

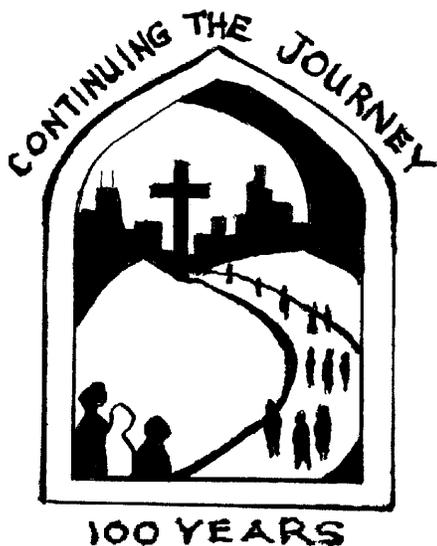
Irving Park Lutheran Church

Continuing The Journey

Part II 1929-1953

THE SECOND QUARTER CENTURY

Our second 25-year period was the most rewarding, challenging and heartbreaking era in Irving Park Lutheran Church history. It was during this time that we enjoyed our largest congregational membership and constructed the Educational Building to accommodate the expanding programs. Dr. Joshua Odén, pastor of the congregation for the entire 25 years, celebrated his 45th year with Irving Park in 1953. The era began with the onslaught of the Great Depression, continued through the devastation of World War II and ended with the Korean War. IPLC thrived in its second 25 years and members eagerly looked forward to keeping the founders' dreams alive.



The portable High School Chapel in 1929. It was built on the site of the Educational Building (otherwise known as the gym).

THE HIGH SCHOOL CHAPEL

In 1928, the Illinois Conference loaned IPLC a portable chapel that was placed on the southeast corner of Harding and Belle Plaine, the present site of the Educational Building. The chapel, used to house the overcrowded High School Department, opened on April 29, 1928.

After being improved with four coats of paint, wallpaper, carpet and a fireplace, the Conference decided in the summer of 1932 to relocate the building to serve a new congregation in Pontiac, Mich. The decision was made much to the chagrin of the IPLC Board of Trustees. The building was taken apart in one day

and moved to Pontiac. Ironically, neighbors of the Pontiac church objected to the building, and the city ordered that it be dismantled.

The IPLC Board of Regents soon appointed a committee to study the possibility of constructing another temporary building to house the Sunday Bible School until a permanent facility could be constructed. Unfortunately, the building was not easily replaced because of the economic climate caused by the Great Depression. What had been a regular attendance of 200 in the High School Department soon dwindled to 50 because it lacked a suitable facility.

THE CENTURY OF PROGRESS ORGAN FIASCO

The organ built for the Hall of Religion at the 1933 Century of Progress was hailed as the finest instrument of its size ever produced. The organ was built by M.P. Moller Inc. of Hagerstown, Md., the same company that installed the IPLC organ in 1917. The Century of Progress organ was valued at \$14,500.

Mr. Moller had expressed interest that the organ remain in Chicago “specifically at Irving Park Lutheran” after the Century of Progress exhibition ended. Somewhere along the line, IPLC’s courtship struck a sour note and the talks fell flat. The disappointment was explained in the “Tidings” of January 1934 (a condensed version):

Our Board of Trustees agreed to purchase the organ in October 1933. The paperwork was submitted to the Moller Co., and the only hitch was that IPLC asked Moller to dispose of our old organ. The contract was delayed for several weeks before Moller sold the Century of Progress organ to another party without informing IPLC.

THE EDUCATIONAL BUILDING

There is a story behind the story of the construction of our Educational Building. The unexpected loss of the portable high school chapel in 1932, coupled with increasing membership, made it necessary to think about expansion. At congregational meetings on April 26 and May 14, 1934, it was agreed to adopt an expansion plan offered by the building committee.

However, the expansion plan called for an addition to the church building, not the construction of a separate facility. Plans were made for a \$25,000 three-story addition that would, essentially, extend the church building to the north over the area that now houses the parsonage garage and the garage at our two-flat

building at 4112 N. Harding. Despite financial hardships caused by the Great Depression, the church raised enough money during the summer of 1934 to get the project started. It took almost a year for plans to be finalized and presented to the congregation on June 11, 1935.

