

The 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service of  
*St. Peter Lutheran Church*

May 21, 2023



*140 Years of God's Grace*

**1882 – 2022**

St. Peter Lutheran Church, LCMS  
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Portage, Indiana

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# The 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service of *St. Peter Lutheran Church* May 21, 2023 – 10 a.m.

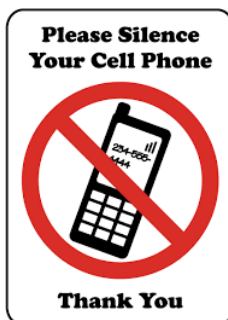
## The Practice of Holy Communion

**Holy Communion** is integral to the worship life of the baptized at St. Peter. In accordance with Scripture and Lutheran Confessions, we keep the sacrament by our Lord's command, "Take and eat . . . Take and drink . . . for the remembrance of me" and by his promise "my body given for you" and "my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." As we, by bread and cup, eat the body and drink the blood of Christ for our sins, we share also his resurrection for our new life.

This Holy Meal is not a private matter. It gathers and affirms us as "the communion of the Holy Spirit in our time and place. Those who commune with us at our family table belong to us and us to them. We delight in their gifts as in our own and seek to overcome any barrier that might divide us from any of them.

Baptized guests who regularly commune at their home congregation and share this understanding are invited to commune with us at our Lord's table. Guests, including children of guests, who have never received Communion are invited to receive a blessing until you have spoken to the pastor about proper preparation for receiving Christ's body and blood.

Gluten-free wafers and grape juice are available for those with allergies. Please inform an usher if you wish to receive either or both of these at Communion.



*Is your cell phone off or silenced?  
Thank you for your cooperation!*

## The Service of the Word

### Processional – “Built on the Rock” LSB 645

1 Built on the Rock the Church shall  
stand Even when steeples are falling.  
Crumbled have spires in ev’ry land;  
Bells still are chiming and calling,  
Calling the young and old to rest,  
But above all the souls distressed,  
Longing for rest everlasting.

3 We are God’s house of living stones,  
Built for His own habitation.  
He through baptismal grace us owns  
Heirs of His wondrous salvation.  
Were we but two His name to tell,  
Yet He would deign with us to dwell  
With all His grace and His favor.

5 Grant, then, O God, Your will be done,  
That, when the church bells are ringing,  
Many in saving faith may come  
Where Christ His message is bringing:  
“I know My own; My own know Me.  
You, not the world, My face shall see.  
My peace I leave with you. Amen.”

Text: Public domain

2 Surely in temples made with hands  
God, the Most High, is not dwelling;  
High above earth His temple stands,  
All earthly temples excelling.  
Yet He who dwells in heav’n above  
Chooses to live with us in love,  
Making our bodies His temple.

4 Here stands the font before our eyes,  
Telling how God has received us.  
The altar recalls Christ’s sacrifice  
And what His Supper here gives us.  
Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim  
Christ yesterday, today, the same,  
And evermore, our Redeemer.

### Call to Worship

*(Please stand, as you are able)*

We will tell the next generation **the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,**  
so the next generation would know them, **even the children yet to be born,**  
and they in turn would tell their children. **Then they would put their trust in God**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son **and to the Holy Spirit;**  
as it was in the beginning, is now, **and will be forever. Amen.**

### Confession of Sins

Heb 4:14, 16

Therefore, since we have a great high priest (Jesus Christ) who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ... Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Psalm 51:1-9

Have mercy on me, O God, **according to your unfailing love;**  
according to your great compassion **blot out my transgressions.**  
Wash away all my iniquity **and cleanse me from my sin.**

**P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the  $\dagger$  Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** **Amen.**

Psalm 26:8, Psalm 84:1-2, 10-14

O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house  
**and the place where Your glory dwells.**  
Blessèd are you, O LORD, the God of Israel  
**our father, forever and ever.**  
How lovely is Your dwelling place,  
**O LORD of hosts!**  
My soul longs, yes, faints  
**for the courts of the LORD;**  
For a day in Your courts is better  
**than a thousand elsewhere.**  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
**than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
**and to the Holy Spirit;**  
as it was in the beginning,  
**is now, and will be forever. Amen.**  
O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house  
**and the place where Your glory dwells.**

