E. Griesse.

Following Pastor Griesse, Pastor Robinson, the newly installed pastor at St. John's in Russellville, became the vacancy pastor at Zion in addition to his duties at St. John's. He recalled in a letter to Earl Schrock dated August 24, 1998: "During Lent, we had mid-week services at St. John's on Wednesday night and at Augsburg on Thursday night. After one service at Zion, I was returning to Russellville. It was quite dark. The Mill Creek Road at the time was gravel and dirt with a lot of dust. About one or two miles before the junction with the highway at Mill Creek, a woman was standing in the middle of the road waving her arms for me to stop. Since I could not get around her and would not run over her, I stopped. She came to the window on the driver's side of the Rambler station wagon and with a thick Arkansas drawl asked if I would take her to town. I asked her why she needed a ride at this hour of the night. She replied that her husband was trying to shoot her. Rather hesitantly, I told her to get in. We had driven about twenty yards when two shotgun

blasts thundered with an ensuing rain of metal pellets against the rear of the Rambler. I let her out at one of her neighbors about half a mile down the road.

When I arrived home, I telephoned Otto Brinkman, sheriff of Pope County and a member of St. John's. When he came by the parsonage the next morning and looked at the rear of the station wagon, he pointed out the pellet dimples. He had sent two of his deputies to the house, and the man shot at them before they were able to disarm him. Excluding my time in the armed services, that was the first and last time I have been the target of gunfire."

For several years while he was pastor, Pastor Robinson served St. John's, Zion-Augsburg, Grace-Clarksville, Trinity-Petit Jean, and the Perryville Nursing Home each Sunday. It was about a 250-mile circuit, beginning early in the morning and lasting until after dark. Reflecting on this time in his life, Pastor Robinson wrote in the 1998 letter, "I must say I made the acquaintance of some wonderful people whom I will love and cherish in this life and feast with them in the life to come."

In 1966, Zion formed a dual parish with St. John's, and Pastor W. H. Ringhardt accepted the call to the dual parish. In 1975, Zion dissolved its dual parish relationship with St. John's and entered once again into a dual parish with Grace Lutheran Church at Clarksville (formerly St. Paul's at Lutherville).

After the short vacancy-pastor stints of Alan Wyneken and William Couch in 1966 and 1967, a joint call from Zion and St. John's was extended to Pastor W. H. Ringhardt. On January 17, 1967, Pastor Ringhardt wrote a letter to St. John's and Zion in which he said: "In the past days the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit have been made wonderfully clear to me as I prayed for the Lord's help in regard to your Call. So it is with a sense of humble dependence upon the graciousness of the Holy Spirit and with the firm conviction that our Lord still rules and

guides His Church here on earth that I humbly and happily accept your Call to serve our God in your midst.”

Pastor Ringhardt had a long and successful tenure at Zion; he seemed to have a fascination with numbers and was undoubtedly the most meticulous record keeper of any of Zion’s pastors.

The November 7, 1967, Minutes of the Voter’s Assembly show that a decision was reached to expand the parish hall. Supervisors for the construction were L. Steuber, M. Priebe, and Ed Birkhahn. Henry Dorn built the addition in 1968.

By June of 1971, the membership of Zion had grown to 113 souls, 93 of whom were communicants. Also in 1971, the sale of Church Extension Tracky Treasure Map Stamps was begun. All of the children carried their quarters to church to buy stamps after the worship service, teaching them the German virtue of saving money at an early age.

In February of 1972, the voters approved the formation of a Walther League for the youth at Zion with Melvin and JoAnn Dorn and Cecil and Delores McDaniel as the sponsors. During Pastor Ringhardt’s tenure the Youth League was very active, participating in conducting the church services, attending youth rallies, going on skating parties, bowling, float trips, having fish fries, ice cream socials, progressive dinners, wiener roasts, and so on.



Pastors Ringhardt and Griesse at Zion's 90th Anniversary

In 1974 a \$10,000 loan was obtained for the construction of a second addition to Zion's educational unit (which everyone called the Parish Hall), making it much more convenient for Sunday School, VBS, and potluck meals.

In June of 1975 the Department of Missions approved the realignment of the parish—from St. John's and Zion to Zion and Grace-Clarksville. In September of that year Pastor Ringhardt accepted the call to the dual parish of Zion and Grace and was installed in October.

Vacation Bible School was apparently first held at Zion during the late 1960's and flourished under Pastor Ringhardt's leadership. In 1976, for example, there were 56 youth enrolled in our VBS. Glenda Schrock said, "JoAnn Dorn always invited a bunch of kids in the community to VBS and came to church with her truck loaded down with them. Many others brought guests, too. Pastor Ringhardt was a great VBS leader. Some of the children who came to VBS returned to Zion as adults to become members and leaders."