It soon became apparent that it would be impractical to put an addition on the church because too much of the original building would have to be destroyed. After another 11 months of consideration, it was decided on May 14, 1936, to build a new brick structure on the southwest corner of Belle Plaine and Harding that would cost no more than \$15,000. Church leaders hoped to have construction completed by

Thanksgiving week, 1936.

The building would be noted for its “utility rather than beauty” and would house the church school, a gymnasium and a stage. It also would provide rooms for other activities and concerts. Groundbreaking was June 14, 1936. A familiar face had a hand in the building of our “old gym.” Among the dignitaries taking turns with the shovel was current member Betty Fridlund.



Sunday School outside Educational Building in 1938.

A TRAGIC THREE WEEKS

IPLC was in mourning late in 1931 when Ruth Wicklund, a member of the Confirmation class, was shot and killed at the intersection of Springfield and Berceau. Ruth, who lived around the corner at 4186 N. Elston, was 12 years old.

Ruth was a seventh grader on her way to Belding School on Monday, Nov. 30. Her 16-year-old boyfriend, Roosevelt High student Henry Sio, Ruth’s neighbor at 4184 N. Elston, shot her and committed suicide after

she tried to break off their friendship. The tragedy was compounded a day later when another Roosevelt student, Joseph T. Wilson, apparently re-enacting the crime, shot and killed classmate Constance Trohatos with a gun that he thought was not loaded.

The tragedies, dubbed the “Puppy Love” murders, dominated the front pages of Chicago newspapers for days. A thousand people attended Ruth’s funeral service at the Mee and Ramme Funeral Home on Dec. 2. IPLC hosted a memorial service on

Dec. 6, when Ruth was remembered for her “sweet, happy disposition, mature outlook upon life and her deep spiritual convictions.”

Twelve days later, on Dec. 18, Eugene Atkinson was hit by a car and died. Mr. Atkinson, 67, was manager of the “Tidings” and had held offices on the Board of Regents and Board of Deacons. His widow, Laura, took over his duties with the “Tidings.”



Irving Park Lutheran Church in 1928.

FINALLY, THE DOORS OPEN

On Sunday, Jan. 17, 1937, IPLC celebrated its 33rd anniversary and the opening of the Educational Building.

The 9:30 a.m. Swedish service paid tribute to church founders. The 11 a.m. service was filled to capacity, and L.M. Nelson, who also served as construction superintendent for the Educational Building project, gave a speech about the early days of the church.

At 5 p.m., the congregation gathered in church and proceeded across the street to the new Educational Building.

A TIME CAPSULE

Almost 800 people attended the afternoon ceremony when the Educational Building cornerstone was laid on Rally Day Sunday, Sept. 27, 1936. A box, containing the following items, was placed in the cornerstone:

- * IPLC Bulletin for Sept. 27, 1936.
- * Tidings for July-August 1936.
- * Lutheran Companion, Sept. 26, 1936.
- * Augustana, Sept. 24, 1936.
- * IPLC membership directory.
- * Clippings from the Irving Park News of Sept. 25, 1936; Chicago Daily News of Sept. 26, 1936; Chicago Sunday Tribune of Sept. 27, 1936; and Swedish-American Tribune of Sept. 24, 1936.
- * Membership lists of the Chorus-Choir, teachers and officers of the Church School, Board of Regents, and committees for the erection of the Educational Building.
- * A photograph of Pastor Odén.
- * Copies of the Hymnal, Psalm Book and Illinois Conference minutes of 1936.
- * A subscription blank and "brick" subscription envelope, and a Duplex church offering envelope.

SCOUTS HONOR IPLC

Boy Scouts of America was incorporated in 1910 and increased in popularity during World War I. During the 1910-20 decade, Irving Park provided its own unofficial scouting experience. Pastor Odén would take 10-20 boys to Camp Arcadia, a resort 12 miles from Ludington, Mich., where they enjoyed sports, fishing, hiking and fellowship.

Pastor Odén blazed another trail in August 1919 when IPLC officially joined the Boy Scouts and formed Troop 863, which has thrived at IPLC for 84 years. Pastor Odén organized Troop 863 and was the first Scoutmaster. For the first 26 years, camp was held at various locations, including the Menominee Indian Reservation along the Wolf River in Keshena, Wis., Camp Owassippi near Whitehall, Mich.,

and camps at Long Lake and Lake Geneva.

