

Der Herr Ist Mein Hirte (The Lord is My Shepherd)

Concordia University is now the proud steward of Der Herr Ist Mein Hirte (The Lord is My Shepherd), painted in 1938 by Northwest artist Colista Dowling. This painting, originally commissioned by the children of Jacob Erdman, was displayed behind the altar of the church located on the corner of NE 8th and Failing Streets in Portland.

The church building was most recently the home of the Gethsemane Church of God in Christ, but back when the painting was completed, the congregation of St. Paul's Evangelical & Reformed Church worshiped there. The neighborhood was originally founded by immigrant families, predominately Volga Germans, ethnic Germans from the Volga River region of Russia. The church was founded in 1904 by several families, many of whom were originally from the Volga German colonies of Brunntal and Grimm in Russia. Rev. Jacob Hergert, also an immigrant from Brunntal, was the first pastor of St. Paul's and remained pastor for 17 years. Upon his passing, Jacob's brother, Elias Hergert served as pastor for many years and oversaw the church's growth.

On November 6, 1938 the congregation held a *Kirchweihfest*, a celebration to consecrate the new newly enlarged and renovated church building. Shortly after the *Kirchweihfest*, the painting was presented to the church and dedicated on Christmas Eve, 1938, by the children of Jacob and Amalia Erdman in honor of their parents.

The Jacob Erdman family emigrated from Grimm, Russia and arrived in Portland in 1913. Jacob, wife Amalia and their eight children lived across the street from St. Paul's church. Jacob served as St. Paul's Church Board Chairman until his passing in 1964.

In 1973, the church sold the building to the Gethsemane Church of God in Christ. Gethsemane Church was led by the Rev. R.L. Menefee and later by his son, Winfred Menefee.

The church was sold in 2013 to developer Peter Kusyk, who, at the request of Jacob Erdman's grandchildren, donated the painting to the Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia University. Thanks to the generous financial contributions of many, the painting was restored by Nina Olsson, of the Heritage Conservation Group.

More information about St. Paul's Evangelical and Reformed Church can be found at: www.volgagermansportland.info/st-pauls-evangelical-and-reformed-church.html