

# **SALEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

125 Years of Christian Ministry, 1849-1974

W. Edward Orser  
Catonsville, Maryland  
1974

## FOREWORD

September 30, 1974 marks the 125th anniversary of the organization of Salem Lutheran Church in Catonsville, Maryland. Looking gratefully to the past and expectantly to the future, we celebrate this significant occasion with praise and joy.

The following persons are serving on the Anniversary Committee and are giving generously of their time and talent:

Gilbert E. Miller, Chairman

K. Elizabeth Grim

W. Edward Orser

Emily M. Payne

Victor C. Peischl

Dorothy M. Reis

The committee was enlarged with special assignments given to the following persons: Lewis H. Addison, III, Lynn M. Appeltofft, Elizabeth S. Lottich, David L. Michel and Walter F. Stevens.

The author of this anniversary booklet is Edward Orser, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County and a member of Salem Lutheran Church since 1970. He has served on the Church Council and is currently chairman of the Social Ministry Committee. He serves as a lay assistant at worship services and has on occasion preached. Son of a Methodist minister, Edward Orser, his wife, Jo, and their children, Stephen and Sharon, live in the Hunting Ridge area of Baltimore City.

Illustrations are by Lynn Appeltofft; photo by Dave Michel.

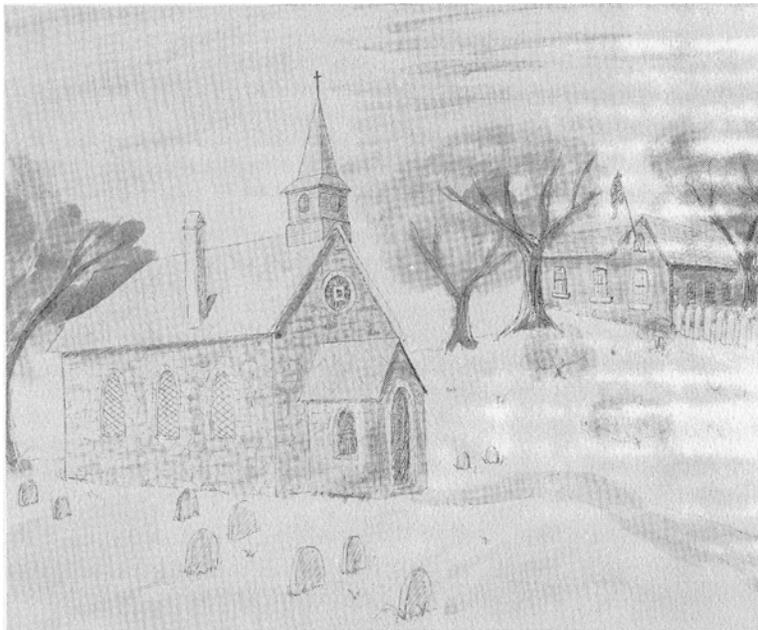
G. Paul Lottich, Pastor

September, 1974

## **SALEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

### **125 Years of Christian Ministry, 1849-1974**

On September 30, 1974, Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Catonsville, Maryland, will be 125 years old. Over its long history the church has sought to provide a Christian ministry to a congregation, community, and larger society whose needs have changed in the face of new conditions and new times. With remarkable resilience and commitment, though not without struggle and cost, the congregation has responded to the challenge of change. In its 125-year ministry there seem to be three relatively distinct phases: I. The Ethnic Church, 1849-1899, the period of "Old Salem" during which the church filled the needs of an immigrant, German-language group; II. The Community Church, 1899-1949, during which the church moved into the mainstream of the growing Catonsville area, changing its services to English and becoming a thriving community congregation with an active church life; III. The Church in a Secular Society, 1949-1974, during which the church sought to meet the needs of a metropolitanized area, developing new forms of worship, service, and parish life, less self-confident than at some previous times, but willing to face new challenges. This is a brief sketch of these changing patterns of Christian ministry.<sup>1</sup>



#### **I. The Ethnic Church, 1849-1899.**

Salem's founding as a church in 1849 was part of the larger story of the great nineteenth-century waves of immigration by predominantly non-English-speaking groups which transformed the face and character of the American nation, profoundly affecting the small seaport city of Baltimore and the rural village of Catonsville to its west. The Germans were one of the first groups to come in large numbers, spurred to leave their homeland in the 1830s and 1840s by turbulent political and economic conditions in the German states. The early gravestones in Old Salem's graveyard indicate that a sizable number of the first members of the church came from Bavaria, many of them emigrating when they were middle-aged or older.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the early German residents of the Catonsville area apparently attended services at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church after its founding in 1844, but, according to local tradition, a visit to the area by Father Heyer, the first Lutheran missionary to India, gave impetus to the idea for a separate church. On September 30, 1849, Gustav Lurmann, a local resident and Baltimore merchant, called a meeting to organize officially as a congregation and adopt a constitution. Among Catonsville's German Protestants Lutherans apparently predominated and were joined in the new congregation by some Reformers; the German-speaking Catholics of the area eventually united with English-speaking Catholics to organize St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church. Early records included the rather lengthy name of the new church organized at the 1849 meeting: the German Evangelical Lutheran Salem Congregation.<sup>3</sup>