VBS was usually held for a week and ended with an evening presentation for the congregation. Each day opened

with a brief service and a song inside the church. The children were well-behaved; they lined up to go everywhere and do everything. Sessions with individual teachers were held in the parish hall. It was a little noisy before the parish hall was remodeled; classes were separated only by dividers because there were no classrooms. Singing was in the church, led at first by various people and later by Nancy Roth, who played her guitar; crafts were made in an area of the parish hall; and the closing service was in the church.

There was a voter's meeting at the church on the evening of December 10, 1978. Late in the night, maybe early in the morning of December 11, phones began to ring. The church and the parish hall were on fire. Many members gathered at the site to watch helplessly as the church and the parish hall finished burning. All who were there and all who heard the news were stunned. How *could* the church burn? Delores McDaniel said, "It was an overwhelming feeling, like what are we going to do? All this history lost!"

Even as late as 2008, Cecil McDaniel can scarcely speak of that night. "I guess I've never got over it. It will never be the same again."

Regina Steuber said, "It was just like the world came to an end."

Her sister Irene Eledge agreed. "We were all devastated. The worst of all was the bell. It cracked into pieces when it fell."

On December 11, 1978, a special meeting was held at Pastor Ringhardt's home to take stock of the situation, gain comfort and guidance in prayer and each other's company, and make plans.

Although the insurance had been renewed for a higher amount on November 30, 1978, the amount available to the congregation was far less than what was needed to rebuild. The

District promised that it would do all that it could to help since Zion was a subsidized church. East Point, Mt. Carmel, Rushing, Pless Community Center, St. John's, and Grace all offered the use of their facilities to our congregation.

Although some of those present expressed a desire to stay as close to Augsburg as possible, President Melvin Dorn gave these encouraging words: "The only thing that burned was the building. Let us be unified. The least thing to worry about is convenience. The tradition that we don't mingle with others should be out; they have been good to us. Let's not argue about what each of us wants to do. We have a long road ahead. We need to make any decision unanimous!"

Pastor Ringhardt encouraged the congregation to build for the future, not for the present—that we should not build for 100 people but instead for 150 to 200.

While trying to deal with the devastation of the fire and the expense of rebuilding the church, the Voters decided to take \$500 from the treasury for MARVA Workshop, whose building in Russellville was destroyed by fire.

Later that week the families of Zion all received a letter from Pastor Ringhardt which began, "It's Tuesday morning now—just a little more than 24 hours after watching our Church and Parish Hall burn to the ground. There are still many conflicting questions, thoughts, and feelings.

"One feeling is that of sadness. . .the building that has been so much a part of our lives is gone! It was here where we worshipped our God, coming so close to him in word and sacrament! It was in this building in which so many of our members were baptized, confirmed, married, had their children baptized, and from which their loved ones were buried. This is the only church building some have known! Now it is gone! But. . .we remember it is only a building. God is still here—His

blessings and love still cover us—His protection still surrounds us. We are still His! By His grace we are still the Church!”

A building committee was appointed which consisted of Cecil McDaniel (Chairman), Julius Hogrefe, Ray Roth, Bob Meimerstorf, Ed Steuber, Gordon Higgs, Glenda Schrock, Keith Whitney, Martin Priebe, Jerry Birkhahn, Lucy Dietrich, Melvin Dorn, and Pastor W. H. Ringhardt. The contractors for the building were Elmer and Eddie Hogrefe.

The building was dedicated on March 9, 1980. The special Bible verse chosen for the dedication was Ephesians 2:20—“Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone.”

Seating 170 in the Nave, the wide pews attempt to bring the worshipper as close as possible to the Chancel and the Means of Grace. The Chancel furnishings are all wood, with the vertical strips of wood serving as a reminder of God’s gracious act of coming down to us in love as well as our response of praise ascending to Him.

The three windows above the altar, as well as the three candles in each of the candleholders on the wall, serve to remind the worshippers of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in Whom we believe. The two candles on the altar, used during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, symbolize the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ.

Worship in the 1979 Church

In 1980, the congregation numbered 179 baptized members and 149 communicants with 190 in attendance at the Christmas Eve service.

Easter of 1980 marked a sort of healing and renewal for the congregation, as well as the beginning of a new tradition at Zion. At Jaulina Peterson’s urging, parts of the trunk of the last

Christmas tree used in the old church (1978) and the first tree used in the new church (1979) were fashioned into a cross just over five feet tall, covered with wire. On Good Friday, the cross was placed to the left of the altar and draped in black, as was the altar cross. There was a solemn service, made more so by the dimmed lights and the black-draped crosses. Everyone left somberly, their minds filled with the echo of the closing of Christ's tomb. But on Easter Sunday, there the cross was, a resplendent symbol of new life, covered with fresh flowers brought by women of the church and placed there on Saturday. Others added flowers before the Easter service.

The cross has been used every Easter season since then, though early Easters have sometimes forced the use of flowers from florists or other compromises.

