

Immanuel (Elm Grove)

Rockwell

Immanuel (Emmanuel) Lutheran Church traces its history some thirty years beyond the organizational date of April 14, 1895, back to the days of the Civil War. During, or soon after the year 1862, a log building was constructed a short distance southwest of the present home of Mr. B. A. Earnhardt to provide a place where the families of the community could assemble for Sunday school and prayer services. The numerous elm trees around this log building give it the name Elm Grove. In 1874-75 Dayvault Beaver gave a deed for one acre of land on which a frame building was erected. There was a change of ½ miles in location from the log structure but no change in the name of the new building. This is the site of our organizational building. The deed made a provision that said property is used for Sunday school purposes. So, for thirty years the families of the community assembled at Elm Grove for Sunday school and worship and frequently visiting pastors were called in to conduct services of worship. Rev. CA Brown, W. R. Brown, and Rev. Samuel Rothrock were heard many times at Elm Grove. Prior to the year 1895, several attempts had been made to effect the organization of a congregation at Elm Grove, but the efforts had failed. In January, 1895, the community sent Luther C. Miller, Julius A Earnhardt and Calvin L Brown to attend a meeting of the joint council of the Organ pastorate of the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This meeting was held at Organ Church and the committee was instructed to seek the counsel and advise the officers of Organ pastorate as to what steps are taken at Elm Grove for the organization of a Lutheran congregation. It was reported that the Methodist Episcopal Church was endeavoring to organize a congregation at Elm Grove.

After long and careful consideration it was decided to take Elm Grove as a mission point and the pastor of the Organ pastorate, Rev. Geo. H. Cox, was instructed to hold regular services there twice a month on Sunday afternoons or nights. Rev. Cox began holding these services on the second Sunday in January, 1895. On the following Easter Sunday, April 15, 1895, after the service on that day, sixteen people organized themselves into an Evangelical Lutheran congregation. They were Catherine N. Earnhardt, C. L. Brown, M. J. Earnhardt, Mrs. M. J. Earnhardt, Luther Miller, Lewis Beaver, Mrs. Lewis Beaver, J. A. Earnhardt, Mrs. J. A. Earnhardt, C. J. Boger, Mrs. C. J. Boger, B.A. Earnhardt, Mrs. B.A. Earnhardt, Miss Eicie Earnhardt, and C.A Miller. The following officers were duly elected and installed: Calvin L. Brown, elder for two years; M. J. Earnhardt, elder for one year; Luther C. Miller, deacon for two years; and Julius A Earnhardt, deacon for one year.

A congregational meeting was called for Thursday night, April 18, 1895 to adopt a constitution. Every member of the congregation was present for this meeting and a constitution prepared by a committee composed of Rev. Geo. H. Cox, Calvin L. Brown and Jeremiah Earnhardt was unanimously adopted. This action gave the name **IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH** to the new congregation. This name was suggested by the oldest charter member, Catherine Nussman Earnhardt, daughter to the Rev. Adolphus Nussman, first Lutheran minister to North Carolina. The congregation voted to petition the North Carolina Synod for membership in that body. C.L. Brown was elected delegate and Julius A Earnhardt alternate delegate to present this

petition at the meeting of Synod. One dollar and seventy cents was received as the congregation's first contribution to the treasury of Synod. Luther C. Miller was elected secretary of the council and C.L. Brown, treasurer.

The Rev. Geo. H. Cox was the first pastor of Emmanuel Church (spelling of name was changed at some time) as this congregation was made a part of the Organ pastorate. The first communion service was held at Emmanuel November 24, 1895, with the sermon by Rev. Derrick and the communion service was conducted by the pastor, Rev. Geo. H. Cox. Almost immediately steps were taken toward the erection of a church building to be made of brick. Two acres for the church property had been purchased from Eli Beaver, a grandson of Dayvault Beaver, for \$25.00. Mr. Calvin L. Brown was appointed to solicit funds for the new church building and through his efforts a handsome sum was raised from other Lutheran congregations and individuals. (At the age of 4-5 years, Beulah Holshouser, now Mrs. George Fink, accompanied Mr. Brown on many occasions as he solicited funds) Brick were made by hand where the Travis L Eller residence now stands. The members took hold of the work with a determination to accomplish their object. One day each week was set aside by the congregation on which to work for the new church. The members made their own brick and every person, young and old, male and female, did his part. (Irene Miller, later Mrs. Geo. R. L. Beaver, remembers being too young to help make or carry brick for fear she would drop and break one, but they let her hold up her dress with bits and pieces of bricks, thinking possibly she was helping. She also remembered that George Miller, a black man laid the brick) After 1896 Emmanuel was no longer a part of the Organ pastorate.