The newly formed congregation set to work immediately building a church. The church trustees purchased a lot on the west side of Ingleside Avenue for \$300 on November 1, 1849. The stonemason Johann Moessmeringer drew up a simple, graceful design, and members of the congregation joined in the construction of the stone building. An advertisement for the consecration of the church, which was held on June 16, 1850, described the new building in this way: "This really beautiful little church, its gothic style, its rising tower, and its neat mechanical execution and finish, would be an ornament to any neighborhood, but is particularly so to this, since from its elevated position it overlooks the whole surrounding country: and the steeple seems to be a spiritual light-house, guiding to the port of Heaven, or a lightning-rod averting the sin-begotten thunders of the Almighty." Illustrating the particular ethnic character of the church as a German-oriented institution in a larger English-speaking community, the consecration services proceeded with four sermons - two in German and two in English. Equally interesting was the fact that the invitation was extended to "all friends of religion and education."<sup>4</sup>

While the devout piety of these German-born Lutherans might be assumed, early church records (perhaps like most church records) were not preoccupied with matters of Christian faith, doctrine, worship, or practice, leaving us little information on the congregation's life in these respects. Instead, the very normal problems of keeping a struggling new group on its feet assumed special importance at Church Council meetings. For example, in 1851 the Council decided that the yearly church dues for payment of the pastor would be two dollars, paid at fifty cents per quarter.<sup>5</sup>

Two functions of the church underscored its effort to minister to the needs of the ethnic group. One was the decision to use the churchyard as a graveyard, increasingly the custom in the nineteenth century. Initially, burial rights on the church grounds were one of the free privileges of membership--indeed, revocation of burial rights was one of the penalties set for failure to pay congregational annual dues.<sup>6</sup> The other important concern of the church was for education. A small log schoolhouse had been on the property when it was purchased. The Council on July 28, 1850, decided to borrow one hundred dollars to build a new schoolhouse, authorizing the pastor to collect the funds for it. In 1857 a quarterly fee of fifty cents was levied on congregational members and a five dollar tuition set for children in the school. A school teacher was retained to teach German, English, and, as an extra duty, to ring the bell.<sup>7</sup> An article in the *Lutheran Observer* on the occasion of the church's fiftieth anniversary in 1899 maintained that the church's school had been the first "public" school in Catonsville, and that around 1879 it had ceased to be a church school, becoming simply a German-English public school and still flourishing at the time of the article.<sup>8</sup> Both the burial ground and the school provided an important ministry to a group of people who instinctively turned to their church to help with the needs of

life in the new society in which they were rapidly establishing themselves.

The church's first pastor was Charles A. Brockman. While little is known of his relatively brief tenure beginning in 1850, church historians speak of the tragic loss of his wife and two children and of some "dissensions in the congregation" during his ministry.<sup>9</sup> His successor in 1854, George W. Ebeling, well educated in Germany with a Ph.D. degree from the University of Goettigen, launched a ministry that extended until 1901, better than one-third of Salem's present total life as a congregation.

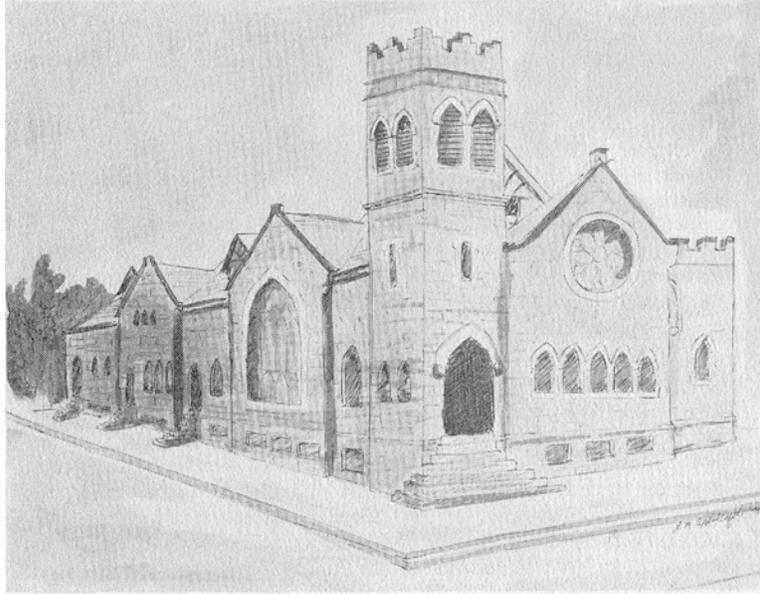
By the turn of the century the relatively closed and placid ethnic phase of the church's history was beginning to be outgrown. Apparently many of the newer and younger members preferred to abandon the German language orientation of the church. Also, there was sentiment that the church was physically (as well as ethnically) on the periphery of the Catonsville community. Consequently, at a very important congregational meeting on August 11, 1901, motions carried 1) "to discontinue services in the German language" and 2) to hold evening services under Salem's name in the Library Hall (located in the middle of Catonsville on Frederick Road, approximately on the site of the present Wilson's Hardware).<sup>10</sup> Actually the decision on changing the language of services to English had been long in the making. As early as 1858 the Council had voted to have an afternoon service in English.<sup>11</sup> In December, 1897, a compromise on the question of English and German in the services was reached by the Council, with the decision to hold English services on the first and third Sundays of each month.<sup>12</sup> English had been introduced into the Sunday School two years earlier. With the death of Dr. Ebeling in September, 1901, all German services at Salem ceased.<sup>13</sup>

