

## ST JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH, POTH, TEXAS

St. John Lutheran Church is located at 106 Titcomb Street in Poth, Texas. It is a beautiful church with 12 magnificent, stained glass windows, which were installed in 1983. A bell to call the faithful to worship was dedicated in 1931. St. John's has a long and interesting history.

The roots of St. John's church congregation can be traced to January 15, 1899, when a congregation was organized in the home of Carl Voigt, Jr. People from several communities were part of the congregation. A little church with a one-room parsonage was built nearby and dedicated September 17, 1899. This church was considered too remote and therefore, a combined church and school was built "Waldeimm Kirchengemeinde", on the George Boening farm near the present curve on U. S. Hwy. 181 between Poth and Floresville.

The first pastor was Rev. Hans P. Duborg, aged 80. He served from Beeville except for the short time he lived in Waldheim. He was succeeded by Rev. Herman Drews in January, 1902, and served through August, 1903. The third pastor was Rev. Julius Schroeder who lived in Karnes City and served from October, 1903 through August 1918. Rev. Julius Schroeder was the father of Rev. S. T. Schroeder who later served St. John.

On April 19, 1906, services were held in Floresville in the Church of Christ, corner of "C" and 6<sup>th</sup>. Streets. Rev. Lewis F. Freyberg was installed by Rev. Julius Schroeder as pastor on August 18, 1918. He served First Lutheran of Floresville and Peace Lutheran of Dewees, with both German and English Services.

Rev. Lewis F. Freyberg held the first services in the Poth School on June 1, 1921. A schedule was set up whereby Rev. Freyberg held services in Floresville, Poth and Dewees on a rotating basis with services in German and English. It was hoped that members of Peace Church in Dewees would join the Poth Lutherans and some years later, services in Dewees were discontinued.

When the town of Poth was laid out, a lot was set aside for a Protestant church. The land was given by the Jones family, then owners of the land. Several Lutheran families in Poth and the vicinity formed a temporary organization to take advantage of this offer and to make plans for a church building. Construction for the church was begun on September 17, 1922. The cornerstone was laid, and on Thanksgiving Day, November 30, 1922, the dedication took place.

The preceding Sunday, November 26, a meeting was held at which time the formal organization was formed and adoption of a constitution took place. The congregation was named in honor of the blessed apostle, St. John the Devine. The newly organized church was received into membership with the Joint Synod of Ohio at the Texas District Convention in May, 1923.

Walter Ulbricht was the first person to be baptized in St. John's Church. This took place on May 5, 1923. The first confirmation class was on September 9, 1923. This was followed by the first marriage in the church. Louis Lindemann married Paula Schriewer on June 18, 1924.

On October 16, 1928, Rev. Meinhart A. P. Keller arrived to become the first resident pastor in Poth, and St. John's of Denhawken was added to the parish. The little church was to see many changes through the years. A cemetery was dedicated in 1930. A church bell and a parsonage were dedicated in 1931. In 1930, the Joint Synod

Of Ohio became the American Lutheran Church.

Rev. J. K. Poch came the next year. With his inimitable personality, he won the love of the people of the entire community. Many improvements were made and members were added during his ministry. In 1935, Denhawken and Nixon became a

parish, and newly ordained Rev. S. T. Schroeder became pastor of that parish. From that time on Pastor Poch devoted his talents entirely to St. John in Poth. Rev. Poch retired in 1947.

After a period of interim pastors, Rev. Manno Shatto became the pastor at St. John in August, 1951. Construction began on the expansion of the chapel in November 1951. It was enlarged to its present size. Many members volunteered their labor and generous contributions were given. The enlarged building was again consecrated on June 29, 1952. Rev. Manno Shatto served until October, 1953.

Dr. Otto R. Schawe, an Army Chaplain during WWII, and a retired instructor at Texas Lutheran College, became St. John's pastor in 1954. An educational building was dedicated on March 27, 1960.

Pastor Kenneth D. Joens arrived in August, 1966, and served until January of 1969. A new electronic organ was dedicated on June 21, 1970. In 1971, the church building was covered with brickstone, and the roof was repaired and painted, including the white cross at the top of the tower.

During the ensuing vacancy, Dr. Schawe again served until a merger with First Lutheran of Floresville, became effective May 1, 1969, when that congregation's pastor, Rev. S. T. Schroeder was installed to also serve St. John.

A speaker system was installed by Werner Artus as a gift from E. H. Wehmann. In 1972, this speaker system was dedicated to the glory of God in memory of Mrs. Normania Wehmann and Rev. and Mrs. August Artus.

Rev. C. William Mosley was installed in 1977 as pastor of St. John and First Lutheran after Rev. S. T. Schroeder's retirement.

The church received a central air and heating system in 1980.

January, 1981, Pastor Mosley resigned his ministry in Poth, and in October the congregation voted to dissolve its 12-year partnership with First Lutheran.

Rev. Fred Scheffel accepted the call as Interim Pastor of St. John. During his tenure the newsletter, "The St. John Messenger" was begun. An Altar Guild and Acolyte Corps were formed. The stained glass windows depicting Biblical scenes were installed. Rev. Scheffel left in 1987 after 6 years.

Rev. Louis F. Balderach joined St. John in April 1987 as a part-time pastor. The chimes and tapes were installed as a gift from the Maeckel family. Rev. Balderach resigned in August, 1992.

From 1992 – 1996, St. John has been served by various supply pastors and several interim pastors -- among these have been: Dr. James Qualben, Pastor Richard Nybro, and Pastor Virgil Ganz.