

## KNIKER

After serving the congregation for 21 years, Pastor Krebs presented his resignation at a special meeting on November 25, 1925. The president, William Henze appointed a pulpit committee and on March 24, 1926, Rev. Paul Kniker arrived by train from Beasley to preach a trial sermon. All 42 members present voted "YA" to call as pastor Rev. Paul Kniker--whose father, as president of the Synod, had counseled with the church back in 1895. Soon after he moved to Coupland, Kniker met and fell in love with Dora Henze from Austin, the granddaughter of William Henze, the president of the congregation. They were married about a year later on June 27, 1927, and the bride moved into the parsonage.

During the following years the congregation engaged in a rather difficult struggle over the question of which language to use for the church services and meetings. The older people generally wanted to retain German and the younger members wanted to move toward

the English. A few Sunday school classes and the Youth Fellowship adopted English. Confirmation instruction was given in both German and English. On June 29, 1929, a move was successful to add one additional English evening service per month to minister to those who could not get much out of the German services.

## BAPTIST CHURCH

The people who made up the small congregation for the English services were mostly persons who had worshipped in the Baptist Church which was located on the corner of Broad and Herrin Streets. This Baptist congregation had started back about 1914 when Milton Cunningham organized a group in a rented business building. The church later bought two lots and built a small auditorium. The effort never really generated much head-way and by 1926 the services were discontinued. A number of the remaining members, the Fords, the Kimmons, Chalupas, Sorensons, and Beans, were the ones who worshipped in the evening services at St. Peters church and some of them eventually transferred their membership.



The abandoned Baptist church building with its furnishings was purchased by St. Peters Youth Fellowship in 1934 for \$500. Emil Polzin, using his house-moving gear, his mules and the boys from the Youth Fellowship, moved the building to the lot east of the parsonage where it served for many years as a youth building and community center.

In late 1931 Kniker left Coupland to become pastor of a church in San Antonio. From there he went to Burton where his health began to fail, and he died in 1947 at the age of 47. His body was returned to Coupland for burial in St. Peters Cemetery on the lot of his wife's family, William Henze. One lot in the cemetery was reserved especially for ministers and their families, but that lot remains unused today since Kniker is the only former pastor buried in the cemetery.

## MOHR

After Kniker left Coupland the church was once again without pastoral leadership for some months, during which time Julius Kasiske of Richland served as supply pastor. Incidentally, his daughter, Gretchen, now lives in Coupland and is a member of St. Peters church. Her name is Pfluger.

To secure a new minister the president, C. W. Pfluger, corresponded with the Texas Synod president Robert Mohr. He recommended one minister after another, all of whom chose not to come or for some other reason were not called by the congregation. Synod President Mohr even visited Coupland himself to meet with the council to help them with their work of calling a new minister. Finally, in John Alden fashion, the council said to Mohr, "Why don't you come and be our pastor?" Surprisingly, he accepted that call and moved into the parsonage with his wife, Olga, and two sons. One son, Bill, later married a local girl, Evelyn Ging.

In 1934 an important church merger took place in American Protestantism which affected the story of St. Peters church. At a joint general synod meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 26, the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church of America became one, adopting the name Evangelical and Reformed Church. From then on until 1957 the local church was known as St. Peters E. & R. Church.

In those days, unlike today, the rite of confirmation did not automatically admit persons into the membership of the church. When Mohr arrived, he found a number of young persons who had received confirmation instruction but who had not yet joined the church. He went to work on these prospects and during the following years a remarkable number of persons were added to the membership roll. In fact, a record number of 38 persons were received in the one congregational meeting in January of 1938. Since then, in 1954, the rite of confirmation was declared the service of reception of youth into full membership of the church.