The new services at Library Hall were part of an effort to relocate more centrally in Catonsville, a move which culminated in the erection of a new church building at the corner of Frederick Road and Newburg Avenue, completed on October 15, 1903.<sup>14</sup>

The church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1899 under Ebeling, but clearly the shift to English, the move to the center of Catonsville, and the death of Ebeling marked the ending of a very distinctive phase in the life of the Salem congregation. "Old Salem," as it would be fondly remembered, continued to sit in its semi-rural setting, a gem of a country chapel. However, the congregation had decided to move beyond its agrarian ethnic orientation to enter more fully into the mainstream of the growing turn-of-the-century Catonsville community. George Keidel recognized in his 1919 history of the church with unmasked sentimentality that important changes had taken place with the move from Old Salem:

... the old tombstones bear mute witness in their quiet rural nook far from the main lines of present-day travel to the passing of the era of first settlement now long since brought to a close .... And thus will we leave them undisturbed!<sup>15</sup>

The 1949 100th anniversary story of the church viewed these changes more matter-of-factly as leading to a new period of growth for Salem: "Catonsville had become a rapidly growing community .... The age of German provincialism had passed with the coming of better means of transportation and the ever increasing community spirit." The church had acted, the writer felt, to meet the new needs.<sup>16</sup>



## II. The Community Church, 1899-1949

With the move to "New" Salem early in its second fifty years the church entered into a period of growth and apparent confidence. No longer identified with the old-country language tie which had been one source of its earlier strength, the church now took its place as a mainstream Protestant church at the center of the life of the Catonsville community, which was experiencing a major shift from rural to town status. Two areas of church life which appear to be indicative of the tone and character of this second period in the church's history were 1) the physical and esthetic improvements to the church and 2) the important role assumed by the many church organizations, making the church a kind of "community center" for many of its members.

Martin Luther Enders, whose ministry began with the move to "New" Salem, had first served the church as a supply pastor while a student at Gettysburg Seminary. He responded to the call to be Ebeling's successor as pastor by asking that "all the congregation and friends will remember my youth and inexperience in so large an undertaking and will bear with me and help me in all things and in every way aid to build up this church and community in the faith of the Son of God and in the true Christian life ...."<sup>17</sup> Having served Salem during a critical period in its history, Enders moved on in 1910, eventually serving a long pastorate at First Church in Baltimore. He was succeeded by John Culler Bowers who like Ebeling earlier, entered upon a lengthy period of ministry at Salem: serving as pastor for the next thirty-seven years. Salem's 100th anniversary publication, *"My Story"* in 1949 spoke affectionately of Dr. and Mrs. Bowers as laboring "unceasingly in the interest of the Kingdom" and endearing "themselves in the hearts of the parishioners."<sup>18</sup>

The Bowers chronicled their service at Salem with a number of publications, two of which, *"In Those Days": A Brief Story of His Ministry* (1942) by Dr. Bowers and *Salem, The Church Beautiful* (1946) by Mrs. Bowers, deserve special attention because they both chose to highlight the many physical and esthetic improvements which they felt had enhanced the church's worship and ministry during the second fifty years. The new church was built in a Norman-Gothic style, with its crenelated tower on the corner, large Gothic stained glass win-

