

New York, March 23, 1863

History of the German Evangelical Lutheran St. Luke's Church in New York,
for the Corner-stone.

The German Evangelical Lutheran St. Luke's Congregation in New York was founded by Pastor G.W. Drees, a native of Bentheim in the Province of Osnabrueck in the Kingdom of Hanover, who had studied theology at the National University of Goettingen, had passed his candidacy examination and had arrived in this country in July 1846, where he was ordained in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in October of the same year. The first service of the congregation took place on 50th Street in a building belonging to Columbia College on the 14th Sunday after Trinity, September 1, 1850. On the following Sunday the Congregation occupied quarters located at the corner of 9th Avenue and 35th Street. In September 1853 the Pastor was received into membership of the Lutheran Synod of New York. On November 20, 1853 the order of service recommended by this Synod was adopted after thorough revision. In May 1854 the Sunday School, which had been conducted from the very beginning, was organized, and a Sunday School Teachers' organization was formed. As the meeting-place of the Congregation was not only too small, but also very unsuitable generally, and since the Congregation was almost entirely made up of poor people, they, on November 6, 1854 sent a request to the German Lutheran St. Matthew's Church of this city asking for help to build a church. A reply was received on January 10, 1855, promising either a gift of \$100 or the free lease of two lots for a certain time. In reply the congregation did designate two lots on 40th Street west of 8th Avenue as being suitably located, but the idea of building a church on leased property did not appeal to many, and for this and other reasons it could no longer be considered. Although the congregation thus received no outside support and was beset by many serious difficulties, the attendance at the services and of the Sunday and day school, and also the number of ministerial acts proved that God regarded the work of the Congregation with favor, and that it was to have a future.

On May 17, 1859 it was resolved to have the order of service reprinted with several additions and to distribute it. Ever since the beginning of this year the matter of building a church had been taken up again with renewed and greatly increased zeal, and the collections for that purpose had been noticeably successful. On the 11th of August the Congregation addressed a petition to Mr. J.J. Astor, asking him to cede three lots on 46th Street to the Congregation in exchange for a gore (triangular plot) located on 9th Avenue between 45th and 46th Streets, which could be purchased for \$6000. The negotiations with Mr. Astor, which Mr. C.G. Guenther kindly conducted, were successful. On January 10, 1860 the Congregation reported what had been done to St. Matthew's Church and again asked for help. At a meeting held in that church, at which the following members of our Church Council were present: Messrs. Helok, Bell and Fitschen, as was also the Pastor, it was resolved to give \$2000. to our Congregation to help us obtain a church. Encouraged by this promise, the Congregation continued to collect funds and succeeded in paying off \$4000. on their property. But when towards the end of the year the Civil War broke out in our country, the consummation of our intention, so greatly desired and nearly attained, was again indefinitely postponed. In April of 1861 new quarters were occupied at 655 Eighth Avenue, which offered more room, but in other respects were not much more suitable than the former quarters had been.

After the Congregation had thus struggled with difficulties for many years, its future very uncertain, and only the pure Word of God and their

unwavering faith keeping the people together, a great change suddenly took place. A Baptist congregation wished to sell their church on the corner of 8th Avenue and 43rd Street. At a meeting of our Congregation held on February 15, 1863 it was resolved to sell the lots owned by our Congregation, to acquire a plot of ground on 43rd Street, 240 feet west of 8th Avenue, and to purchase the church and move it to this new location. The plot, 60 by 100 feet, was purchased immediately for \$7520., and the church, which, including all necessary expenditures, will cost about \$5000., was also bought. In conducting these transactions Mr. Chr. Brand, a highly regarded member of our Congregation, went to great pains and deserves the most sincere thanks of the Congregation. On March 4th the Congregation sent another petition to St. Matthew's Church, from which they are now expecting a favorable answer. The present Church Council of the Congregation is composed of the following members: G.W. Dress, Pastor; John M. Helok, Henry Munker and Andrew Busch, Elders; John Karsch, Frederick Grimm, Henry Siers, Nicholas Hellmer, John Blohm, John G. Tietjen, Christian Nuerge, Carl Heuer and John Suesdorf, Deacons. The Board of Trustees is made up of the following members: John M. Helok, Chairman, Andrew Busch, Secretary, John G. Tietjen, Treasurer; Henry Munker, John Karsch, Frederick Grimm, Henry Siers, Nicholas Hellmer, John Blohm. The following gentlemen have been invited to speak at today's corner-stone laying: Dr. Schmidt, Professor of Columbia College, who will conduct the liturgical parts of the celebration; Pastor Schook of St. James' Church of this city for the English oration, and Pastor Raeger of St. Mark's Church for the oration in German, while the information contained in this account will be read by the Pastor of the Congregation.

A copy of this account, prepared by the Parochial School Teacher, Mr. A. Qpitz, has been placed in the corner-stone.

G.W. Dress, Pastor