On December 14, 1982, Pastor Ringhardt wrote to the Department of Missions: "By an overwhelming vote by the Voters' Assemblies of both Zion-Augsburg and Grace-Clarksville the decision was made on December 12, 1982, to become a Self-Supporting Parish in 1983! To God be praise and glory!" After decades of District subsidy, the congregation was at last standing on its own two feet.

In 1983, the congregation became actively interested in preserving its history and launched a project to collect, reprint, and frame historical pictures and to gather historical memorabilia. Also during this decade, a number of gas wells were producing in the section containing Zion's forty acres, and the church reaped significant benefit from the royalties. And in March of 1985, Robert Sims built a display case for the parish hall to display historical memorabilia that had been collected.

It took Zion over a hundred years, but it finally decided to give the women in the congregation the right to vote! On August 5, 1990, the voters unanimously approved amending the Constitution and By-Laws to give every communicant eighteen

years old or older the right to become members of the Voter's Assembly. Interestingly, no women attended the next Voter's Assembly. The second voter's assembly after passage of the constitutional amendment (December 9, 1990) attracted only two women—JoAnn Dorn and Glenda Schrock. Change is difficult for a lot of people, and in a conservative community like Augsburg, it is embraced slowly. On January 13, 1991, Glenda Schrock was accepted as the first female voting member of the Zion Voter's Assembly. However, at the August 4, 1991 Voter's Meeting, ten women showed up!

On June 30 of 1991, Pastor Ringhardt retired after serving 24½ years, the longest tenure of any of Zion's pastors.

Though vacancy pastors served Zion and Grace before Pastor Famuliner arrived in 1992, much was accomplished. A microfilm copy of the Zion Record Book was placed in the Pope County Library. Thanks to efforts of an enterprising group, Zion's float entered in the Dover Christmas Parade in 1991 won first place.

A joint congregational meeting between Zion and Grace May 17, 1992, resulted in a call being extended to Pastor Loren E. Famuliner. He accepted the call and was installed as pastor of the dual parish on October 11, 1992, at 4:00 P.M.

In 1995 the Ladies Aid was given permission to administer the Food Bank, which has since distributed food to many needy families. In the same year, Pete and Jaulina Peterson donated the stained glass windows at the front of the church in memory of her parents, Fred and Pauline Hogrefe. In 1996, the pavilion was constructed, giving the congregation pleasant outdoor seating for fish fries, ice cream suppers, and picnics.

Pastor Famuliner retired in 1999.

On March 16, 2003, Pastor Herbert Swanson was installed as the joint pastor of Grace and Zion in a 3:00 P.M.

service. He was a strong minister of the Gospel, always stressing that Christianity differs from all other religions in the world in that it has a risen Savior. Pastor Swanson resigned as Zion's pastor April 30, 2005, to become full-time pastor at Grace.

Pastor Thom Lakso was installed as the pastor of Zion Lutheran Church on August 1, 2005. Though once retired, he has been quite active as Zion's pastor. He has visited members faithfully, especially in time of illness or grief. He has conducted a number of adult instruction sessions for potential members. Under his leadership new adult membership has grown. Children's attendance has also increased considerably. The Sunday School program, which had been virtually discontinued except for the adults, has been reinstated, with classes held each Sunday for both children and adults.



Pastor Thom & Linda Lakso

A major focus of Pastor Lakso's ministry has been the Revitalization Program. This program, sponsored by the Mid-South District, is designed to reenergize small congregations and give new impetus to congregations with declining membership.

Pastor Lakso says that this is the smartest, most talented congregation he has ever served. In his view it has excellent Christian leaders with some of the greatest skills, very dedicated people.

Pastor Lakso's vision is to reach out to unchurched people in the community, centering our mission effort at home rather than abroad. In this vision, the church will once again become the center of the community. It will provide a place for younger people to gather with each other and also with older people, learning from them so that the old skills will not be lost. Pastor Lakso has received backing from the congregation in pursuing the fulfillment of that vision. Community outreach has been significant under his leadership. Since he came, Zion has had fish fries, benefit dinners for people with severe illnesses, and special offerings for those in need in the community. The Halloween party in 2007 was a great success. Recently a turkey shoot with a freewill-offering lunch was held to raise money to buy new playground equipment for the church yard. Zion has not forgotten others in the area. A recent gift from Zion to the River Valley Free Clinic was over three times the budget of Zion for an entire year during the 1950's. As we worship the risen Lord and strive to do His will, we manage to stay busy and have a great deal of fun.

This history would not be complete without a mention of Delores McDaniel, church organist, who began playing the church piano in the 1960's and took over as organist as soon as the church obtained a new organ. Dennis Steuber also serves as the church organist for some services.