**Response of Praise** Thank the Lord *LSB 164*

Thank the Lord and sing His praise; tell ev'ryone what He has done.  
Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and proudly bear His name.  
He recalls His promises and leads His people forth in joy  
with shouts of thanksgiving. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Salutation and Collect of the Day**

**P** The Lord be with you. **C** **And also with you.**

**P** Let us pray. Almighty God, You have promised to be with Your Church forever. We praise You for Your presence in this place of worship and ask Your ongoing blessing upon those who gather here. Dwell continually among us with Your holy Word and Sacraments, strengthen our fellowship in the bonds of love and peace, and increase our faithful witness to Your

salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C Amen.**

**The First Reading** 1 Kings 8:22-30

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, 23 and said, “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; 24 you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. 25 Now therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.’ 26 Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.

27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! 28 Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, 29 that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. 30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God!**

**The Epistle Reading** Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God!**

**Alleluia and Verse** LSB pg 156

**Alleluia! Lord, to whom shall we go?**

**You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia. Alleluia**

*(Please stand, as you are able)*

**Holy Gospel** John 17:1-11

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the seventeenth chapter.

**C Glory to You, O Lord.**

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority

over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

*(Please be seated)*

**Sermon** St. John 17:1-11 Our Merciful and Great High Priest

**Preacher:** The Reverend Richard Stuckwisch, President of the Indiana District, LCMS

**Sermon Hymn** – “Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus” LSB 529

1 Since our great High Priest, Christ  
Jesus, Bears the name above all names,  
Reigning Son of God, surpassing  
Other titles, pow’rs and claims—  
Since to heav’n our Lord has passed,  
Let us hold our witness fast!

2 Since we have a priest who suffered,  
Knowing weakness, tears, and pain,  
Who like us was tried and tempted,  
Unlike us, without a stain—  
Since He shared our lowly place,  
Let us boldly seek His grace.

3 Sacrifice and suff’ring over,  
Now He sits at God’s right hand,  
Crowned with praise, no more an outcast,  
His preeminence long-planned;  
Such a great High Priest we have,  
Strong to help, supreme to save.

4 Love’s example, hope’s attraction,  
Faith’s beginning and its end,  
Pioneer of our salvation,  
Mighty advocate and friend;  
Jesus, high in glory raised,  
Our ascended Lord be praised!

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**Apostles’ Creed** *(Please stand, as you are able)*

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life † everlasting. Amen.**

**Peace of the Lord** (*Please greet the people in your family group with God's peace, and extend to those near to you the peace with a wave.*)

### **The Prayers of the Church**

With thanksgiving and supplication let us pray to the Lord.

O Lord, God heavenly Father, we give You thanks for the gift of Your Son, our Lord and Savior; For His Church, the Body of Christ, throughout the world, and through all time. For through the waters of baptism You welcome each one of us individually to be part of His Body, to be His hands and feet in this world. Lord, for Your mercy, **we give You thanks.**

O Lord, we give Your thanks for establishing Your Body, here at St. Peter; For receiving Your grace, so we may reach out with Your grace to all around us, in our town and in our world; for 140 years of Your grace in this place; for all the saints who have gone before and established this holy house as Your dwelling place, for their examples of faith and grace. Lord, for Your mercy, **we give You thanks.**

O Lord, we give Your thanks for Your ministries here and through St. Peter for 140 years; for the baptisms, Sunday School teachers and students, for youth groups, for confirmations, for meals and much more. For fellowship and support; for comfort when loved ones go to be with You; For all the willing hands and feet involved in Your ministries here and throughout the world. Lord, for Your mercy, **we give You thanks.**

O Lord, we pray for the nations of the world, that leaders of the nations would work toward beating their swords into plowshares; for the peoples of the world, that they may live in peace, and come to know Your peace in their lives, we especially lift those experiencing natural disasters, or violence. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all comfort, You alone bring the peace that passes understanding to troubled hearts. Remember the afflicted, [especially \_\_\_\_\_ and those we name in our hearts,] that they would know Your presence, taste Your peace and receive healing according to Your gracious will, ever trusting in the hope of the resurrection. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the gift of this blessed Sacrament, O Lord. Give us a right heart as we prepare to eat and drink Christ's true body and blood, that by it we would be equipped to love You above all and our neighbors as ourselves. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray that You continue to pour out Your abundant blessing on us; so that we may be blessed to be a blessing unto others; to bring honor and glory to Your Holy Name. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen**

### Lord's Prayer

**P** Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:  
**C** **Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;**  
**Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**  
**Give us this day our daily bread.**  
**And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.**  
**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**  
**For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

### Preface

**P** The Lord be with you. **C** **And also with you.**  
**P** Lift up your hearts. **C** **We lift them to the Lord.**  
**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**C** **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

### The Word of Our Lord

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My  $\text{†}$  body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My  $\text{†}$  blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."



