

Trinity Lutheran Church
Historical Events
1954 to Present

January 17, 1954: Pastor Luther S. Borgen and his family arrived in Eau Claire from Portland, Oregon, and began work under the auspices of the Board of Home Missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. (See Pastor Borgen's article at the end of this document to begin to understand what a big undertaking this was.)

January 25, 1954: A house-to-house canvass of the area began with Miss Phyllis Score of the Board of Home Missions assisting.

February 10, 1954: Bids on the first unit of the church were received.

February 28, 1954: The first service was held at the State Theatre in downtown Eau Claire with 125 adults and 60 children present to hear Pastor Borgen's first message "Today We Begin".

March 3, 1954: Lenten midweek services began. They were held at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Rudolph Road and Goff Avenue.

March 21, 1954: Sunday services began at the old YMCA. This building was located at the corner of Farwell and Eau Claire Street.

March 25, 1954: Building contracts were signed. (Money was loaned by the Dept .of Home Missions.)

March 28, 1954: Groundbreaking ceremonies were held with about 250 people present.

March 31, 1954: The women of the church was organized as the Women's Missionary Federation with 28 women. Meetings were held in the homes.

March, 1954: The "Trinity News" newsletter began.

May 5, 1954: The congregation was officially organized, the constitution was adopted, the first officers were elected, and the name "Trinity Lutheran Church" was chosen. Charter membership was 225.

May 30, 1954: Luther Borgen was installed as Trinity's first pastor.

June 9, 1954: Trinity Lutheran Church was admitted into membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

July 15, 1954: Trinity Congregation assumed financial responsibility for itself.

August 29, 1954: The first worship service held in the new building with 327 people present.

September 2, 1954: Senior Choir began. Boyd Christopher was the director.

September 9, 1954: Religious Day School began for Grades 5 – 8 every Thursday morning from 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

September 12, 1954: Sunday School began under the direct supervision of the Trinity's Board of Education.

September 26, 1954: 140 new members were received.

October 25, 1954: The Trinity Brotherhood was organized.

November 7, 1954: Two Sunday morning services began at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Couples Club (for all married couples) began.

November 10, 1954: Junior Choir (Grades 4-8) began.

December 12, 1954: Junior Luther League was organized.

January 7, 1955: The first Annual Meeting was held and plans were made to begin building the second unit of the church which was the Sunday School addition. Refinanced the indebtedness to the Board of Home Missions.

February 27, 1955: Dedication of the first unit of the Church.

July 3, 1955: Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the Sunday School addition.

September, 1955: The Cherub Choir was organized.

1955: The Library was started by the WMF (Women's Missionary Federation) with the gift of five books from Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Menomonie.

January 8, 1956: New Sunday School Addition was used for the first time. Dedication was conducted by Rev. Myron C. Austirson on February 26th. Membership was 360 pupils.

1956: Conn organ was purchased in October for \$3,600.00. It was paid for by mostly memorial donations.

March, 1956: Senior Luther League was organized.

February 24, 1957: The organ was dedicated (third anniversary of the first service at the State Theatre).

July, 1957: Additional parking area was purchased across Trimble.

September, 1957: Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts were organized.

1958: Pastor Borgen resigned.

Pastor Waldo Johnson begins ministry.

“Four Forward Program” began which marked the first of the plans that lead to the building of a new sanctuary with the trademark “Ski jump” roof.

Women’s Bible Study began under the leadership of seminary student, Robert Witte.

The first issue of the Trinity “Visitor” was published and mailed.

The tradition of hanging the Advent Wreath in the front of the church began.

1959: Construction of the new parsonage at 1215 E. Lexington was completed.

Bill White is hired as a part-time youth worker.

By the end of the decade membership was 1,311.

1960: Plans for the new sanctuary were completed.

Robert Arneson became Assistant Pastor in mid-August.

1961: Groundbreaking services were held. Construction begins on new sanctuary, sacristy, kitchen, cloakrooms and nursery.

The American Lutheran Church was created by the merger of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The women’s organization (WMF) became the TLCW. Circles were formed.

