

## EARLY RELIGIOUS SERVICES: ERNST

In 1890 the budding village of Coupland lacked one important institution, a church. So the Swiss and German immigrants, feeling an urgent need for religious leadership, got together and arranged to have a German speaking minister visit the community from time to time to perform necessary religious rites and conduct religious services. They were able to find a pastor on a part-time basis in Rev. F. Ernst of McDade.

According to records, in 1890 Pastor Ernst baptized the infant Louis Foerster in the Pear Valley School located on the Franz Nickel farm east of Coupland. In 1892, using Luther's Catechism as a text, he gave confirmation instruction in the home of Dietrich Goetz south of Coupland. On the certificate he identified the congregation as St. Peters Lutheran of Coupland. We cannot tell how the name St. Peters originated, but it seems to have become fixed in the minds of the people in the years that followed. The term "Lutheran" was used on the document probably because Ernst was the pastor of a Lutheran church at McDade, though the St. Peters group was more or less interdenominational in the beginning.

### CZILLAT

In 1893 the group was able to work out a more frequent schedule of religious ministry with Rev. Gus Czillat of Taylorville. About this time the public school on Elliot Street in Coupland became the regular meeting place of the congregation. Sometime during 1894 the group organized into a more or less official congregation, and that year has come to be thought of as the year of the birth of St. Peters Church.

### KANMACHER

In the spring of 1895 the infant congregation assigned its president, John Goetz, the task of getting a teacher for the school who could also conduct worship services in German at least one Sunday a month. Mr. Goetz appealed to Rev. C. Kniker, the president of the German Evangelical Synod of North America. This immigrant denomination traced its origins to Uhlrich Zwingli in Switzerland and Martin Luther in Germany. Kniker was able to recommend a Rev. Kanmacher, whom the congregation called at a salary of \$400 a year.

Kanmacher arrived on October 1 and later that month the congregation voted to build a parsonage on the northwest quarter of block 5 purchased from Aschen and Kreidel for \$70.00 to be paid in three years. Reinhold Aschen was contracted to oversee the project by the building committee: August Kreidel, Wm. Henze and F. Wilgrube.

Music for both the school and the church was provided by a pump organ which had been loaned to the congregation by John Goetz. In 1895 the church voted to buy the organ from Goetz for \$25.00. Ten years later the same organ was moved into the new church building where it served until it was replaced, first by a piano and then in 1938 by an electronic organ. In 1970 the Men's Brotherhood dug the original organ out of the attic, had it rebuilt and placed it in the educational building.

## RUDOLPH

Kanmacher remained in Coupland less than a year and moved to Dallas. By the beginning of the school term in 1896 the congregation had called a new teacher-pastor, Rev. Ernst Rudolph. His major contribution was to prepare a constitution for the congregation. On January 24, 1897, the president John Klattenhof presented the document at the congregational meeting. It was adopted and signed by the 23 members present. At the same meeting the congregation took a special vote to join the German Evangelical Synod of North America.

## RAASE

After serving about two years Pastor Rudolph moved and was followed by a young man, Rev. Raase. He devoted his full time to the church, for the school operation was separated from the church except that the pastor continued to teach a two-month course in German in the public school during the summer.