Zion has faced many difficult challenges over the years. It has weathered primitive conditions, cultural isolation, a Depression, a major fire, and the change of pastors over the years. We are persuaded that God has a reason for Zion's survival, and it is a reason that has not changed since 1883. Christ is our cornerstone and the focus of our being. Though 125 years have brought tremendous change to the little church on Augsburg Mountain, we must always remember that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Earl and Glenda Schrock
2008



Present Church Building

PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED ZION

As a Dual Parish with St. Paul's of Lutherville:

F.W. Herzberger (lived in Lutherville and later in Augsburg)	1883-1885
---	-----------

Henry Koch (lived in Lutherville)	1885-1887
-----------------------------------	-----------

C. Burkhart (lived in Lutherville)	1888-1895
------------------------------------	-----------

Gerhardt V. Toerne (lived in Lutherville)	1895-1896
---	-----------

As a Single Parish (1896):

August F. Graebener	1897-1905
---------------------	-----------

W.J. Kaiser (Vacancy Pastor)	1905-1906
------------------------------	-----------

H.M. Schreiner	1906-1917
----------------	-----------

B.F. Noack	1917-1919
------------	-----------

H.F. Meyer	1919-1920
------------	-----------

Alexander Wagner	1921-1923
------------------	-----------

H.M. Hanson (Vacancy Pastor)	1923-1925
------------------------------	-----------

Henry D. Wagner	1925-1929
-----------------	-----------

C.H. Neuhas (Vacancy Pastor)	1929-1930
------------------------------	-----------

Albert Behnke (Vacancy Pastor)	1930-1933
--------------------------------	-----------

M.L. Rothe (Student Vicar)	1931-1932
----------------------------	-----------

M.L. Cook	1933-1936
-----------	-----------

H.M. Hanson (vacancy Pastor)	1936-1939
------------------------------	-----------

As a Dual Parish with St. Paul's of Lutherville (1939):

H.M. Hanson	1939-1940
-------------	-----------

Adolph Kollmorgen (Vacancy Pastor)	1940-1949
------------------------------------	-----------

Martin Gassner (Vacancy Pastor)	1949-1951
---------------------------------	-----------

Julius Dahms (Vacancy Pastor)	1951-1953
-------------------------------	-----------

D.D. Schiebinger (Vacancy Pastor)	1953-1955
-----------------------------------	-----------

E. Schroeder (Vacancy Pastor)	1955-1956
-------------------------------	-----------

R.C. Jahn (Vacancy Pastor)	1956-1957
----------------------------	-----------

John C. Kaiser	1957-1960
----------------	-----------

W.E. Griesse (Vacancy Pastor)	1960-1963
-------------------------------	-----------

Jack Robinson (Vacancy Pastor)	1963-1966
--------------------------------	-----------

As A Dual Parish with St. John's of Russellville (1966):

Alan Wyneken (Vacancy Pastor)	1966-1967
-------------------------------	-----------

William Couch (Vacancy Pastor)	1966-1967
--------------------------------	-----------

W.H. Ringhardt	1967-1975
----------------	-----------

As A Dual Parish with Grace of Clarksville (1975):

W.H. Ringhardt	1975-1991
Loren E. Famuliner	1992-1999
Herbert Swanson	2003-2005
Thom Lakso	2005-

(Following are some personal memories written by members of the congregation for the 125th anniversary and an essay about the old church written by Sheryl Ringhardt in 1986.)

Dorothy Birkhahn's Memories of Her Father, Charley Steuber, Zion's Third Organist

My father, Charley Steuber, made a living farming and he did a good job doing that. He planted a big field of corn, cotton, and sweet potatoes. One year he planted a field of boysenberries; they were picked and taken to Russellville and then sent to a canning factory, but that didn't last too long. He decided to try growing green beans. That went good for a time, but he had to get help to pick the beans. They were taken to Russellville and sent to the canning factory.

When the time came to hoe corn or cotton, my mother, sister, and I had to walk about a mile to get to the field, walk back home at lunch time, and back after lunch. We would go home so we got the chores finished before dark.

Lawrence would be helping Dad with the plowing or whatever needed to be done. Edwin was too young to be helping us.

The fun started when time came for digging sweet potatoes. We would work at that for days. Dad would plow up the potatoes, and we would pick them up and fill boxes. He

would take a wagon load to the potato house. The house was full when we got them all dug. Dad took some of the potatoes to Russellville once a week to sell.

He would cure them out by keeping a hot fire in a wood stove. Sometime on Saturday morning he would tell us to go down and catch some crawfish. He would go fishing after lunch. He walked a long way to get to fish. He loved fishing, and most of the time he came home with some fish.

When Sunday came, we knew we would go to church. In the afternoon we all went to visit friends.

My uncle Will Steuber played the organ at church as long as he could. So that is when my dad took over and he played until he got sick and couldn't do it any longer. I think he played for many years. He did play the most beautiful wedding march you ever heard. I don't think anyone could play that but Dad. I don't know if he played that for many weddings, but he would if they asked him to.

