

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH San Antonio, Texas

Brief Abstract from the Hand-Written History
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Translated from the German by
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Brief abstract of the history of the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, whose members are listed in the following Registers: Pages one through four hundred document the Marriage and Death Register; from page four hundred on, the remainder documents the Baptism Register.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” Apocalypse (Revelation) 2:17.

In the Year of our Lord 1851, the Missionary and Pastor Theobald Kleis, stationed in Hortontown, Comal County, regularly visited San Antonio with the intention of establishing an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation for the already numerous local German Protestants, and therefore held regular services. Because he could not fulfill his goal due to failing health and other reasons, he petitioned the Pilger Mission (Seminary) in Basel to transfer Pastor Friedrich Zizelmann, who was already in Texas, to continue his work which he (Zizelmann) began on January 6, 1852. Because of serious illness and depression due to accumulating debts from his ill health he had to leave the city on August 13 of the same year, after which he served a congregation in Fredericksburg for several years. During the following years the Episcopal Church sent the German preacher Rottenstein here (San Antonio) in order to establish among Germans a suitable congregation which, however, failed. Repeated efforts on the part of the Methodist Church during this time were also unsuccessful. In 1856, the First Evangelical Lutheran Synod

focused once again on the orphaned city and asked Pastor Zizelmann to attempt once again the difficult task, with the assurance of a salary, which he did.

The previously-named Synod, in conjunction with the General Synod, requested from the Home Mission Society of this named body adequate support for this mission, which, based on their statutes, was granted; the statutes provided for support for two years. On the basis of a petition to the City Council, the Council granted use of the school site (The People's School) for religious services of the mission congregation on Sundays and holidays. It was a happy beginning in that attendance at the service was better than expected. In spite of two failed harvests which troubled West Texas, and close on the heels of this burden, it was nevertheless dared to take steps to organize the congregation, and the attempt was crowned with great success.

On December 26, in the Year of our Lord 1857, the formal organization took place where the Constitution, which was developed and presented by 40 independent men was signed, and the congregational members: J. Connatt; H.A. Fischer; J. Dennys; J. Pöschel were elected to the governing body.

“May God, the Trinity, let the Congregation be a place of manifold and rich blessings for a long, long time.”

Soli Deo Gloria.

Written January 9, 1858

Ph. J. Zizelmann
Pastor