## Pax Domini

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always. **C** Amen.

Agnus Dei LSB pg 163

**C** Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.

Communion Distribution (*Please be seated*)

### Distribution Hymns and songs –

#### “Better Is One Day”

How lovely is Your dwelling place,  
O Lord Almighty  
For my soul longs and even faints for You.  
For here my heart is satisfied  
Within Your presence,  
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings.

**Chorus** Better is one day in Your courts,  
Better is one day in Your house, Better is  
one day in Your courts than thousands  
elsewhere; Better is one day in Your courts,  
Better is one day in Your house, Better is  
one day in Your courts than thousands  
elsewhere;

One thing I ask and I would seek:  
To see Your beauty;  
To find You in the place Your glory dwells.  
Be merciful to me, O Lord,  
And hear my heart’s cry;  
Then I will see the goodness of the Lord.

My heart and flesh cry out To You, the  
Living God, Your Spirit’s water to my soul.  
I’ve tasted and I’ve seen, Come once again  
to me I will draw near to You, I will draw  
near to You.

#### Chorus

#### Instrumental Interlude Chorus

**Tag:** Than thousands elsewhere **3X**

CCLI Song # 1097451 Matt Redman © 1995 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) CCLI License # 2235066

#### “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” LSB 770

1 What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Ev’rything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit;  
Oh, what needless pain we bear—  
All because we do not carry  
Ev’rything to God in prayer!

2 Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev’ry weakness—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge— Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace there.

Text: Public domain

### “Make Us One”

#### Verse 1

One with the Father one with the Spirit  
One with the Son of God  
One with our sister one with our brother  
One fam'ly by the blood

#### Chorus 1

Make us one make us one  
Your will be done make us one

#### Verse 2

One heart with heaven one mind connected  
One body unified  
Bind us together now and forever  
Jesus be glorified

#### Chorus

#### Bridge

We confess all our offenses  
We confess we've been afraid  
We repent of all our pride  
Let all the hurt be washed away  
For all the wars and violence against our  
enemy Come heal our land with Your great  
river Restore the family and

#### Chorus x2

CCLI Song # 7091349 Chris Quilala | Joshua Silverberg | Ran Jackson | Ricky Jackson © 2017 Capitol CMG Amplifier (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Capitol CMG Genesis (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Jesus Culture Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Red Red Pop (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Tunes of Jesus Culture (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Be Essential Songs (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) Modern Hymns and Sacred Songs (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) Richmond Park Publishing (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC)

### “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” LSB 621 Text: Public domain

1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence  
And with fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,  
For with blessing in His hand  
Christ our God to earth descending  
Comes our homage to demand.

2 King of kings yet born of Mary,  
As of old on earth He stood,  
Lord of lords in human vesture,  
In the body and the blood,  
He will give to all the faithful  
His own self for heav'nly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven  
Spreads its vanguard on the way  
As the Light of Light, descending  
From the realms of endless day,  
Comes the pow'rs of hell to vanquish  
As the darkness clears away.

4 At His feet the six-winged seraph,  
Cherubim with sleepless eye,  
Veil their faces to the presence  
As with ceaseless voice they cry:  
“Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, Lord Most High!”

*(Please stand, as you are able)*

### **Post-Communion Collect**

**P** Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

### **Post Communion Canticle - Thank the Lord**      LSB pg. 164

Thank the Lord and sing His praise; tell ev'ryone what He has done.  
Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and proudly bear His name.  
He recalls His promises and leads His people forth in joy  
with shouts of thanksgiving. Alleluia, alleluia.

### **Sending**

**P** Our eyes look back with thanksgiving. Our eyes look forward in hope. Therefore, with thanksgiving for the past and hope for the future, let us dedicate ourselves and our lives to the mission which God gives us.

**P** May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. (Heb 13:20-22)

**P** Go in peace!

**C** **Serve the Lord!**

**P** Let us bless the Lord

**C** **Thanks be to God!**

### **Closing Song – “Living Stones”**

Jesus Christ is our Cornerstone. He's the Rock; He's the solid foundation.  
We are building on Jesus alone, building up as the people of God.  
Each of us is a living stone, precious stones in the building of Jesus.  
In this house we don't stand all alone; we are one. We're the people of God.