Pastor Cook was our pastor at that time. He would go to the C.C.C. camp I would say about once a month to have a service for the boys. I don't know where the place was, but we did go up Highway 7 north. My dad, sister, and I would go with Pastor Cook to do some singing. I don't know if there was an organ or if we sang without one. It was somewhere between 1933 and 1936.

I was confirmed in March of 1936. Pastor Cook left soon after that. I was twelve or thirteen years old at the time.

In the old church we had a huge wood-burning stove. Someone would build a fire early Sunday morning, but it would still be so cold in the big church. I can still see my uncle, Will Steuber, putting wood in that stove during the church service. All the young people would sit as close to the stove as they could and still be cold!

Peeling of the Past

An Essay Written by Sheryl Ringhardt (12-2-86)

Nine years ago, its bell pealed clearly the beginning of church, a wedding, or the death of a loved one. After a destructive fire, all that remains of the country church in Augsburg, Arkansas, is the cornerstone, now a part of the new modern brick church. The old church was the only public building in the small community, and its isolated walls among the pine trees was like a box holding precious memories.

I can still close my eyes and picture the one-hundred-year-old church where, in my childhood days, I spent many Sundays, summers for Vacation Bible School, and winters for Christmas programs.

Zion Lutheran Church was very tall and made of white-washed boards with a green-flecked grey shingle roof. The bell tower on the roof had a metal grate on all four sides and supported a white-washed steeple and an iron cross. The arched black wooden doorway and single stained glass window served as a welcoming place for the congregation. The door's tarnished, jiggling door knob was never locked, trusting the church's care into God's hands.

Inside, double doors led from the narthex into the sanctuary. Above the double doors, an old rusted clock hung on the wall, long since being unable to present any time but 9:55. Four white circular pillars located a few feet from the doorway supported the unsteady balcony where kids on special Sundays would sit and throw pieces of the bulletins onto the heads of the adults below. It was scary ascending to the balcony, for the stairway was steep and the steps were narrow, barely holding the length of your foot.

A hardwood floor supported twenty pews on both sides of the church, separated by a narrow green strip of carpet serving as an aisle extending up to the steps of the altar.

Wooden crosses stood out like Braille on the sides of the pews facing the aisle. The pews were mobile and scraped back and forth on the floor due to shuffling and standing during the services. The altar was painted white with gold-painted inlaid letters of IHS standing for Jesus Christ. The pulpit located behind the altar was five feet above the floor. Short, semi-circular steps led up to my father's "looking place" over the congregation.

An old wood stove was a permanent member of the church, separating the pews on the right side by sitting in the middle section. Its large round pipe extended into the ceiling and out of the roof. The stove was not an efficient member, for the congregation was still cold in the winter, especially their feet.

During the summer, wood pieces were used to prop open the ten screenless windows that ran along each side of the church. A metal casement on the ceiling that held the chandelier-like array of light fixtures was the home of a multitude of heavenly wasps that distracted the adults' attention and scared the children.

Other members can recall different folklore about the old church and enjoy giving a picture of what their eyes saw as a child or adult. Many of those who could describe the church the best have passed away, but their remains and memories lie not far from the pine-tree-surrounded box of memories that in the past pealed to acknowledge its presence.

Memories of Jean Allen

I remember when we just moved to London after living in Tilly and were looking for a church home. John and I had gone to a few churches but never seemed to find what we were looking for until that Easter when we stopped at Zion at 10 A.M. We had stopped at that time because most churches started at 10

A.M., but with our luck we were late, and an Easter egg hunt was in progress. We were met by Pete Peterson and had a lovely visit with him. We came the next Sunday, met his wife, Jaulina, and her sister and their families and so many other wonderful people, and we knew this was the place God wanted us to be.

Pastor Famuliner gave us confirmation classes at our home. We went to almost all of the services and other activities.

We moved to Springfield, but this will always be our home. Now even with John gone, I try to get back as often as I can. I wish I could be here more often. I love you all.

Memories of Regina Steuber

I started to school when I was six years old at our Lutheran School at Zion. Pastor Cook was our pastor and teacher. I loved Pastor Cook. I remember that, when I got dog bit, he took me to London. The dog bit me in the face, and blood just poured. They had to put one of Lorene Miller's dresses on me because mine was so bloody! Dr. Cowen bandaged my face. I remember that one of our church members brought me some vanilla wafers. To this day, I never eat a vanilla wafer without thinking of Mrs. Louise Harms. Then right after that Pastor Cook left and went into service and was killed in an airplane crash. We all missed him.