Former Scoutmaster Walter Worthington wanted Troop 863 to have its own camp. Worthington purchased an 80-acre parcel on Pine Lake west of Elcho, Wis., on Nov. 24, 1943, but the first summer camp was not held at "Worthington Pines" until 1945. Members of the troop's Pioneer Club and older Scouts cleared the land of trees and stumps to create a ball field. Pastor Odén dedicated the camp in 1946, and it was renamed "Camp Cayuga" in 1949.

Cub Scout Pack 3863 was organized in January 1938 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford J. Harris, and membership quickly grew from 10 to 45 in the first year.

Camp Fire Girls, which began in the early 1920s, and Girls Scouts (March 1927) also have flourished at Irving Park.

RADIO MINISTRY

Irving Park was one of the pioneers in radio ministry. Starting in the mid-1920s, our church services were regularly broadcast, primarily on WCFL (1000-AM), WGN (720-AM) and, in the early days, on WIBO (560-AM) and WCBD (1080-AM).

In March 1931, our English (8:30 a.m.) and Swedish (9:15) services were broadcast over WCFL. J. Vern Fridlund was announcer for the services. The Swedish Club of Chicago sponsored the broadcasts of the Swedish Julotta in 1938 and 1939. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, 1946, WCFL broadcast across the United States our Midnight Service in English, and the Julotta at 1:30 a.m. The church was filled, and hundreds were turned away at both services. Letters were received from across the country thanking IPLC for the services.

Excerpts from the letters were printed in the "Tidings" in January. Letters arrived from New York, Massachusetts, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Michigan and California. On Jan. 29, 1950, WGN broadcast a 30-minute program performed by our Sunday School.



The Religious Drama Guild in 1928.

RELIGIOUS DRAMA GUILD

In our early years, Irving Park was active in religious drama. During the 1920s, Pastor Odén had a temporary stage erected in the church and presented a series of Sunday evening dramatic sermons that illustrated the Old Testament stories.

Soon after the opening of the Educational Building (with its new stage), the Religious Drama Guild was formed with more than 50 members on March 10, 1937. Pastor Odén was honorary chairman and J. Vern Fridlund was acting (possible pun intended) chairman. Mrs. Sophia Swanstrom Young was director. Performances included "Luther the Emancipator," "St. Claudia," "The Way of Peace," "The Forgotten

HEAVENLY MEETING

Pastor Odén was selected to be the chaplain of the Illinois Legislature for a week in May 1936. He had a 15-minute meeting with Gov. Henry Horner, and pastor later recalled in the "Tidings": "As I had no ax to grind nor any request to make, the Governor seemed to be doubly pleased for a caller of this kind."

Christmas Gift," "Dickens' Christmas Carol," and others.

The Chicago Sunday Evening Club invited the Religious Drama Guild to perform "Luther the Emancipator" before a capacity house at Orchestra Hall on Sunday, Jan. 16, 1938. The performance earned the Drama Guild much citywide publicity and recognition.

IPLC Trivia

* From October 1929 to October 1930, IPLC added 462 members, bringing the total to 2,234 people (992 families, 1,859 communicants, 375 children). Only six members died during that year.

* Thursday, Nov. 20, 1930: A huge reception was held in church to welcome home L.M. and Hannah Nelson. The Nelsons had been passengers on the Steamer Bremen for an extended tour of Sweden, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, Spain, Switzerland, France and Great Britain.

* May 1, 1931: The boys basketball team, which took first place in the Church Athletic Association Basketball Division, was honored with a banquet at the Irving Park Y.M.C.A. Legendary coach Amos Alonzo Stagg of the University of Chicago was the guest speaker.

* April 1932: Pastor and Mrs. Odén traveled to Washington, D.C., during the week of April 3. The trip, which included visits to the White House and almost every other important government building, was well-chronicled in the "Tidings."

* June 11, 1932: More than 1,000 attended the "Sunday Bible School Picnic" at the Forest Preserve at Devon and Milwaukee. A few consumption numbers: 1,400 bottles of pop, 1,800 candy bars, 720 Good Humor ice cream bars, and 12 cases of something called Krimko.

* 1932: Music director Harry T. Carlson was chosen to lead the Protestant music celebration for the Century of Progress World's Fair in 1933.



