



175th Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

THE CHERISHED ANGEL

In addition to being the 175th anniversary of the founding of First Saint Paul’s, 2021 is also the 475th anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther (in 1546) and the 150th anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire (in 1871). These three events come together in the historic statue of the angel that stands in our church lounge. On October 9, 1871, the Chicago fire destroyed the church’s seven-year-old building on Franklin and Superior, as well as most of the parishioners’ homes. Only two things were saved from the burning church: the church records and the carved, wooden statue of an angel.



This angel points heavenward with one hand and holds an open book with the other. Inscribed on the book (in German) are words from Revelation 14:7: “Furchte Gott und gebet ihm die Ehre,” or “Fear God and give Him the glory.” When Martin Luther died in 1546, his pastor Johann Bugenhagen Pomeranus preached on this passage in Luther’s funeral sermon. St. John, in his Revelation, sees “an angel flying through the midst of heaven. He had an eternal Gospel to proclaim to those who sit and dwell on earth . . . and he said with a loud voice: ‘fear God and give him honor.’” Pomeranus declared in his sermon that “[Luther] was without doubt the angel concerning whom it was written in Revelation 14.” He also argued that the quoted words of verse 7 “are the two parts of Dr. Martin Luther’s doctrine, the Law and the Gospel.”

This image of the angel—and the words from Revelation 14—also appeared at this time in the masthead of *Der Lutheraner*, the publication of the LC-MS. It appears to have been an important image to the immigrant Germans’ Lutheran identity. This may suggest why it was the most cherished object to be rescued from the fire. The angel statue has been displayed prominently in each of the subsequent church buildings.



Herangezogen von der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten. Redigiert von C. F. W. Walther.