I especially remember all of our Christmas programs that we looked forward to. The older children and adults would decorate the big Christmas tree, and we never got to see it until we went to our program. It was a sight to behold. We had candles just larger than birthday candles all over the tree. The Elders would light them when we sang "Silent Night." Then after singing "Silent Night," we would get our sack of candy, apple, and orange—and each one got a tablet and pencil. During our program, we would get to hear special songs by Esther

Steuber Niemeyer and Dorothy Steuber Birkhahn. They always sang “Let Us Haste to Bethlehem.” Anna, Hilda, and Amanda Rietzke would also sing a song. No one could play that pump organ like Mr. Charley Steuber. As time went on, we had several guest pastors, all of whom we thoroughly enjoyed having. As it happened, Lawrence Steuber and I got baptized, confirmed, and married in our old church. We had every intention of having our funerals in that church as well.

Over the years, things change. We never locked our church doors. No younger person than our son, Dennis, will remember our church’s bell ringing. One of our members was killed the night Travis Hogrefe was born. This is when our church bell really was important.

Because we were too trusting and left our church doors open for anyone to come in to have a visit with God, we lost our church to fire in 1978. The church bell and all our hopes were gone. But not yet. The people around here helped in every way they could when we rebuilt the church. Elmer Hogrefe was the contractor and Eddie Carl Hogrefe and Charles Zachary were the bosses. Eugene and Jaulina Peterson, Alma Whitney, Laura Hogrefe, Beulah Steuber, Maxine Steuber and Regina Steuber did all of the insulation of the building and all of the sanding, varnishing, and staining. We had so much fun. When we got done, our church was paid for before we ever had a service in it.

When Elmer finished building the church—his last job on this earth—he decided to take a vacation. He went to California to visit his sisters. While he was there, God called him home. His funeral was held in the new church which he had built. The year I turned 50, I was called out at 1 A.M. to see the church burning in the sky above me. That Christmas was the first Christmas service I had missed in the Augsburg church in 50 years. The church that I was baptized in, confirmed in, and

married in was gone, but it will never be forgotten. Life goes on—hopefully for another 125 years.

Memories of Zuna LeMarr

I was the youngest of ten children in the family of Fred and Pauline Hogrefe. On Sunday we always knew where we were going—to Sunday School and Church. We never missed a Sunday. All ten of us have stayed in the Lutheran Church, probably as a result of Mom and Dad always keeping us in church.

We always looked forward to the Spring and Fall Mission Rallies because we were anxious to see all the people from Lutherville and Russellville. Our church was always full and we had a big dinner. Then we always went to their Mission Rallies. Our dinners were outside.

Christmas was my favorite time of the year—seeing the Christmas tree that would touch the ceiling and the wax candles when they would light them. Getting our bags of candy meant so much! My kids enjoyed getting the bags of candy as well. It was sad when several people stopped the tradition; it meant so much to our kids.

It was sad when our church burned. So many memories went along with it. It started out with a wood stove and then changed to coal. It was nice to stand near it and warm up. Finally, we got gas.

We had to hoe the cemetery every year. We would keep every blade of grass out. That was a hard job. I was little but I really worked hard. It sure is nice to have grass and a lawn mower now, but I haven't forgot the blisters on my hands from the hoe.

On Christmas I still fix my grandkids and great-grandkids a bag of candy with an orange, an apple, nuts, and candy like we used to get. It's just not Christmas without it.

Memories of Scott Roth

So, we're in the old church for this one....imagine, it's July and it's so hot that with all the windows open it was still 90 degrees.....I know the elders remember when the old bell was rung in times of need and such, well, Melvin Dorn used to take a kid or two up to ring it for service....we thought it was cool and we could get away from Mom and Dad for a bit, anyways, If you know about the old church, there were no screens on the window, and all the rafters and ceiling were usually swarming with wasps and mud-dobbers, just about the time ole Melvin was going to ring the bell, they swarmed him good...the bell rang once and that was that, we were running for our lives in that little bell room, when it was all said and done, I think Melvin got 3 or 4 stings....he never said a word, although I know it hurt....sorry Melvin....after service, he was still out front taking care of Tracky Stamps...what a guy!..... my first bell ringing memory.

HAPPY, HAPPY MEMORY by Nancy L. Roth

To think back to the early seventies, all Zion church members who wanted to sing met at the church all bundled up in warm clothes and prepared with a flashlight. The Leader would pass out the Song Sheets ; we would go house-to-house caroling. Some would climb into one of the pick-up trucks, and we would laugh together at some of the fun things that happened at the last house. Some who had heard of the date for the caroling would be prepared to come out of their homes with candy, cookies, etc. At some homes, the cookies were warm, coming straight out of the oven for us. After singing at 8 to 10 homes, we'd return to church to enjoy some warm soup or chili. Again, lots of laughs of some of the enjoyable events we'd just been through. Back out bundled up again, we'd continue caroling to another 6 or so homes. Sometimes the hour would be late getting back to the

church again for some hot chocolate, which many could use for their throats. The following Sunday, many could not sing because they had gotten laryngitis caroling in the cold December night. If we asked what their favorite Christmas song was, they would almost always answer “Silent Night.”