**Chorus:**      Living stones, we are living.  
Living stones, built on Christ.  
Living stones, holy people of God,  
Building on the firm foundation.  
Living stones, we are living!  
Living stones, built on Christ.  
Living stones, holy people of God,  
Building on the firm foundation  
Of Christ.

Jesus, You are our Cornerstone. You're the Rock; You're the solid foundation.  
We are building on Your love alone. Build us up as the people of God.  
Each of us is a living stone. We're alive in the love of Jesus.  
We are trusting in Jesus alone; we are His. We're the people of God.

**Chorus**

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## Serving in the House of the Lord Today

Preacher: Pastor Richard Stuckwisch, President of the Indiana District, LCMS  
Lector: Pastor Don Williams, our past Circuit Visitor  
Liturgist: Pastor Wally Waite, Vacancy Pastor  
Musicians: Mario Samaniego, Phil Luster-Bartz, Linda Lemond, Ethel Wells  
Crucifer: Joshua Rex  
Acolyte: Hannah Lackey  
Bible Bearer: Dan Rex  
Elders: Ro Guerrero, William Lackey, Phil Luster-Bartz,  
Dan Rex, Lee Riley, Mark Speckhard,  
Technology: Victoria Luster-Bartz

# *A History of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Portage, Indiana*

## *140 Years of God's Grace*



Church at the Lenburg Home in late 1800's

In 1880, much of northern Indiana was farmland, settled by European immigrants. A group of German immigrants, wanting a place to worship, met at the home of Anna and Jacob Lenburg. This brick house still stands near our present building.

Some of the family names of the earliest members are still known in Portage today: Lenburg, Eggers, Fuhrmann (later anglicized to Foreman), Schulz, LaHayne, and Hockelburg.

In 1890, the thriving congregation adopted a constitution in which the church was referred to as "The Evangelical Lutheran St. Peter Congregation at McCool, Porter County, Indiana."

In 1895, members of the congregation built the first church building from hand-hewn timbers, just east of McCool Road where the Methodist Church now stands.

In 1905, the growing congregation built a white clapboard church building across the street from the log cabin one. This building has housed other congregations and businesses, now Untold Gallery, Timeless Tattooing.

In 1905, the Reverend John Bescherer, pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Chesterton, co-joined his pastorate with St. Peter. He served our congregation for **52 years**. Initially, some services were in German, some in English. By 1916, all services were in English.

Church was quite different in the early 1900s. Men sat on the left side of the sanctuary and women on the right; communion was served only twice a year and members had to meet privately with the minister and discuss their readiness to attend the Lord's Supper.

St. Peter Lutheran Church joined the Missouri Synod in June 1949.

By 1957, St. Peter was able to support a full-time minister, the Reverend Thomas Strieter. While at St. Peter, he married Doris Bruch. He served the congregation until 1962.

In 1963, the Reverend Robert Schroeter became minister but left in 1966 to do urban ministry. The Reverend Ernest A. Schutz was installed later that year.

The year 1968 brought big changes. The town of Portage was incorporated as a city, and St. Peter congregation broke ground for a new and larger building at Mission and Central Avenues.

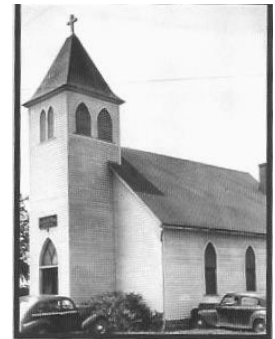


On June 8, 1969, the members of the congregation took items of worship from the old building, formed a procession to the new building, and worshiped there for the first time. It was a day of joy that the Lord had blessed them so abundantly, but also a day of sadness to leave the little white clapboard building that had served the congregation so well for over 64 years.

After Pastor Schutz accepted another call, Pastor Schroeter returned to St. Peter.

During the 1970's, many improvements, including the choir loft, made the church safer, more attractive and utilitarian. Lights were installed in the parking lot and a P.A. system was installed in the church building. In 1973, a programmable carillon system was installed. Pastor Schroeter was the first St. Peter minister to invite parents to bring their children to the communion table to receive a blessing. In 1979, due to failing health following a stroke, Pastor Schroeter was made Pastor Emeritus.

