



175th Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

REV. JAMES MANZ: MAN OF GOD IN TURBULENT TIMES

Of all the pastors in the history of First Saint Paul’s, only Henry Wunder served longer than Rev. James Manz, who was pastor from 1949 to 1981. Pastor Manz provided steady leadership through times of great change in the congregation, the neighborhood, and the wider culture. His ministry, one could argue, was characterized by a careful mix of orthodoxy and progressivism. Faithful to the Gospel and the Lutheran confessions, Pastor Manz also embraced racial integration, the civil rights movement, and the vision of a mission-minded, inclusive church.

Ordained in 1942, Pastor Manz came to First Saint Paul’s after serving three years as assistant pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest. A scholar and student of theology, Manz received a Master’s Degree (in 1947) and a Doctor of Sacred Theology degree (in 1953) from the Chicago Lutheran Seminary in Maywood, IL. He wrote for synodical publications, he served on the LCMS Board for Higher Education, and he chaired the LCMS Synodical Commission on Social Action. He also supervised a vicar at First Saint Paul’s every year from 1955 to 1969.



Pastor Manz arrived at a time when people were leaving the neighborhood for the suburbs. The 1956 anniversary booklet calls the neighborhood around the church “as colorful and challenging as any in the country.” In a 1959 essay in *The Vanguard*, Manz noted that the near north side was being called a “graveyard of churches,” but he challenged our members to reach out to the community, now largely populated by people of different races, cultures, and backgrounds.

Manz called his approach “an aggressive mission policy in the neighborhood, beginning with the youngsters.” Members, assisted by young people from the Epsilon



Chapter of Gamma Delta, canvassed the neighborhood and enrolled children in Sunday School, even going to area homes to escort children to church on Sunday mornings. In 1959, 50 of the 112 children in Sunday School were African-American. Manz declared, “I count it as one of my greatest blessings that I am now the shepherd of an interracial Lutheran parish.” Manz also participated in the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America, an organization devoted to “the extreme urgency of better understanding between the races.” The Chicago chapter occasionally met at First Saint Paul’s.

Manz's progressive social agenda, however, was always informed by an orthodox Lutheran approach to ministry. In a 1960 essay in *Lutheran Brotherhood Bond*, Charles B. Foelsch characterized First Saint Paul's this way: "Don't you then water down your worship and discard some of our old churchly forms and customs and ceremonies? Not for a minute! We preach Law and Gospel straight from the Word . . . We use the loveliest music we can command . . . Our first concern is the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments." Guided by these principles, Manz led the church through a period that would bring urban renewal to the neighborhood—and a new sanctuary for the congregation.