



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

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

### THE WUNDER YEARS

“The Wonder Years” may evoke (for some of us) memories of a nostalgic TV series about coming of age in the 1960’s. One could argue that, if First Saint Paul’s ever experienced its own “wonder years,” it was the “Wunder Years”—the 62-year pastorate of Rev. Henry Wunder. It is hard to image that one individual held the office of pastor for over one-third of our congregation’s 175-year history.



Pastor Henry Wunder

Born in Muggendorf, Germany in 1830, Henry Wunder began pre-ministerial studies in Neu-Dettelsau, Bavaria, under Pastor Wilhelm Loehe, well-known in LC-MS circles for training pastors to send to the United States. Leaving his family behind, the 16-year old Wunder arrived in New York in 1846, the year First Saint Paul’s was founded. He studied for two years at the synod’s preparatory school in Fort Wayne and then completed theological study at the seminary, then in Altenburg, MO, in 1849. He was ordained by Rev. C. F. W. Walther, the president of the LC-MS.

Wunder was installed as pastor of First Saint Paul’s in 1851 (upon the departure of our first pastor, August Selle), and he served until his death in 1913. Over the years, Pastor Wunder not only served as a faithful pastor and teacher, but he became a fixture in Chicago’s German-American community. The 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet notes that Wunder “helped many immigrants from Germany find their Church in the new homeland.” During this time, First Saint Paul’s was known by many Chicagoans as “Wunder’s Church.” The 1946 centennial booklet, published 33 years after his death, notes that “almost anywhere one goes on the North Side, one can find people who remember him or at least remember their parents speaking of him.” People fondly recalled him walking the neighborhood, making calls on his parishioners.

A 1930 church publication offers the following mind-boggling statistics. During his ministry at First Saint Paul’s, Pastor Wunder baptized 17,350 infants, married 5,062 couples, and officiated at 6,361 funerals. In 1951, 38 years after his death, First Saint Paul’s honored the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his installation by creating the bronze plaque that listed all of the congregation’s pastors. This plaque, once on the wall of the previous church, is now on display in the church lounge.



Reproduced from a plaque dedicated in September, 1951  
in memory of the 100th Anniversary of  
Pastor Wunder's Installation