The Reverend Robert Junkin accepted the Call and served from September 1979, to 1986. He and his wife, Alice, and their six children, Miriam, Rachel, Daniel, Mark, Rebecca, and Sarah, all took an



Building on the corner of McCool and Central in 1920's

active role in church activities, including singing in senior or junior choir. The older children helped teach Sunday School.



In 1982, St. Peter congregation celebrated its Centennial with a year-long festival. All organizations within the church participated with skits, dinners, concerts, and even a float in Portage's July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade. The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration included a service at church and a dinner and program held that afternoon at Portage's Woodland Park. The history of the church was re-enacted. Parishioners, members of the community, former clergy and their families were all invited.

Celebrations continued in 1984, when the mortgage was paid in full. A special service including the ritual burning of the mortgage papers and a dinner took place.

When Pastor Junkin left in 1986 to move to California, the congregation was left without a full-time minister for 18 months. The Reverend Lester Kuker served as interim minister. The congregation became quite fond of retired Pastor Lester and his wife Esther. In December of that year, the congregation presented a special Christmas cantata entitled "Love Came Down." The entire congregation was involved for months making costumes, backdrops, singing and acting.



The Reverend Phillip Schoenherr was installed in 1988. He and his wife, Gail, and children Marcie and Patrick came from Huntertown, Indiana. Both Pastor Schoenherr and Gail enjoyed singing in the choir and fellowship activities with parishioners. He served the congregation until May, 1991, when he took a call to Florida to be closer to Gail's aging parents.

The Reverend Kenton Rohrberg was installed in December 1991. Pastor Kenton and his wife Eileen had three children: Erin, Travis, and Justin. During Pastor Rohrberg's tenure, the congregation and Sunday School grew. He instituted a Prayer Breakfast Bible Study, introduced the congregation to many hymns he had written, and taught a Bible Study entitled "The Divine Drama: the Story of God's Search for a Better Relationship with You and Me." Over 25 members made the 15-week commitment. He also led the youth in a Good Friday presentation he had written, called "Shadows along the Way."

Pastor Rohrberg left for personal reasons and moved back to Arizona in June, 1993. In October of the same year, the Reverend Stephen Krueger was installed. He and his wife Wendy had three sons: Martin, Michael and Matthew. Pastor Krueger continued the good rapport with the youth, establishing an annual February retreat to Camp Lutherhaven.

In 1994, the Evangelism committee began its "Open Door in 94 to a Friend" Campaign.

In April of 1995, Pastor Krueger and Wendy, presented a Seder on Maundy Thursday with Wendy doing most of the cooking. Those who attended appreciated learning about the meaning of the Passover foods, how it has been celebrated over the centuries, and how it connects to our Eucharist meal.

In November 1995, an Oktoberfest – "Das Deutsch Essen Fest" - was held at St. Peter with crafts, music, and German food prepared by congregational members.

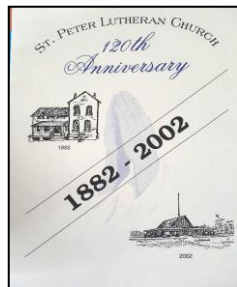
In 1996, Pastor Krueger had another campaign called "Love Letters from God," in which members of the congregation visited with less active members and those who had visited the church once or twice to share God's love and encourage those they visited to find their area of service within the congregation.

Desiring a more urban ministry, Pastor Krueger took a call to Portland, Oregon. The Reverend Ludovit Vajda filled the vacancy until the Reverend Roy Zerbe was installed in 1997.

In 1998, a new programmable carillon system was installed with monies from the Memorial Fund. In 2000, the first St. Peter website was created both as an informative tool for our members and as outreach to others. The Parish Nurse Program began, with a team of nurses offering a health ministry to the members.

During the fall of 2001, building plans were developed to add a larger social hall and Sunday School rooms. Pathway Ministries was hired to assist the congregation with this project. The Awake Ministry was formed with 28 parishioners serving on the committee and many others participating. Unfortunately, the building project did not come to fruition at this time.

In May, 2002, one of the member, Robert Kuhn, donated a corpus of the Risen Christ (“*Cristus Resurrectus*”). It was installed on the chancel cross and dedicated to the glory of God.