dows on each side of the squared sanctuary, and almost Byzantine mosaic reredos at the front. It was constructed of Port Deposit granite at a cost of only \$24,000.<sup>19</sup> In 1911 a parsonage and stable were built on a lot adjacent to the church. In 1917 an addition to the Sunday School was completed at the rear of the church, and in 1932 the church basement was dug lower to allow for social rooms and a kitchen. A new organ was installed in 1929 and in 1932 major rearrangement and redecorating work was done in the sanctuary: the center aisle created, brass communion rail installed, the walls newly frescoed, and the pulpit rebuilt to match the altar and mosaic reredos.<sup>20</sup> Old Salem, used traditionally for Mother's Day and Harvest Festival observances, was also redecorated and cared for.<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Bowers' publication also called attention to the church organizations which came to pay a dominant role in the church's life during its second fifty years: "Our Sunday School, Ladies' Aid Society, Brotherhood, Women's Missionary Society, Salem Missionary Helpers, World Friendship Society, Luther League, all contribute towards building a congregation that will go forward when others take our place."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, as the church took stock of its first hundred years in 1949 and sought to characterize the nature of congregational life and ministry, it devoted almost all of its attention to these organizations describing them as "groups that carry out a good part of my [the church's] work."<sup>23</sup> These church organizations, together with the Sunday School, provided activities and opportunities for service for virtually all members-of various age, groups and both sexes -- who chose to make the church the center of their time and energy, a kind of community center for church-going families.

The numerical growth of the congregation was steady throughout this period. Church membership at the time/of Brockman's ministry when the church was getting its start was reputed to have been forty-three members.<sup>24</sup> A membership list from 1893 showed ninety-five members, and in 1910 the number had grown to 240.<sup>25</sup> By 1949, at the end of its first one hundred years, the church claimed a total baptized membership of 1249, with 954 confirmed and 534 communing.<sup>26</sup>

If the second fifty years appeared to be a time of confidence in Salem's ministry, with the church providing an active center for the life of its congregation, there nevertheless was some recognition of challenges and changing times. While Salem's members gathered in 1949 to watch Dr. Bowers and his newly appointed successor W. V. Newby cut a tiered hundred pound cake, topped by a model of "Old Salem," with obvious satisfaction at the church's centennial accomplishments, the writer of the anniversary publication reminded them that there were question marks regarding the future:

I [the church] should not be concerned because I am growing. But never - has there been a time, perhaps, in the entire history of the Christian Church with so many problems and complexities and thus challenges. Will my people meet them?

Among the problems mentioned were the need for a new Sunday School building for a growing educational program, the fact that only half of the baptized membership was actually communing, and the question of how to minister to Catonsville as it once more began to experience rapid growth, coming more and more into the orbit of the Baltimore metropolitan area. Indeed, these would be some of the issues that would face Salem in the near future, but the writer answered with a confidence characteristic of these second fifty years: "I think they [the congregation] will meet them [the problems mentioned] if the past history of the Church is an indication."<sup>27</sup>



### III. The Church in A Secular Society, 1949-1974

Salem entered its second hundred years with relative confidence and optimism that the forms of ministry which had served it in the past would continue to be effective in the future. Indeed, in keeping with national trends, church membership and resources continued to boom in the 1950s. But beneath the surface of institutional growth was the challenge of critical changes in society, which by the 1960s and 1970s had begun to pose profound questions regarding the way the church ought to minister to new times and new situations. If self-assurance had marked the earlier period in the church's life, the new era was a time of self-appraisal, even self-doubt, as Salem searched for ways of meeting new needs without losing sight of its heritage and traditional concerns. Severely challenged, the congregation nevertheless showed remarkable resilience, resourcefulness, and flexibility in its ability to adapt and experiment in such areas as worship and music, Christian education, social ministry, and church organization.

A church that has had only five ministers in its long history, Salem has been served by two pastors during these past twenty-five years. W. V. Newby, who was installed as pastor in 1947 and officiated at the 1949 100th anniversary celebration, served Salem until his resignation on June 8, 1960. Well regarded as a pulpit preacher with a fine appreciation for music and liturgy, Newby presided over the peak period in the congregation's numerical growth, though his years were not without some congregational dissensions as well. G. Paul Lottich, who had formerly served pastorates in Toledo, Ohio, and Roanoke, Virginia, became Salem's fifth pastor when he was installed on April 26, 1961. Pastor Lottich's ministry at Salem has been characterized by his frank call to the church to develop new forms of ministry. For example, his report on "The State of the Parish" to the congregational meeting on February 7, 1966, concluded: "... In all areas of parish life, it is necessary for us to examine the traditional forms we have been using, ever seeking new and venturesome methods of serving Christ in today's world."<sup>28</sup> During these twenty-five years Salem has also been served, at various times, by an assistant pastor, Richard Trudo (1958-60), a Director of Christian Education, Barbara Mann (Hanst) (1964-7), and two Gettysburg Seminary interns, Donald Smith (1968-70) and George Feldman (1970-1).

