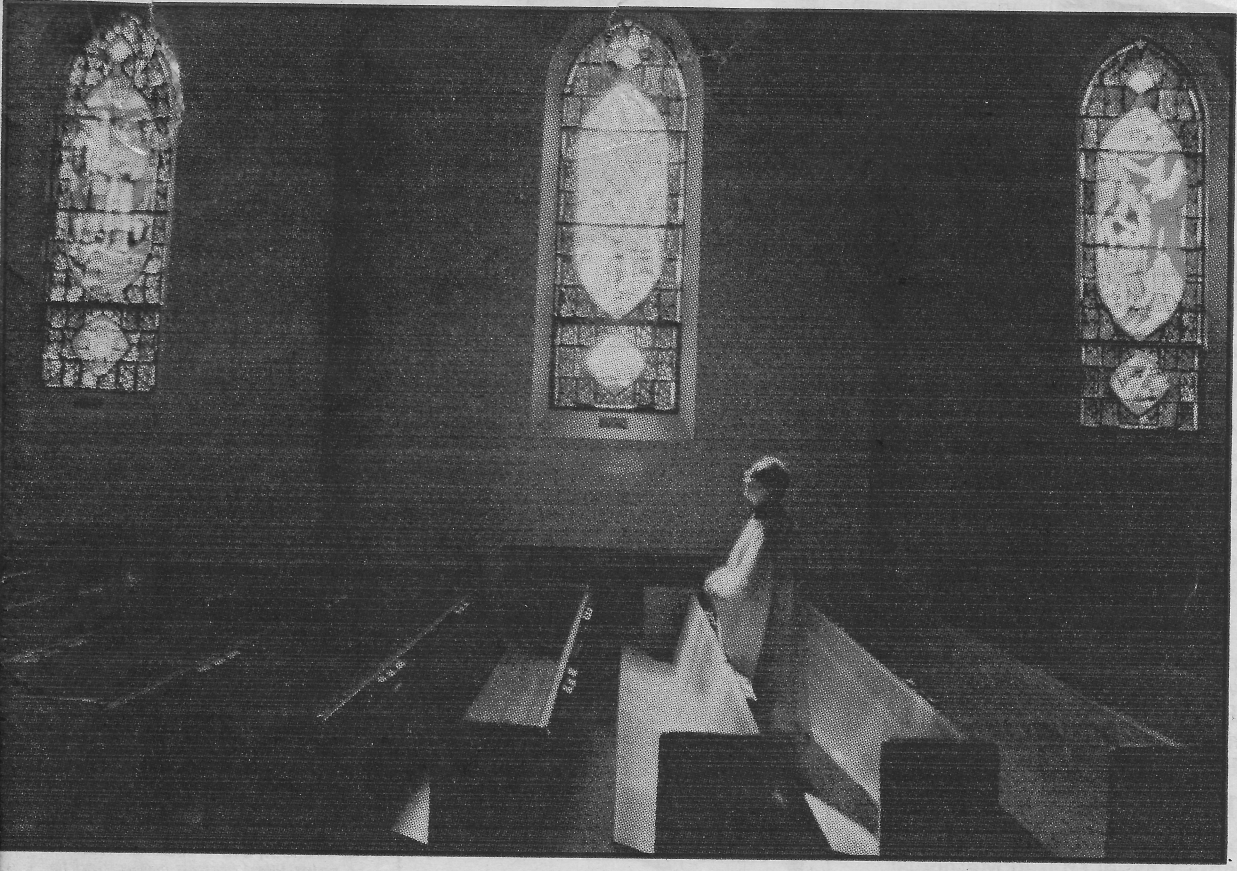

Heather Stone/News-Sentinel staff

The Rev. John P. Schulz, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, contemplates the church's 125th anniversary while meditating in the N. Broadway sanctuary.

A milestone

First Lutheran marks 125 years

By Bob Barrett
News-Sentinel religion editor

First Lutheran Church, 1207 N. Broadway, celebrates its 125th anniversary this weekend with the Rev. Dr. Wallace Schulz, associate speaker for The Lutheran Hour national radio program, as its special guest.

The congregation, which has adopted a slogan of "a friendly family in the heart of the city," will kick off the celebration with an anniversary banquet at 7:30 p.m. today at The Foundry (formerly the Strohaus) on the World's Fair site.

Schulz will be the banquet speaker as well as the pulpit guest at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at the church.

(The Lutheran Hour airs at 7 a.m. Sundays on WEZK-FM, 97.5 mHz.)

Church and civil records do not reveal the exact date the first Lutherans moved into East Tennessee, but there is a record that some Lutheran missionaries made regular trips through the area as early as 1813 to minister to the Lutherans already here.