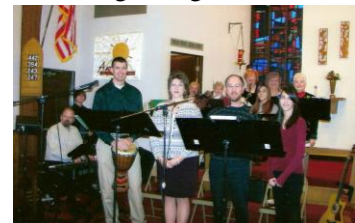


A group of members formed a committee to celebrate the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Peter.

In May, a German dinner with authentic German food and music was held. In June, there was a Pancake Breakfast for the members and community, and a Fish Fry was held in October. All monies raised by these events were donated to the Building Fund.

On October 13, 2002, the congregation celebrated its 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a special service and dinner.

In an attempt to offer a more varied worship opportunity, Pastor Zerbe and then Music Director Barb White planned a contemporary service. September 8, 2002, marked the beginning of the two different services offered to the congregation. The early service was a praise worship service with a Praise Team of singers and instruments, and the late service remained the traditional service with the liturgy and hymns from *Lutheran Worship* played on the organ by organist Marsha Logan or on the piano by Karen Ackermann. Both services included the traditional Lutheran elements of Confession and Absolution, prayers, and Creeds. A paid position for an assistant Music Director to produce the praise service was created at this time. Allan Evett became the first Assistant Music Director.



In 2004, the congregation presented an original cantata written by Linda Lemond and Allan Evett entitled “A Baby, a Cross, and a Plan.” Once again, numerous congregational members were involved in the production. Members of the Praise Team along with pianist Karen Ackermann provided the music, while Barb White directed the choir, and individuals performed and sang as the people of the Nativity.

When Barb stepped down from her position as Music Director for personal reason, Linda Lemond stepped into the position.

During these years, many congregational members attended an interdenominational retreat called The Great Banquet (known elsewhere as the Walk to Emmaus.) Several people continue to be involved in this ministry, serving in the spring and fall when the annual retreats occur.

Pastor Zerbe retired in 2004, and the Reverend Dean Mues served us during our vacancy. Pastor Mues held several meetings, helping the congregational members look at past accomplishments both in the church and in the community and look forward to what we hoped to accomplish in the future.



In 2005, the Reverend Frederick Hoover was installed as pastor. He and his wife Darla brought lots of life and excitement with their three little children, Jake (4) and twins Matt and Katie (9 months.) Pastor Fred’s



enthusiasm and energy brought many changes. In 2008, the addition that had been discussed so many times over the years was finally completed with a large and welcoming narthex, dedicated Sunday School rooms and Youth Room, new offices for the pastor and secretary, and lots of storage upstairs.

When the addition was added, the congregation gave the original building a “face lift” with new painting and carpeting. Three congregational members – David Anderson, Scott Lehmann, and John Demmond - built beautiful new chancel furniture. This included altar, pulpit, lectern, flower stands, and baptismal font and a communion railing that extended to enclose the new praise team platform.



Pastor Fred brought in more technology and used series in both his Bible Studies and sermons. He was happy to grab his guitar and play with the Praise Team whenever possible. One of his greatest gifts to St. Peter was talking Brad Hughes into running for congregational president. Although reluctant at first and unsure of his abilities, Brad has continued to serve well and faithfully as president, guiding the congregation through several Calls and many other events.

In 2009, artist Mikell Daege Vawter, the great-great-great granddaughter of founders Jacob and Anna Lenburg, painted Biblical scenes in all the Sunday School rooms. We could now tell new students, “You will have class in the ‘Job Room’ or ‘the Zacchaeus Room.’”



When Allan Evett moved to Colorado where his wife Mary had a better job offer, Rick Arial became our second Assistant Music Director.

Pastor Fred took a call to Pennsylvania and left in October, 2015. The Reverend Wally J. Waite served the congregation in the interim.

In 2016, the Reverend Benjamin Ahlersmeyer accepted our Call. He served St. Peter for four years, during which time the Germanfest was resurrected and expanded exponentially. For two years it was held at Portage’s Founders Square. We celebrated Pastor Ben’s Golden Birthday when he turned 30 on May 30, and held a baby shower for him and his wife, Melissa, when they were expected their first son, Seth.

In 2016, when Holy Cross Lutheran Church closed its doors, many of those members joined St. Peter. They brought with them their servants’ hearts and new outreach ideas, such as community dinners. Over the years we have been blessed with members of Hope Lutheran who have come to join us at St. Peter also and share their time, talents, and treasures.

In 2017, we adopted the *Lutheran Service Book* as our hymnal.