The Rev. R.L. Brown became pastor of Emmanuel in 1897 and served until 1900. Work on the new church continued and on August 19, 1897 a large congregation on the grounds to witness the laying of the corner stone of Emmanuel Lutheran Church. The Rev. V. R. Stickley, President of the NC Synod officiated at this service. Addresses were delivered by President Stickley, Rev. W. B. Oney and Theological Student, C. L. Miller. Pastor and members of Emmanuel worked faithfully and on the fifth Sunday in October, 1898, Emmanuel Lutheran Church was dedicated to God. The sermon was preached by the Rev. H. M. Brown, brother to the pastor. Assisting in the dedication services were Rev. C.A. Brown, President of the conference; Rev. W. R. Brown and others.

Rev. J. H. C. Fisher was pastor of Emmanuel from 1900 through 1902. The new congregation continued to grow in membership and enthusiasm. In the summer of 1902, Theological Student C.P. Fisher, supplied at Emmanuel. He was called to be the pastor of the Parish, including Faith and Emmanuel Churches. On graduation from the seminary in 1903, Rev. Fisher began his pastoral work at Emmanuel. He served as pastor for fifteen years. Some time during 1906-08 the Emmanuel cemetery was laid off into plots and blue prints were made to give the church a beautiful and well-planned cemetery. This work was under the direction of Mr. A. B. Clemence. The duplex envelope system for church offering was introduced in 1914. August 22, 1915, the congregation decided to build a church steeple and to install a church bell. A meeting of conference was held at Emmanuel November 18, 1915. April 9, 1916 the church tower was completed and on October 8 a dedication service for it was held. The sermon was preached by Dr. R. L. Patterson.

Rev. M.L. Ridenhour supplied the congregation in 1918 until Rev. G. O. Ritchie accepted the call to become pastor. Rev. Ritchie served Emmanuel for two years, 1918-

1919. Emmanuel was in a parish with Faith from 1903 until 1918 and then with St. James until 1949.

In 1919, Emmanuel and St. James Lutheran Church, Rockwell, were placed in the same parish when Faith became self-supporting. The Rev. C. R. Pless accepted the call of the new parish and he was pastor of Emmanuel/St. James congregations for four years. The parsonage was built jointly by the two in 1919 (This parsonage was on the east corner of Emmanuel Church Road and Highway 52)

The Rev. E.F.K. Roof was the next pastor of Emmanuel serving from 1922-1925. Rev. J. A. Yount and Theological Student E. Ray Trexler served as supply pastors during 1925 when the parish was without a regular pastor. On January 1, 1926, Rev. C. P. Fisher again became pastor of Emmanuel when he accepted the call of the Rockwell Lutheran Parish. In the spring of 1927 an addition was built at the rear of the church for Sunday school rooms. The building committee was composed of B. A. Earnhardt, George R. L. Beaver, George H. Boger, and John A. Misenheimer. At the same time, the auditorium of the church was remodeled. An altar and new pews were added to the furnishings of the church

Rev. J. D. Shepherd was the next pastor and he served Emmanuel from September 1, 1930 to July 1935. The Sunday school building was dedicated on the fourth Saturday in July, the annual date for the fellowship supper preceding homecoming, 1934. The cornerstone was also laid at this time. The pastor in charge of this service was assisted by Dr. J. L. Morgan, President of the Synod. Rev. J. E. Walker was called to Emmanuel and moved to Rockwell October 15, 1935. In the spring of 1938 memorial windows were placed in the church by members and interested friends. At the same time, a new floor foundation sub-floor was laid. The church yard was beautified and concrete walks were laid. Electric lights were installed in 1940. New church property was acquired when, on December 19, 1941, Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Earnhardt gave to Emmanuel the deed to one acre of property on the south side of the church.