During the postwar 1940s and the church-going 1950s membership rolls at Salem, as elsewhere, continued to show rapid expansion, making these years the crest of the community phase of the church's ministry which had characterized the previous fifty years. In 1950 the church records listed 1331 baptized and 573 communing members. By 1960 the figures had become 1835 and 720, respectively. However, in the 1960s and 1970s the numbers began to level off, even decline slightly. In 1968 there were 1383 baptized and 707 communing members, and in 1973 1375 baptized, 548 communing members.<sup>29</sup> While these figures do not indicate drastic differences, and numbers admittedly are not the best indicator of the quality and nature of congregational life, they were one symptom of some changing patterns in the church's life, character, and ministry.

Catonsville itself was changing rapidly in the postwar period. No longer the town of the pre-war years, it was becoming an integral part of metropolitan Baltimore, a bedroom community for people whose work, shopping, and social activities in many cases were located elsewhere, linked by the automobile (and eventually the Beltway). Population increased with the building of new houses and apartments, as new residents moved in. Pastor Lottich called attention to some of these developments in his report to a congregational meeting in 1969:

The Catonsville area is changing. No longer can it be considered a staid and stable community, as we like to think or to dream. Families are moving out of this area into the outer periphery- Howard County, Westminster, Reisters-town, etc. Of the people moving into Catonsville many are transients. Many of them are young people who plan to live here only a short time. They seem to be reluctant to sink roots into the community and tend to avoid involvement. This says something to us in considering evangelism and social ministry as well as other facets of parish life.<sup>30</sup>

Such changes tended to bring a decrease in Catonsville's homogeneity. They also helped to bring a dawning awareness of some of the area's hidden social problems, particularly race relations and poverty.

As the area changed, so did the character and needs of the congregation. Perhaps more than in the past, many of the members came relatively long distances to the church, from Baltimore City to the east and Howard County to the west. Although often dedicated to Salem, they made it less the center for their activities than had been the case in the church's community period. Many of the church's auxiliary organizations -- the Brotherhood, the Women of the Church -- received less support, some of them going out of existence. Similarly, Sunday School membership peaked in 1957 with 570, tapering down to 341 by 1961 and 135 in 1973.<sup>31</sup> Although the reasons for these developments were complex, involving factors both internal and external, they did suggest that the church was less the center for its congregation's activities than in the past and that the nature of the activities which it did serve was changing.

Such changes in community and congregation were not unique to Salem, but what has been striking in the life of the parish during its past twenty-five years has been its willingness to respond to the challenge of change by developing new forms of ministry. Insisting that the quality of Christian commitment should not be confused with numbers, the church has demonstrated a capacity for renewal that has kept its program vibrant and alive. As Pastor Lottich reminded the congregation in 1969: "In these days, *quality* Christianity is demanded, not just formal Christianity."<sup>32</sup> The effort at renewal has not always been successful, nor has it been made with-

out some difficulty and friction. However, through a process of self-appraisal, experimentation, gradual change, the church has developed forms of ministry which give it reason to believe that it can be a "family of God" in a larger, secular society.

### **Worship and Music**

Worship and music illustrate both the stability and change that has characterized the past twenty-five years at Salem. One of the most consistently strong elements in the church's life has been the music program. Under the direction of Elsie Rau, organist and choir director since 1948, the choirs -- presently there is a senior and a children's choir -- have always had a reputation for dedication commitment and quality. A professional, trained at the Peabody Conservatory, with a keen sense of music as her craft; Mrs. Rau feels that she works the choirs hard reminding them that "you give your best to God." At the same time she is able to maintain an informality and stress upon enjoyment in music which has won a long-standing sense of loyalty and unity among the choir members. Speaking of some of her professional associates who are organists at larger churches with better organs, Mrs. Rau says: "It is not the organ that has kept me here, but the choir. They're my family .... You can tell that I love it. "<sup>33</sup>

One of the things that Mrs. Rau takes pride in is the fact that the choirs have been willing to work hard to learn and introduce new music. Perhaps the best and most recent example was Salem's role in the Lutheran Church in America national convention, held in Baltimore in July, 1974, where Mrs. Rau was one of three area musicians in charge of all of the convention's music and the Salem choirs provided the backbone of the choral music program, the senior choir singing by itself for one convention communion service and as part of a larger chorus for another' the children's choir providing the nucleus for a joint effort another night: Obviously delighted with the appreciative reception afforded, Mrs. Rau beamed when relating how she had been told afterwards that "the big choir was 'wonderful,' but the children were 'magnificent.' "

The choirs have also played an important role in liturgy, an area of considerable change during the past quarter century. When the church moved from the older "black book" to the newer "red" one, the 1958 *Service Book and Hymnal*, Mrs. Rau and the choirs helped Pastor Newby introduce it to the congregation, making Salem among the first to be familiar with and use both settings of the service. Similarly, Salem's music program played an important role in the introduction of the 1970 Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship ("All-Lutheran") rite, not only teaching the congregation two settings, but helping to conduct seven workshops throughout the synod to teach them to other church musicians.