The combined choirs in 1933, with Pastor Joshua Odén (left) and Director Harry T. Carlson (right).

WORLD WAR II

The second World War also took a toll on the IPLC family. In 1943, the "Tidings" printed a special Christmas edition listing the names and addresses of 275 members of our congregational family who were serving in the military. By the end of the war, that number swelled to 388.

Letters from service personnel were printed in each edition of the "Tidings." Memorial wreaths, and a gold star were placed in the sanctuary to honor those who gave their lives for our country. One slain soldier was Staff Sgt. Howard William Musson, the son of IPLC custodians Mr. and Mrs. William C. Musson. Their son was reported missing in action on March 19, 1944, and he was declared dead one year later.

The last of our 11 war casualties was recognized at a memorial service on Feb. 9, 1947. The service honored Robert George Johnson, who was 21 when he was reported missing in action Jan. 19, 1945, while serving with the Army Air Corps.



The Sunday School teachers huddle on a cold day in 1929.

HARD DAYS, NIGHTS

July 26, 1947, proved to be a busy day and night for Pastor Odén. At 2 p.m., he baptized Enid Elaine Powell (Enid, a current IPLC member, later married Calvin Gustave Johnson on Aug. 22); at 3 p.m., he conducted a funeral service for Thorwald Ellingson; at 5 p.m., he married Vigo C. Carlson and Elizabeth Reed; at 6 p.m., he married Fred Muehlfelder Jr. and Nerieda Rieker; at 7 p.m., he

married Kenneth H. Lundgren and Jo Anne Barnes; at 8 p.m. he married William S. Gindele and Elizabeth F. Anderson; and at 8:30 p.m. he married Adolph A. Anderson and Florence Johnson Becker. One baptism, one funeral and five weddings in one day. Pastor Odén had another busy day on Sept. 6, 1947, when he conducted weddings at 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 p.m.

ORGAN DEDICATION

Sunday, Dec. 13, 1953, was a golden moment in IPLC history. That was the day our Casavant organ was dedicated as part of our Golden Anniversary Jubilee. Harry T. Carlson, who served IPLC as music director from 1921-39, returned as guest organist for the ceremony. Lillian Carlson, Harry's wife, was the Irving Park organist in 1953.

The new organ was built by the Casavant Freres Limitee (Casavant Brothers) of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada. The organ design and specifications were developed with the help of Mr. Carlson and J. Vern



The IPLC organ, as pictured in the 1953 dedication bulletin.

Fridlund, who worked for the Kimball Organ Co. for many years.

Mr. Carlson suggested a heavier foundation for the organ, which accounted for its stability and strength of tone. There are three keyboards for the hands and one for the feet. More than 2,500 pipes are in three expression chambers in the organ loft to the upper right of the chancel.

The Deagan Memorial Chimes, which had 25 notes, and a public-address system installed by Tri-Par Sound Systems Inc., also were dedicated on Dec. 13.



Dr. Joshua Odén

More IPLC Trivia

* 1932: Pastor Odén drove to Los Angeles on a two-week trip. Along the way, he preached in Avoca, Texas, Los Angeles and Pasadena, Calif., and Albuquerque, N.M.

* 1932: Christmas Evensong was held Sunday, Dec. 18, and Tuesday, Dec. 20. The performance featured many musicians, including harpists Gertrude Peterson and Lucy Lewis of Los Angeles, Calif., who were touring the nation.

* 1932: The chancel was decorated elaborately for the 15th anniversary of the church building. The

Decorations Committee built a replica of a snow-covered country church that covered the organ grill, and a replica of a small cottage covered the organ console. Thirty trees were placed in the

chancel around those replicas to give the appearance of a church on a hill and a cottage in a valley.

* January 1933: IPLC published its membership directory. The top 10 list of names: Johnson (92), Anderson (75), Peterson (52), Carlson (45), Nelson (36), Larson (33), Swanson (27), Olson (20), Erickson (15) and Gustafson (15). Smith and Jones? There were listings for only one Smith (Mrs. Emma), and two Jones (Mr. & Mrs. Bernard L., and Miss Margaret).

* June 1933: In Pastor Odén's first 25 years at IPLC, he baptized 31 adults and 1,205 children, confirmed 1,269 people, married 771 couples, performed 1,081 funeral services and ministered to 3,430 IPLC members.