First Vacation Bible School was held for grades K – 7.

1962: (Maundy Thursday) The first service was held in the new Sanctuary.

The new sanctuary was dedicated.

Men’s Bible Study began with breakfast meetings.

TLCW made the kneeling pads.

1963: New red hymnals were purchased.

1964: September 20th was the 10th anniversary which we celebrated with a pot luck. Pastor Borgen was the guest speaker.

1965: Library expands to shelving space in main office.

Bibles presented to third graders.

1966: Sunday School Addition began.

Pastor Arneson left Trinity to accept another call.

1967: Dedication of the new wing of the church which included education rooms, infant nursery, lounge, offices and library.

Merlin Bartelt was installed as Assistant Pastor.

The youth went to Holden Village for the first time.

1968: An interfaith service was held at St. Olaf’s.

Dime Folders were handed out for Lent.

The chimes were heard for the first time today. They were given in memory of Warren Richards.

Mother-Daughter Banquet.

Family Camp at Luther Park Bible Camp.
Pastor Waldo Johnson accepted a call to another church.
Dial A Meditation began.
Jack Olson was installed as Senior Pastor.

1969: Golden Age Group (senior citizens) formed and the library was expanded.
Rev. John Mager, retired missionary to New Guinea, joined the staff as a part-time Visitation Pastor.
Pastor Bartelt accepts a call to another church and leaves on November 30.
Adult Instruction Program called Bethel Series began.
By the end of the decade membership was 2,280

1970: Zane Torgrude became Assistant Pastor.

1971: Sponsorship of the Brauns, missionary family to Ethiopia, was undertaken.
Young Couples Club and retreats for men were introduced.
Passover Meal introduced during Lent by TLCW.
Living room dialogue groups formed.

1972: Open communion was offered.
The last Sunday of the month was designated as Missionary Sunday.
Father-Son Banquet.

1973: Annette Grimstad joined the staff as Parish Education Director.
Pastor Torgrude left Trinity to further his work in Clinical Pastoral Education.
TLCW designated the fourth Wednesday of the month as Work Day to complete stewardship projects.
First Scandinavian Dinner was held.

1974: Andrew Boe became Assistant Pastor.
First campout for families was June 7, 8, and 9 at Sleepy Hollow in Cameron.
A pictorial directory and the Lutheran Standard were made available to all members in this, our Twentieth Anniversary year.
Peg Market became President of the Northern Wisconsin District ALCW.
Indian Concerns and World Hunger programs were supported.
The "Book Mark" library newsletter began.
Good Friday to Easter Prayer Vigil began.
Work began on the wall hanging project.
Cottage meetings were held.

1975: Organization meeting for Trinity Fellowship Group (Anyone beyond High School)
21st Anniversary Sunday.
First Summer Camp at Luther Park.
Pastor Jack celebrated 25th year in the ministry.
Annette Grimstad resigned as parish education director.

1976: Couples Retreat

Pastor Arneson spoke at our 22nd Anniversary Service.

Sketches of wall hangings were displayed in the narthex. They will adorn our sanctuary. They will be 7' x 9' and will be done in wool incorporating the use of applique and stitchery. They were designed by Ed Fish of the UW-EC Art Department. Work has begun on them by the Altar Guild but we hope that anyone interested in helping complete them will call Carol Bartingale to volunteer.”

Our first Laotian family, the Kay Mouas, arrived.

First wall hanging dedicated.

We bought a church bus.

Bob Moore became Parish Ed/Youth Director.

Women began asking for recipes for new cookbook.

1977: The Moua family was baptized into the Christian faith.

Opposed the change of the Wisconsin State Constitution to allow for the possibility of legalized lotteries run by the State Government.

Lenten puppets were created by Sally Snyder and Joan Boe. Scripts were written by Andy Boe.

Dedication of the second of the wall hangings “Redemption”.

“Forward in Faith” building program began which included addition of the social hall, enlarged kitchen, furnace revision, installation of the pipe organ.

TLCW published their first cookbook and the sale price was \$3.50.