ZION MEMORY by RAY ROTH

I remember, for many years after I joined Zion Lutheran Church, the annual fish fries. These fish fries were held each fall and were attended by not only Zion members but by people for many miles around. They were hosted by the church youth league with most of the cooking being done by their parents. It was a fun time with good catfish and all the fixin’s you could eat. On some occasions, there would be a talent show. All the church musicians and singers would perform from the back of a hay trailer. Do you remember when????

Another delightful memory was the hay rides. When the old church burned, it was as if an era had passed as most of these events came to an end. So I remember—so I miss!

Remembering Zion by Dorothy Hitzke

1. Road to church, Hwy. 333 – mud, mud, mud. Not sure we would get to Zion Church.
2. The music by the Parish Hall at cookouts.
3. Not concentrating on sermon because of watching mud-dobbers flying around.
4. Praying Pastor would not fall going up or coming down the steep stairs to deliver the sermon.
5. Watching kids write notes on bulletin because they were kept quiet.

Memories by Carrie (Hitzke) Green

Having grown up attending Zion Lutheran Church at Augsburg, I have a lot of memories I could share. I remember as a very young girl being scared to death of having to go to the bathroom during the warm spring, summer and fall months. To those who are confused, let me clarify why. The old church did not have indoor plumbing so you had to use the outhouses. Spiders, snakes, wasps, and who knew what else could attack you when you went through the door. Most of the time, I could avoid having to use it, but during VBS when you were there for hours it just couldn't be. Of course, VBS is in the summer! We did finally get indoor restrooms before I was too old, but now that I'm older, I actually cherish this memory. How many people my age can actually say they remember having to use outhouses?

When the old church burned, it was kind of the end of childhood for me. I was in confirmation and was actually confirmed at Clarksville because our new church wasn't completed yet. My fondest (however odd) memories are all from the old church. Watching the wasps circle above, hearing some poor kid scream when he got stung, running up the tall, skinny stairs to ride the rope of the bell when it was rung, playing dodge ball, the huge perfectly proportioned Christmas tree that had to be decorated lying down before being stood up in the specially made stand, being in the Christmas program and singing in German. These are just a few that come to mind so easily.

Memories by Glenda Schrock

One of those people who used to go door-to-door representing certain religious groups was responsible for getting my family into the Zion congregation so promptly after we moved to Augsburg in 1971. I don't remember which group he

represented, but you know the type: he wore a suit of sorts and had little to say about the Bible, but he was very persistent, had the inside story on Christ's return, and wanted to give me some books. I was trying to remove years of dirt from the living room of Charlie Harms's Old Place when he drove up and tried to evangelize me. An hour or so later, he left so impressed with the fact that I am a Lutheran that he shared that information with the next person down the line, who also happened to be a Lutheran, as the two previous ones had been. "Are *all* of you people Lutherans?" he asked her. What he learned dismayed him as much as it would have elated me, but I hadn't heard it yet. Soon, though, word got back to Pastor Ringhardt that the new people were by rumor Lutheran, and he paid us a call. We were delighted to learn that the bell we had heard the previous Sunday morning belonged to an LCMS church just up the hill. We had been so occupied with the problems of establishing a water supply, plumbing, and a vine-free house that we hadn't yet tried to find a church. Instead, God had sent us to it.

Pastor Ringhardt's sermons were wonderful. People who were not near-sighted said he always preached with his eyes closed or partly closed. His voice was calming and gentle. He almost always preached the Gospel, telling us of God's love, and when he preached law, he always followed it with Gospel. My favorite was his sermon on the lost son (Luke 15:11-24). He made the story come alive for us, showing in that father's joyful forgiveness for his erring son God's readiness to forgive us.

I remember with great fondness Emma Dorn, who sort of taught me to crochet, Louise Harms with her trademark laugh, the very wise Lucy Dietrich, and so many others who are now with the Lord.

Memories of Evelyn Battershell

In 1887 Henry (Heinrich) Klingsick and Wilhelmine Pohlman Klingsick came to Augsburg from New Haven, Missouri. They already had one child—a boy, and five more children were born at Augsburg and baptized here at Zion Lutheran Church.

Martha Louise, their third child, was born in June 1891. She was my grandmother. I did not know that she was born in this area and lived here or that she was baptized at Zion Lutheran Church until after we moved here in 1987. My mother told me that she was born in London. Knowing that she was a Lutheran, we checked the old church records and found that she was baptized here. Her mother and father were my great-grandparents.

Then in 1996 my mother, Wilma Harms, moved here and started going to Zion Lutheran Church. Martha Louise Klingsick was her mother, and Henry and Wilhelmine Klingsick were her grandparents. Including my son and daughter, there are five generations of our family that have been members of this church.