Another significant innovation in music and liturgy was the development of a "folk" service, using contemporary folk music and guitars. Introduced in 1968 with the help of intern Donald Smith, Pastor Lottich, and members of the Worship Committee, the folk liturgy sought to emphasize the celebrative mood of the Eucharist, providing for greater congregational participation, music that used a folk style, and language that put the traditional gospel message in familiar, simple terms. Recognizing that not everyone in the church would appreciate liturgical innovation or electric guitars, the Church Council was careful to alternate liturgical forms to give members options.<sup>34</sup> The folk service was more controversial than some of the other liturgical innovations. While some members felt it departed too far from their own sense of traditional services and others raised questions about whether such forms would be long-lasting, its use showed an openness to experimentation and willingness to consider new forms in worship while maintaining a commitment to the traditional concerns of liturgy. One other important

step in worship life was the decision to authorize lay assistants in the communion services.<sup>35</sup>

### **Christian Education**

In Christian education there also have been patterns of stability and change. Hopes and plans for a new parish education building reached fruition when ground was broken on September 12, 1954, with Pastor Newby and Pastor Emeritus Bowers presiding and many Salem members participating. On October 23, 1955, the congregation processed from the sanctuary into the new building for the dedication and presentation of keys. The educational building, in a "modern Gothic" style designed to be compatible with the older church building, cost \$175,818 (including purchase of the necessary additional property along Frederick Road), and many of the furnishings and rooms were paid for as special memorials and gifts by Salem members.<sup>36</sup> The new facility added much needed space, with classrooms and offices on the top two floors and a large social hall and kitchen in the basement.

The years immediately following marked the heyday of the Sunday School in terms of attendance figures, but those numbers began to taper off in the 1960s, and Salem leaders, like those of many other churches, began to take a critical look at their approach to Christian education. Out of such self-scrutiny emerged tentative new directions. In the early 1960s, the L.C.A. began to provide fresh new materials, which sought to employ newer teaching techniques and to present the lessons in more relevant ways. The new materials and approaches necessitated teacher re-training and placed considerably more responsibility upon the teachers to be resourceful and well-prepared. They also placed more responsibility upon the congregation, its leaders and committees, since they raised the fundamental question of what kinds of information and experiences it felt were vital for its young people. As one Sunday School leader observed in an interview: "We can no longer simply accept what we always assumed was a *must*; we've got to ask *why* is it important?"

The catechetical program underwent similar re-evaluation and reorientation. Catechism formerly had been largely a matter of rote memorization under the tutelage of the pastor, but new efforts were made in the 1960s and 1970s to try to make the program "relate life situations to one's faith," in the words of Stanley Gearhart, one of a number of people who have worked on the re-shaping of the program. Increasingly, catechism has become a responsibility shared by the pastor and lay people, who have made use of a variety of approaches—talks, discussions, activities, service projects, weekend retreats, sessions with parish families—in the effort to make the learning experience more integrated and vital. Another important change took place in 1971 when the Church Council voted to lower the age of first communion to those in fifth grade—following a period of preparatory instruction—further de-emphasizing the idea that confirmation at the end of catechetical training meant one had "arrived."<sup>37</sup>

One area that has always been problematic in the life of the church is a program for young people at the senior high level. Even during the strong period of the Luther League in the 1950s the number of participants fluctuated greatly; so did Sunday School participation throughout the twenty-five year period. In recent years there has been more emphasis upon youth in ministry, youth serving in the mission of the church, and an active youth group has re-emerged in the past year, largely upon youth initiative. However, the critical question remains for the church, "what happens after confirmation?"

In both the Sunday School and catechism program there is a feeling of encouragement, of turning a corner, of a growing sense of commitment, cooperation, and support among adults

working in the two areas. As one teacher put it: "There is a unity that has to come, and will come."

### **Social Ministry**

Some of the most striking change in the ministry of Salem during the past twenty-five years has been in the area of social service what Pastor Lottich refers to as "the servant role of the church." This concern has found expression in volunteer programs and in the use of the church building for community-oriented programs.

One of the best examples of this direction is the experience with pre-school programs. In the early 1960s Salem opened a paid kindergarten, serving its own children and others from the Catonsville area, but when Baltimore County instituted public kindergarten in its schools the need for Salem's program was reduced and the decision eventually made to terminate it.<sup>38</sup> In the meantime, Joan Rau had recognized the lack of a pre-school program for Catonsville's black children, many of whom lived near the church in the Winter's Lane section. Receiving support from Pastor Lottich, the Social Ministry Committee, and the Church Council, and lending their own time on a volunteer basis, she and other Salem members launched the Community Pre-school Project in 1965, providing educational opportunities for four and five year olds, and developing what she refers to as a "home-school-community-church relationship." In 1968 when federal funds became available through the Community Action Agency for "head start" programs, the church entered into a contract with C.A.A. to be the sponsoring agent for a Day Care Center. In 1970 the program was expanded to include a second center.<sup>39</sup> With its own staff under the federal contract, the Day Care program became less an area for volunteer work by Salem members than had been the case with the Community Preschool Project, but it did represent a significant step in ministering to community social needs.