Rev. Ernest L Misenheimer accepted a call to the Rockwell Lutheran pastorate in 1943 and came to Rockwell on February 15. An organizational building was constructed across the road from the church in 1944. On May 13, 1943, the Superior Court of Rowan County had granted a clear deed to this property including one acre to Emmanuel Church. This was the property of the Old Elm Grove School and had been in possession of the church for many years but the original deed, mentioned earlier in this historical sketch, had been lost. In 1943, the parsonage was remodeled and a new garage was built at the parsonage in the spring of 1944. The interior of Emmanuel Church was redecorated last summer and the church was given a new roof. The Northern Conference met at Emmanuel November 1, 1944. Financially, Emmanuel had a record year in 1944 when members of the congregation contributed a total of \$6,105 through various treasuries of the church and its organizations.

On January 1, 1945 the membership rolls of Emmanuel were as follows: Baptized members 328, confirmed members 240, communing members 175. Emmanuel has enjoyed fifty years of progress and our congregation continues to grow spiritually and numerically. Giving to general causes of the church has increased. All the organizations of the church; Brotherhood, Missionary Society, Luther League, Children of the Church and Sunday school are functioning regularly and effectively. Emmanuel has sent two

sons into the Gospel ministry, Rev. Lee Shipton and Rev. Clyde Misenheimer. Fifty one of our young men and women were in the armed forces of our country.

The members, former pastors, and friends of Immanuel (Spelling of name changed again) celebrated its fifty years of service, April 15, 1945 with the Rev. C. P. Fisher, DD delivering the anniversary sermon and Dr. J. L. Morgan, President of Synod bringing the afternoon greetings. Also other former Pastors brought greetings plus "The Early History of Immanuel Sunday School" by Rev. C. L. Miller.

A committee was appointed March 19456 to inclose the vestibule of the church. The work was completed and paid for December 30, 1946. April 28, 1946, the council granted the Young Men's Bible Class permission to start a beautiful rock wall around the cemetery in loving memory of Floyd Beaver, who lost his life in World War II. The wall was finished and dedicated in 1947. The council voted April 22, 1947 to sell their part of the old parsonage, in Rockwell, which was joint with St. James. January 1948, \$3,000.00 was received from the sale.

Plans for a seven room brick parsonage to cost \$14,000.00 were received by the council May 21, 1948. During Homecoming Service, July 1949 the parsonage was dedicated. Much labor and material was donated. April 5, 1948, the members of Immanuel voted to become self-supporting effective the first of January 1949. Rev. Ernest Misenheimer left Immanuel December 1948 to continue his service with St. James, Rockwell.

Rev. Glenn A Yount, with his family, moved into the new parsonage in January 1949. The council voted to buy a Connsonata electric organ on May 6, 1951, for about \$3,400.00 which was installed July, 1951. The improvement committee turned in plans July 13, 1952 to renovate and increase the number of Sunday School rooms, remodel and redecorate the sanctuary, adding new carpet, plus a new heating system, at an estimated cost of between five and six thousand dollars. As in the past, much of the labor and materials was donated which made the cost much less than would have been otherwise. Pastor Glenn Yount, his wife Doris and son Tony left Immanuel October 3, 1954 to continue his Christian Service at Bethpage and Cedar Grove. They now have a daughter, Susan Gaye.

Immanuel congregation extended a call to the Rev. Floyd W. Bost, a graduate of the Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC, which he accepted and moved his family; wife Bonnie and daughter Karen, to Immanuel. While members of Immanuel daughter Wanda arrived at the Pastor's home. They also now have a son Dana. Pastor Bost left Immanuel July 15, 1958 to continue his Christian duty with Christ Lutheran, Fairfax, VA.

