



## 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

### “MY WORD SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME EMPTY” – REFLECTIONS ON THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR DELAYNE PAULING

When First Saint Paul’s called Pastor Delayne Pauling in 1982, his immediately previous parish had been a mission congregation – a start-up effort for the experienced minister. While First Saint Paul’s, then entering its 136<sup>th</sup> year, could hardly have been considered a “start-up,” many similarities existed between the mission church in suburbia and the well-established congregation in the heart of Chicago’s Gold Coast. Ministry at First Saint Paul’s required pastors who could face the challenges of an ever-changing membership with enthusiasm and vigor, both of which Pastor Pauling brought with him. Aiding him was an extensive ministry background, which included the Lutheran student ministry on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

The near north side of Chicago was a far cry from the small farm community in Paullina, Iowa, where Pastor Pauling was born and raised. He graduated from Paullina High School in 1952, from Concordia College, Saint Paul, Minn., in 1955, and from Concordia Seminary in 1960. He was ordained that year into the ministry at Zion Lutheran Church, Paullina, Iowa, the same church in which he was baptized and confirmed.



Pastor Pauling enthusiastically welcomed all who attended worship services, including both young professionals whose time in Chicago was often cut short by job transfers, as well as more senior members. He devoted significant energy to single adult ministry, hosting regular holiday events at the church for singles who might be alone for such occasions, including Memorial Day and the Fourth of July picnics. His baked beans recipe is still fondly remembered by those who enjoyed them at such gatherings.

Known for overseeing the many details of both service and fellowship opportunities, he was not shy about calling a member on a Saturday evening to ensure the following morning there would be a greeter or lector for the service. His ebullient personality and vitality even came through phone lines on such calls. He was known for immediately engaging new members, finding a place in the church where each one could serve.

He also played an important role in establishing a group for senior members, which was called Fifty Plus. This group met on an almost monthly basis for a number of years, bringing older members of the congregation together for a weekday luncheon and programs of interest to the group.

Pastor Pauling also cultivated community outreach through his friendship with local civic leaders, including then Alderman Burton Natarus. In 2005 he was recognized for his contributions to the congregation and the community with an honorary street sign—“Honorary Pastor Del Pauling Way”—which resides at the corner of Goethe and LaSalle Drive.



Pastor Pauling retired in 2005 and spent his final years living in the Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, Illinois. He passed away in 2018. At the celebration of his ministry in 2005, the worship theme focused on the sower and his seed, a fitting metaphor given Pastor Pauling’s Iowa roots. The bulletin for the day included these comments: Seed is potential. Will it germinate? Will it green and grow? Will it bear fruit? As a worshipping community we have heard the word of God: “My word...shall not return to me empty.” In this anniversary year, we offer thanks and praise to God for the abundant blessings so richly bestowed through the faithful service of Rev. Delayne Pauling.