Salem members have become involved in a variety of other social service programs as volunteers. Perhaps most notable is the regular staffing of a route for Meals on Wheels, a program which provides food for shut-ins and is coordinated by Elizabeth Lottich in her work at Lutheran Social Services. During several summers Salem volunteers conducted a tutorial program for area elementary school children needing help in reading and math during their vacation months.

As in the case of the pre-school programs, there has been a growing willingness to open the church building during the week to community social needs. Various groups -- the District Boy Scouts, a welfare client advisory body, and others -- make regular use of the facilities. In 1974 the church became the Catonsville site for Lunch-Plus, a federally-funded program for senior citizens which daily provides a nutritious lunch, information, and fellowship for people who are in their retirement years. The program serves a capacity of seventy-five. With Lunch-Plus and the Day Care Centers Salem's primary contribution is in terms of space rather than personal involvement, and the continuation of such programs is primarily dependent upon federal policy. Nevertheless, they do indicate a commitment to make the church a center for community, not strictly congregational, needs.

In the eyes of Pastor Lottich the church's volunteer work and use of its building in the area of social ministry has helped to make Salem appear more open and accessible to the general community. As Joan Rau put it: "If the church is supposed to be serving people other than itself, not just in-grown, it certainly says to the community that Salem is a place that is willing to serve-whether using its energies or its building. We're not closing our eyes and saying this is

not our responsibility, because it is our responsibility. "

### Church Organization

The organizational life of the church represents one other significant area of change in its ministry. Nowhere *is* the shift in the congregation's pattern of activity and relationship to the church more striking than in the disappearance of most of the auxiliary groups which had been strong in the church's community period. The Women of the Church and the Brotherhood, for instance, flourished during the 1950s, but struggled during the 1960s, and eventually ceased to function. Emily Payne, active in a number of the former groups, observed: "I guess the church is no longer the social center it used to be. When I was growing up the Luther League was your social life. Certainly we lost something, though we may have lost it anyway."

For some members of the congregation involvement has taken new and less structured forms. In the mid-'60s a group of church members came together to find ways of sharing and growing in the Christian faith together. Calling themselves "the Bonhoeffer group" because they began with a study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, they met in one another's homes for informal, but intensive, discussion. In 1969 new members were invited, and a number of "small groups" were formed, each approximately twelve in number, small enough to encourage openness and discussion; since that time the groups again have reshuffled in order to provide exposure to new points of view and discourage cliques forming. The groups are often cited by participants as one of the most vital experiences in their church membership and as the center for a sense of community which they feel is being revived within the church. It is worth noting that an effort has been made not to institutionalize them, or make them an official part of the church program, though they are a significant part. Indeed, the "small groups" have not bothered to take an official name that could be placed in capital letters.

While the "small groups" do suggest a revived form of congregational activity on an informal and less structured basis than the earlier church organization, interviews with members of the congregation indicate that there may be a void in the church's program for some, especially older members, who miss the organizational activities of the earlier period in the church's life. One exception to this general gap in the church program is the "Sew-Touch-and-Fold" group (again, an informal name), a group of women who meet on Wednesdays at the church for service-oriented handiwork (cancer bandages, items for children in hospitals or elderly people in nursing homes, etc.) and fellowship.

A number of changes in the official organization of the church have been important. The age for voting and serving on Church Council was lowered in 1970 from twenty-one to include all confirmed members, thus allowing people a greater part.<sup>40</sup> Women play a greater role in areas of church leadership formerly considered male preserves. In 1961 May Grim, Marie Eberhart, and Eleanora Kirwan became the first women elected to the Church Council; since then many have served in this capacity.<sup>41</sup> Women also participate as lay assistants in the worship services. The Church Council has engaged in some significant self-study, both of the congregation and of its own role and function. Following a careful review in 1971, the Council recommended that the number of Council members and frequency of meetings be reduced, placing more responsibility upon the committees to carry on the church program.<sup>42</sup>

#### IV. 125 Years of Ministry

The history of a congregation, like the history of any organism, is inevitably a story of change. Salem's effort to provide a Christian ministry has taken differing forms in various periods of congregational life, forms that reflect the nature of needs in the congregation, the Catonsville area, and American society. Change is never without struggle, never without cost. There have been times in Salem's life when the struggle may have been difficult, the cost great. And one truism about change is that it is not always for the better, not always "progress." Yet change is a fundamental law of life, and what is impressive in examining the record of Salem's 125-year ministry is its resilience in adapting the nature and character of that ministry to new times and new conditions. The challenge for the future, as for the past, is to be able to hold true to the basic commitment to Christian ministry while maintaining an openness to the possibility for reformation and renewal.

#### Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Salem is a congregation of the Lutheran Church in America. I am indebted to many people who made available artifacts and documents regarding Salem's history, especially to Dorothy Maisel Reis and Emily Payne, and to many Salem members who interviewed personnel for their views on important developments during the past twenty five years, only a few of whom could be quoted directly here.

<sup>2</sup> George C. Keidel, *Catonsville Lutheran Church: A Sketch of Its Origin* (Washington, D. C., 1919), pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> "Protocoil Buch," September 30, 1849. The minutes from Old Salem were translated from the original German by Mrs. Frank Roberts, Mrs. Charles Schwarz, and Miss Lena Schoebrodt. See also, Keidel, pp. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Keidel quoted the advertisement from the Baltimore *Sun* of June 15, 1850. Keidel, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> "Protocoll Buch," May 11, 1851.

<sup>6</sup> "Protocoll Buch," September 20, 1857. Non-members paid a fee for burial rights which was set at four dollars for adults. "Protocoll Buch," January 1, 1852.

<sup>7</sup> "Protocoll Buch," July 28, 1850; September 20, 1857.

<sup>8</sup> *Lutheran Observer*, October 20, 1899.

<sup>9</sup> Keidel, p. 8. See also, "My Story": *The Story of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Catonsville, Md.; 1949), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> "Protocoll Buch," August 11, 1901. Another action of the meeting was also an important symptom of the changing times: a motion was approved that all contributing members, women as well as men, be allowed to vote.

<sup>11</sup> "Protocoll Buch," June 20, 1858.

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<sup>12</sup> *"Protocoll Buch,"* December 26, 1897.

<sup>13</sup> "Parish Record," September 25, 1901.

<sup>14</sup> "Parish Record," October 15, 1903.

<sup>15</sup> Keidel, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> *"My Story,"* p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *"Protoeoll Buch,"* August 17, 1901.

<sup>18</sup> *"My Story,"* p. 10

<sup>19</sup> *"My Story,"* pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> John Culler Bowers, *"In Those Days": A Brief Story of His Ministry* (Catonsville, Md., 1942), pp. 16-19. *"My Story":* p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Bowers, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Bowers, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> *"My Story,"* pp. 13-17.

<sup>24</sup> *"My Story,"* p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> *"Protocoll Buch,"* (pp. 48-9) has the 1893 list; *"My Story,"* the 1910 figure (p, 9).

<sup>26</sup> *"My Story,"* p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> *My Story,* p. 20. The Catonsville *Herald-Argus and Baltimore Countain* carried an article on the anniversary, "Salem Lutheran Church to Celebrate 100th Anniversary on September 30" (June 17, 1949).

<sup>28</sup> "Minutes," February 7, 1966. The "Minutes" cited here and hereafter are typescript minutes maintained by the Secretary of the Church Council for Council and congregational meetings.

<sup>29</sup> Figures are from the annual summaries in the "Parish Register" and the annual reports to the Maryland synod.

<sup>30</sup> "Minutes," Congregational Meeting, January 27, 1969.

<sup>31</sup> Annual summaries in "Parish Register"; annual reports to Maryland Synod.

<sup>32</sup> "Minutes," Congregational Meeting, January 27, 1969.

<sup>33</sup> The quotes here and subsequently are from personal interviews by the author with parish members, September, 1974.

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<sup>34</sup> "Annual Report of the Worship and Music Committee" in "Minutes," 1969.

<sup>35</sup> The practice was authorized by the Church Council in 1967, but not begun until 1971 on a regular basis. "Yearly Report of the Worship and Music Committee" in "Minutes," November, 1967; "Minutes," Church Council, November 10, 1971.

<sup>36</sup> *Building for Christ and Youth* (program and information booklet for the dedication), October 23, 1955. The Catonsville *Herald-Argus and Baltimore Countian* carried an article on plans for the new building (September 2, 1954).

<sup>37</sup> "Minutes," Church Council, November 10, 1971.

<sup>38</sup> "Minutes," Church Council, July 10, 1968.

<sup>39</sup> "Minutes," Church Council, July 10, 1968; June 16, 1971. An article by Jean Walsh in the Catonsville *Herald-Argus and Baltimore Countain* in 1967 featured the pre-school programs, as well as other areas of parish life, "Second Oldest Church in Catonsville, Organized in 1849, at Christmas 1967: Salem Evangelical Lutheran" (December 20, 1967).

<sup>40</sup> "Minutes," Congregational Meeting, January 28, 1970.

<sup>41</sup> "Parish Register," list of Council members.

<sup>42</sup> "Minutes," Church Council, October 5, 1971