* June 18, 1933: Pastor Odén gave the introductory address to 50,000 Lutherans from throughout the United States who gathered in Soldier Field as part of the Century of Progress World's Fair. Music director Harry T. Carlson coordinated the choir of 4,000 voices that performed at the event.

* Dec. 9, 1933: IPLC defeated Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox 33-30 at the Irving Park Y.M.C.A. in the first league basketball game in the Northwest Church Athletic Association.



Do you recognize any of these "Square E Girls" from 1938? Perhaps Betty Fridlund or Arletta Anderson? The group, organized in 1937, consisted of about 20 girls from the 1935 and 1936 Confirmation Classes. The Four E's stood for Earnestness, Eagerness, Energy and Endeavor.

More IPLC Trivia

* May 1934: It is noted that in 1904, at the end of IPLC's first year of existence, membership totaled 94. In 1914, membership was 375. In 1924, it increased to 907. In 1934, at the end of the third decade, it was 2,375, representing 2,019 communicants, 356 children and 1,042 families.

* 1935: Pastor Odén was elected president of the Chicago Church Federation.

* May 10, 1936: A downpour flooded the organ chamber and caused extensive damage. Church member J. Vern Fridlund replaced valves and pried out soaked parts to save the organ.

* Summer 1936: Pastor and Mrs. Odén, their son, Joshua Jr., and church secretary Mildred Bogren, Director of Religious Education Edna Magnuson and Parish Worker Verna Samuelson took a seven-week summer trip to Europe under the auspices of the Augustana Luther League Council. Rev. Phillip Thelander filled in at IPLC for Pastor Odén.

* 1938-39 Pastoral report: In his letter to the congregation on the fiscal year 1938-39, Pastor Odén warned of the possible demise of the Swedish service unless "new recruits are won."

* 1939: The Parish Plan was adopted, with the congregation being divided into 94 groups of 10 families in each group. The idea was to knit the membership closer together to make it possible for individuals and families to know each other.

* Sept. 10, 1939: A good-sized crowd attended the Mee and Ramme Funeral Home chapel dedication ceremony and heard Pastor Odén speak on the history of undertaking from pagan times and the dark ages.

* October 1939: After 18 years of service, Harry T. Carlson resigned as music director and organist. His wife, Lillian, took over as organist, a "temporary" job that lasted 37 years.



The IPLC interior in 1929.

* Sept. 20, 1939: Rev. Arvid P. Chindblom, a brother of IPLC member Edward Chindblom, was called as assistant pastor.

* April 25, 1941: The death of Laura E. Atkinson, the "Tidings" advertising manager. Mrs. Atkinson, who was lovingly called "Aunty Ats" by the children of the church, lived almost 10 years after her husband, Eugene, died after being hit by a car.

* Aug. 22, 1942: L.M. Nelson, 75, died. He was recognized as the "foremost founder of the church." The church was formed at a meeting in his house, and he was credited with securing the church lots. He also was the construction superintendent and contractor for the first building.

* September 1946: Pastor Chindblom, who was with IPLC for seven years, resigned and accepted a call from the Inner Mission Society of Chicago.

* Sept. 20, 1946: Aaron Olson died. It was in his home above his dry goods store on Irving Park Road that the Sunday School was organized in 1901. He was 82.

* Feb. 14, 1947: The Boy Scouts spent Valentine's Day hosting their Fathers and Sons Dinner at the Educational Building, with Chicago Bears captain George Wilson the guest speaker. On May 21, 1947, legendary Schurz High School football coach Fred O'Keefe was the guest speaker for another Fathers and Sons Dinner.

* 1948-53: Kenneth E. Farb served as assistant pastor. He returned as pastor in 1959 and served until 1971.

* January 1949: Mildred Bogren Tesberg resigned after 29 years as IPLC secretary and assistant editor of the "Tidings."

* 1953: Events were held throughout the year to honor the IPLC Golden Jubilee Anniversary. The Divine Service was held Feb. 22 at the Schurz High auditorium, and the anniversary dinner was Oct. 23 at the Tam O'Shanter Country Club in Niles.



The Irving Park Lutheran Church Children's Choir in 1938.

TIDINGS

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Irving Park Lutheran Church



TIDINGS

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