

Back to our chronology, after leading the congregation in the building program, Mohr received a call from the church in Beasley. He resigned in the fall of 1954 after serving St. Peters church for a record 22 years. Edwin Schaefer, pastor of the new Trinity Church in Austin, proved to be a helpful leader during the difficult interim period. The church council began meeting every month to deal with the many adjustments needed to prepare for the calling of a new minister. The salary had to be increased. The vacation period was extended to a month and a car allowance had to

be considered. The class system of church finance, described earlier, in which members were assessed dues, was replaced by an every member canvass for voluntary subscription to a unified budget.

JOHNSON

Among the candidates considered by the pulpit committee was Jewel Johnson. He was a Methodist who had served the E. & R. Church at Lewisville, Texas, while attending Perkins School of Theology. He had been the roommate of the president, Bill Pfluger, at the spring meeting of Texas Synod in New Orleans. He was now serving a Methodist church in Hutsonville, Illinois, but had applied for transfer to the E. & R. Church, which explained why he was on the list of prospects.

Johnson arrived by train on January 19, 1955, to conduct a guest service, after which he was elected as pastor by a vote of 140 to 3. So on March 30, his 1953 Chevrolet pulled a small trailer into Coupland with his wife, Mary, and three sons, Stephen, Philip and Paul. On Palm Sunday, April 3, an overflow crowd of 278 persons greeted him to hear him preach a sermon entitled "The Lord Has Need Of It." During the following months a renewed interest in churchmanship was demonstrated by a notable increase in attendance at public worship. On world-wide communion Sunday, for example, the sanctuary and the side rooms were filled with 370 persons when the pastor's new baby, Martha, was baptized. The average attendance for Sunday worship for the year 1956 was a record 231 persons per Sunday.

During this period some significant changes took place in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The original schedule called for the sacrament only four times a year--Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, and Reformation Sunday. Those not communing were dismissed from the service and those who did commune gathered around the altar in small groups of about twelve to drink from a common cup. On the way back to their seats they dropped an extra offering in a plate on the front pew. Some years earlier the common cup had already given way to individual cups, but in 1956 the dismissal was discontinued, members of the council assisted in officiating, the extra offering was eliminated, more frequent observance began, and communion in the pews was initiated. The confirmation class that year made and installed cup receptacles for the pews. Also the use of grape juice instead of fermented wine was introduced.

Another change in the family name of the congregation took place in 1957 as a result of the historic merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. The name adopted by the new denomination was "United Church of Christ."



The pulpit of the neighboring congregation St. Johns of Richland, was vacant in 1958 after the resignation of Albert Petrich. So St. Peters Church was asked to share their pastor during the interim until the arrival of their new pastor E. H. Schwengel. In 1959 another neighbor, Trinity Church of Austin, called upon Johnson to supply their pulpit after the resignation of Edwin Schaefer and until the arrival of Bill Anderson. Then later in the same year St. Peters Church itself was in need of a supply pastor, for Johnson moved to Burton, Texas, on May 1.

DOLLGENER

The Richland church returned the favor by sharing their pastor, Schwengel, who with Frank Horak supplied the pulpit until the arrival of the new minister, Duayne Dollgener. Originally from Dallas, he had just graduated from Eden Seminary when he moved into the parsonage with his new bride, Donna, on July 1, 1959. All three of their children, Cynthia, Paula, and Carl were born during their ministry at Coupland.

In September the president, Bill Schwenke, signed papers on behalf of the congregation to support the construction of a cooperative village water system. Up to this time the houses in Coupland had self-contained systems catching rain water on the metal roofs and storing it in underground cisterns. The sewage system of the village is still an individual enterprise. In 1960 the congregation bought two additional lots, 3 and 4 of block 5, in order to extend the septic tank distribution field of the parsonage.

During this period some significant organizational changes took place in the congregation. The Evangelical and Reformed Hymnal was introduced in the worship service. A young layman, Don Wernli, developed into something of a lay minister serving the church whenever the pastor was out of town. A board of Christian Education was formed to look after the work of the Sunday School. Occasional German services were planned on a trial basis, and two identical worship services were conducted for a trial period. A remodeling program by contractor, Max Pfluger, moved the musical instruments and the choir into the balcony. The project was undertaken in connection with the celebration of the 70th Anniversary in 1964.