During the remodeling of the Sanctuary, Immanuel held its services in the Rockwell School Auditorium. The completion ended in 1955 and was dedicated July 5, 1960. Rev. J. Paul Rimmer accepted the call to Immanuel Lutheran Pastorate and moved his family; wife, Eva; daughter, Jane; and sons, John and Jerry, December 1958. A new piano was added to the Sanctuary which is used mostly for the Sunday school opening, but also adds a lot when used with the organ during our worship service. A lot on the north side of the fellowship building was purchased by the families of C.A. Miller and C. J. Boger and presented to Immanuel to be used as a parking lot. The parsonage was remodeled, adding two bedrooms and bath upstairs, carpeted the living and dining area and built a garage. To honor our Senior Citizens of Immanuel, those couples having celebrated fifty years or more of marriage, or seventy years old or older, an annual

evening has been set aside for their honor and pleasure, consisting of food and good entertainment. On April 23, 1967, the congregation voted to accept the Constitution of Immanuel Lutheran Church. After more than seven years of Christian service, Pastor Rimmer left Immanuel June 1967 to continue his leadership at Prince of Peace, Kinston, NC.

On July 12, 1967, Rev. Donald Loadholdt became Pastor of Immanuel and moved his family; wife, Betty, daughters, Donna, Cathy, and Beth and son, Billy to the parsonage to take up his duties. The parking lot was leveled off and topped with gravel by individuals of Immanuel. The membership rolls of Immanuel in 1970 were as follows: baptized member 417, confirmed members 330, communing members 248. Four of our young men were serving in the Armed Forces of our Country.

Rev. Iverson M. Brendle and his family; wife Gayle, daughters, Sandra and Caryl, and son Lewis, came to Immanuel September 1974 from Sardis Lutheran Church in Hickory, NC. During his stay at Immanuel the church painted and new carpet was added to the sanctuary. Our fellowship building was remodeled and the driveway around it was paved. Pastor Brendle ended his pastorate duties of Immanuel in December 1980. Immanuel extended a call to Rev. Bruce Charles Sheeks, a graduate of Southern Seminary, Columbia SC. He accepted and moved, along with his wife Kim, to Immanuel in June, 1981. Their son Charles Cameron was born in June 1987. Many, many accomplishments have been made during his time with us and he is still the pastor of Immanuel in December 1990.

Our oldest living member is Mrs. Esther Brown. She was the wife of Mr. Lee Brown and their children were Ruby, Nell, James Lee, and Blanche. Irene Miller Beaver was born in 1893 and our church was built in 1895. She wasn't allowed to carry the bricks for fears she would drop and break one, but she remembers holding up her dress with bits and pieces of bricks thinking possibly she was helping. She also remembered that George Miller, a black man, laid the brick. Mr. and Mrs. Stanton Earnhardt donated some acreage on the south side of the parsonage. We built a softball field and there and we now have a men's softball team and also a young people's softball team.

In the earlier years of Immanuel, Ruth Beaver Coble and Rose Brown Bowers played the piano for services. Velna Beaver Brown then started playing the piano when she was only 15 years old and later the organ. She is still our organist. A plaque was presented to her in 1986 for 50 years of continued service for the church. Nell Brown Bost and Millie Culp Barringer have been our assistant organists and pianists for many years. Leona Mesimer Taylor was our choir director for over 50 years and at present Lorine "Doodle" Moore is our choir director with Brenda Hoffner Rummage our assistant choir-director.

Pastors

1895-1897	George Cox
1897-1900	R. L. Brown
1900-1902	J. H. C. Fisher
1903-1918	C. P. Fisher
1918-supply	M. L. Ridenhour

1918-1919	G. O. Ritchie
1919-1922	C. R. Pless
1922-1925	E. F.K. Roofe
1925-supply	J.A. Yount
1925-supply	E. Ray Trexler
1926-1930	C.P. Fisher
1930-1935	J.D. Shepherd
1935-1942	J.E. Walker
1943-1948	E. L. Misenheimer
1949-1954	Glenn A Yount
1955-1958	Floyd W. Bost
1959-1967	J. Paul Rimmer
1967-1974	Donald Loadholdt
1974-1981	Iverson M Brendle Jr
1981-	Bruce C Sheeks