The Klingsick's fourth daughter, Bertha Anna, was born here in September 1893 and died in October 1893. She is buried in the Zion Lutheran Cemetery. There was no headstone on her grave; however, we were able to locate it and purchased a headstone for her and had it placed on her grave.

In 1898 the whole family left Augsburg and moved to Optoma, Oklahoma, to homestead there.

A Few of My Memories by Delores Dietrich McDaniel

One memory that comes to mind before any others is the day Cecil and I married on June 6, 1969 (before air conditioning). It was one of those days with a cobalt blue sky, high humidity and not even so much as a slight breeze—nothing.

It was undoubtedly the hottest day of any wedding ever, at least to us and the wedding party. And if you don't believe me, just ask any of the wedding attendants; that will be the first thing mentioned—how hot it was that day. The perspiration was literally dripping from the guys' chins. I guess this was an omen because it turned out to be a very hot summer.

There are many memories when one grows up in a church, far too many to list. I was baptized, confirmed and married in Zion Lutheran Church, as were my parents. My great-grandfather, both sets of grandparents, many aunts and uncles are all buried in our cemetery. My grandfather, H.J. Sudmeyer, was master builder of the 1907 church—the one that burned in December 1979. My great-grandfather designed the altar in that church. So, as with many other older and some young members of this church that grew up here in this community, our roots go back a long way.

To my knowledge, I have never missed a Christmas Eve service. I was a teenager when I started playing the piano for church—that was all we could afford. Later, we bought a small organ, and in later years we were able to buy a larger one and now have a beautiful Allen organ.

I remember the night when the old church burned and when we got the phone call that it had burned down. The sinking feeling that went over me was just overwhelming. For many years after, I could not talk about it without my voice cracking. My father (Louis Dietrich) was so devastated that he never went to see the aftermath of the fire, nor the construction of the new church—not even after it was finished. In other words he never went back to church after that awful night—I guess he just couldn't bear the pain. We never really talked about it even though Cecil, my mom, and I talked about the goings-on all the time. Cecil and my mom (Lucy Sudmeyer

Dietrich) were even on the building committee. The only time my father entered the new church was the day of his funeral.

I also remember, when I was small, we were having a funeral service, and the gravediggers were still digging in the cemetery. They had hit rock and had to dynamite, and the small rocks were hitting the metal roof of the church while we were having the service. That never happened again.

I am so thankful for my heritage and that God saw fit to put me here in this place. I hope I have been able to contribute just a wee bit to the betterment of this church.

Memories of Earl Schrock

It is impossible for me to separate my life from Zion Lutheran Church. When my family returned to Arkansas in 1971, we started to church here soon after. Our three children have been raised in this church—with the help of the whole congregation. I feel certain that the good traits that they share were, in part, instilled in them by our church family.

At the 100th Anniversary of Zion, our daughter Katie was recognized as the youngest member of the congregation. Now she is a Sunday School teacher here and offers herself as part-time surrogate mother to any child in our congregation. Our son Kurt serves as the president of the congregation, and our son Demian is a member of the Board of Trustees. Glenda has served as substitute organist, secretary of the Voter's Assembly, member of the building committee, etc. I, too, have worn many hats in the congregation. As I said, how can we separate our life outside the church from our life within it.

I remember the many kindnesses that members of this congregation have extended to our family. I remember the weekly visits to Lawrence and Regina Steuber's dairy farm and to Harold and Rosina Steuber's dairy farm to procure our

weekly supply of milk, and with two growing boys that meant six or seven gallons.

I remember my many pleasant conversations with old-timers like Harold Steuber, Ervin Steuber, Calvin Rutledge, Lucy Dietrich, Louise Harms, Emma Dorn, Katie Miller, Lydia Doepel, and many others—all of whom have gone on to be with the Lord. I thank God for my friendship with Martin Priebe, a quiet, unassuming man of great faith. I thank God for our dear friends, Melvin and JoAnn Dorn, who have done so much for this church. They have been a tremendous part of our family's life. I also am so impressed by the faithfulness of my dear friend, Delores McDaniel, who never misses a service and keeps us singing. And Cecil McDaniel, my inspiration, who has endured so much pain with so little complaint!

I can still hear Aunt Louise Harms' wonderful, infectious laugh ringing throughout the church, always embarrassing her shy sister Emma Dorn.

I thank God for sending us to this place that has been filled with such wonderful times and so much love. We pulled together as a family, when our church burned, and built a new one. Perhaps this catastrophe was God's way of providing us with a facility that is much more conducive to attracting new people than our old church was. Although we revered and loved it, most people nowadays would not be so willing to deal with the wasps in the spring, no indoor bathroom facilities, very poor heat, and no air conditioning.

And we thank all of Zion's people for being our extended family.