First Lutheran marks its beginnings from a meeting held on Sunday, Oct. 10, 1869, when the Rev. John Heckel, of Mendota, Ill., addressed a gathering of Lutherans in Knoxville, urging them to establish a congregation.

It was a persuasive sermon.

The evening of the next day some 20 Lutherans met in Peter Kern's Hall, 7 Market Square, and resolved to organize a Lutheran congregation, according to church records.

The next night another meeting was held, and the First German Evangelical Lutheran Church ... of Knoxville, Tenn., was formed.

The new church constitution was signed by 22 men (including Peter Kern).

A week later the new church called the Rev. John Heckel as its first pastor. After his arrival in December, the congregation rented the old Hampden-Syd-

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Milestone

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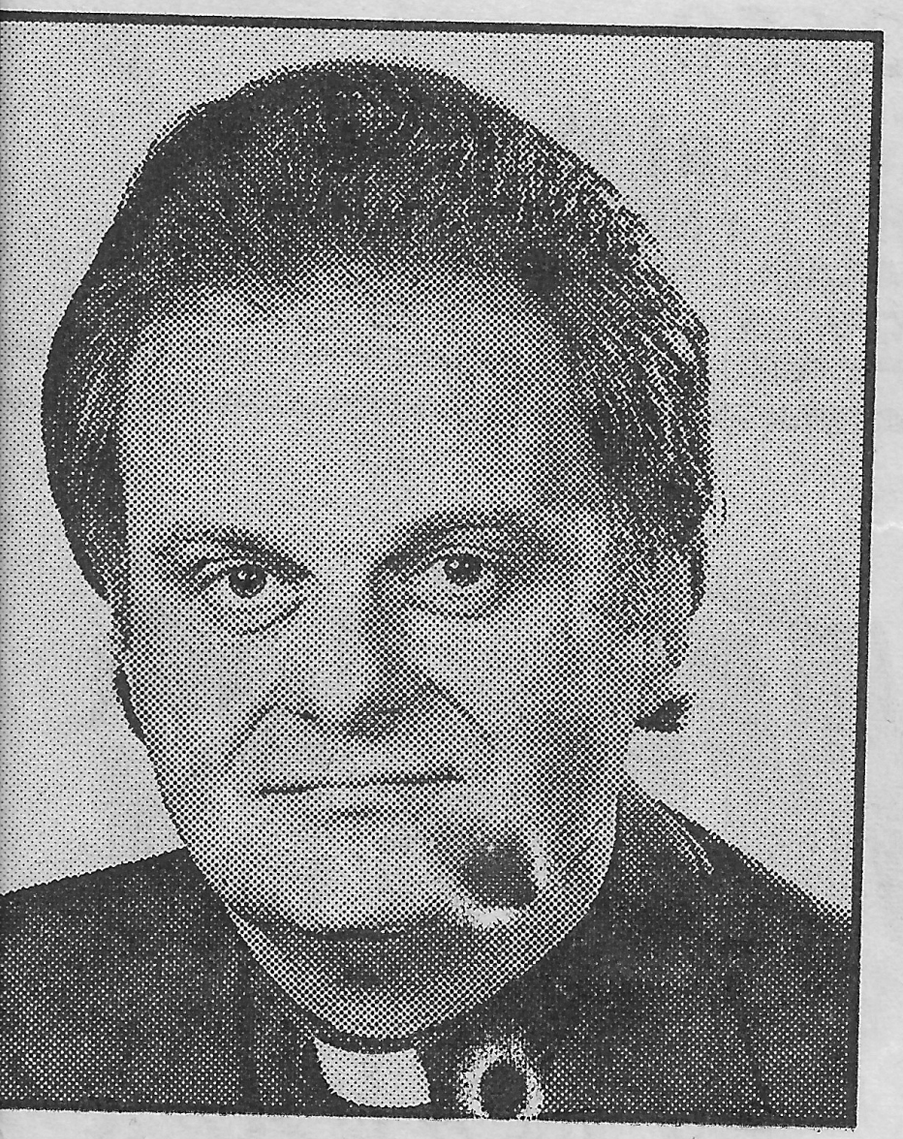
ney Academy, at the corner of State Street and Commerce Avenue, and started a Christian day school.



Dr. Wallace Schulz

Although the school was inactive during part of the church's 125-year history, First Lutheran, to this day, has the school as part of its ministry to the city.

"The strength of First Lutheran, as with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the church body with which it is affiliated, is its humble submissiveness of the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Bible, all the while focusing clearly on the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the world's savior from sin," the Rev. John P. Schulz, the present pastor, said.

"Hence, there is the strong support of the thriving Christian Day School, a major mission of the congregation for about 120 of its 125 years. First Lutheran is a Bible-based, Christ-centered, doctrinally concerned congregation with the mission of sharing this with others," Schulz said.

He has been the pastor for the past 14 years.