When Rick Arial died unexpectedly in 2018, Mario Samaniego became our new Assistant Music Director.

Late 2019 and early 2020 saw many changes not only at St. Peter but in the entire world as a virus called COVID-19 turned the world on its head. Fears of spreading the often deadly infection caused schools, churches, and businesses to shut down. Masks became a mandate.



St. Peter closed its doors to parishioners in March but thanks to the Technology/Music/Service team composed of Pastor Ben, Phil and Victoria Luster-Bartz, Theri Shelburne, and Mario Samaniego services went on with barely an interruptions. At first they were live-streamed via phone. Those with the right technology could still “attend” church in the comfort and safety of their homes.



Soon new technology allowed the services to be livestreamed and recorded for viewing at other times. Slowly, as more people became vaccinated and the threat of COVID appeared to be a bit less, we opened our doors to in-church worship with appropriate social distancing, while continuing the online worship through the St. Peter Facebook.



Pastor Ben took a Call in 2020 to serve Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne.

The Reverend John Albers, who was our Circuit Visitor during the Call process that eventually called Pastor Fred, served as our interim minister for almost one year. Then he took a Call to St. John's Lutheran Church in LaPorte, Indiana, and was installed there on December 20, 2021. Our dear and faithful Pastor Wally returned, despite health issues, to serve us until we call a permanent minister. His wife, Kathy, teaches the Wednesday morning Bible Study.

Over the years, St. Peter has focused on providing enriching Sunday services for its members and guests, as well as numerous types of outreach. We enjoy a blended service with both hymns and praise songs. We have collected and donated books, toiletries, and food items for those less fortunate; made lap robes and thousands of cancer pillows that have been handed out by local hospitals; we have sent cards and messages to shut-ins; we have supported men attending the seminary; we have made tiny dresses for African girls. We pray that all of our outreach may be done to the glory of God.



St. Peter has enjoyed an active Ladies Guild/LWML. At various times we have had active Sunday School and Youth Groups; Senior, Junior and special choirs; Bible studies; Fellowship Groups. We have continued to support the Portage Food Pantry and Portage Christian Resale Shop, as well as other community ministries. We have sponsored Wednesday night free Community Dinners and Friday Night Fish Fries to raise money for the Youth. We have an annual rummage sale, lovingly organized by Candy Gaines and Jolene Wilson. We love to have fun as well, with Social Ministry leader Candy Gaines planning many activities.

Throughout the years, we have been blessed so richly by God Who has saved us and invited us to be part of His family. As willing workers in His harvest, we follow our mission statement both at church and in the community: *Sharing God's Love with Heart and Hands.*



**CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED**  
**ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1882 – 2022**

The Reverend Paulus of Michigan City, Indiana, served the congregation through 1882, when Reverend E. H. Scheips became the first full-time pastor.

Unknown .....	The Reverend Paulus
1882 - 1890 .....	The Reverend E. H. Scheips
1891 - 1902 .....	The Reverend E. R. Schuelke
1903 - 1905 .....	The Reverend P. Clausen
1905 - 1957 .....	The Reverend J. A. Bescherer The Reverend Wolrab**
1958 - 1962 .....	The Reverend T. W. Strieter
1962 - 1963 .....	The Reverend M. Gundermann*
1963 - 1966 .....	The Reverend R. L. Schroeter
1966 - 1971 .....	The Reverend E. A. Schultz
1971 - 1978 .....	The Reverend R. L. Schroeter
1978 - 1979 .....	The Reverend R. Weinhold*
1979 - 1986 .....	The Reverend R. Junkin
1986 - 1988 .....	The Reverend L. Kuker*
1988 - 1991 .....	The Reverend P. Schoenherr
1991 .....	The Reverend E. Neiting*
1991 - 1993 .....	The Reverend K. Rohrberg
1993 - 1997 .....	The Reverend S. Krueger
1997 .....	The Reverend L. Vadja*
1997 - 2004 .....	The Reverend R. Zerbe
2004 .....	The Reverend D. Mues*
2005 - 2015 .....	The Reverend F. Hoover
2015 - 2016 .....	The Reverend W. Waite*
2016 - 2020 .....	The Reverend B. Ahlersmeyer
2020 - 2021 .....	The Reverend J. Albers*
2021 - the present .....	The Reverend W. Waite*

\*Interim pastorate

\*\*Served with Rev. Bescherer at St. Peter and St. Paul