1978: Our second Laotian family, the Ma Xiong Vues, arrived.

The Lutheran Book of Worship was introduced.

The Vue family was baptized into the Christian faith.

1979: Dedication of the Lutheran Book of Worship

Dedication of the Trinity Room (the new social hall).

Sponsorship of new missionary to Japan, Rev. and Mrs. Oliver Bergh.

New Worship/Study began (it had been adopted on June 3rd).

Trinity Endowment Trust Fund formally established.

Dedication of the Trinity Steiner Memorial Pipe Organ.

1980: Christian Preschool “Noah’s Ark” began. Mary Ann Ness teacher.

1982: Joan Boe called to be teacher of Noah’s Ark to begin February 8th.

1983: Prayer Chain began.

Pastor Andy Boe resigns to accept new call to Christ Lutheran Church, Menomonie, WI

Joan Boe resigned as teacher of Noah’s Ark Preschool and was replaced by Jeanne Cooper.

Farewell to Marilyn Nelson as Parish Education Director.

Pastor Dennis Napton installed as Assistant Pastor.

Mary Schoenknecht was also installed as Parish Education Director.

We began participating in Operation Christmas.

1984: 30th Anniversary.

First Handbell Choir Rehearsal. Norma Lionberger was the director.

1985: New missionary project "Operation Bootstrap", a Christian movement increasing educational opportunities in Africa.

Services began for Healing-Wholeness which will be the first Sunday of the month at 7 p.m.

First Uff-Da Fest began as a 5 mile run.

Installation of Dan Streeper as Youth Director.

1986: Youth Room and Office Renovation began

Lounge furnished and carpeted.

Construction started on the Chapel Renovation.

: Re-dedication of the Chapel.

Final payment on first mortgage of the church.

First Advent Workshop held.

1987: Trinity sponsors mission congregation by providing a loan of \$100,000 to Prairie Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

Plans begin to expand the pastoral staff and call a third pastor.

Joy Choir formed.

1988: Holy Communion served each Sunday at the 8 a.m. Celebration Service.

Voted to call a third pastor.

10th Anniversary of Vue family arriving in Eau Claire.

Pastor Kurt Jacobson was installed as the third pastor. He was ordained June 5 in his home church, Bethany Lutheran in Rice Lake.

Trinity becomes part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Sponsorship of Pastor Debra Hippen, Missionary in Japan, begins.

Dan Streeper resigned as Youth Director.

Mary Strayer appointed Interim Youth Director.

Bee Vue and Chao Vue became U. S. Citizens.

Dedication of the sixth wall hanging.

Christmas Sharing Project began this year.

1989: 35th Anniversary Celebration held at State Theatre.

Scott Jackson hired as Youth Director and will begin in August.

Pastor Jack Olson retires in September and a recognition day was held on September 10th.

Pastor Jim Haerter called as Senior Pastor and begins serving in November.

"Project Rescue" begins effort to free Yong Thao Moua and family from Thailand refugee camp and resettle them in Eau Claire. \$10,000 was raised in less than 4 weeks for this effort.

1990: Communion for fifth grade students is implemented.

Pastor Dennis Napton resigns in April.

Stephen Roslak resigns as Organist and Trinity Choir director.

Fran Broten hired as organist and George Utphall combines the Joy Choir together and assumes directorship of the Choir.

Council appoints a call committee to bring a recommendation for an Associate Pastor. Two special congregational events were held to encourage participation in the process.

Confirmation ministry is restructured allowing flexibility in scheduling, encouraging retreat, youth gathering and Bible Camp participation.

Worship attendance shows both services are at seating capacity. In September a third service is added offering a contemporary style led by Harmony in Spirit. Connie Kees is the first director of this music group.

Major computerization of all church records and operations implemented.

Bea Vue begins studies at Luther Northwestern Seminary, St. Paul to become first Hmong pastor in ELCA.

1991: Trinity votes to call first female pastor.

Pastor Mary Jorgensen accepts call and is installed March 10.

Archives Committee formed.

Paul Markquart ordained at Trinity in October.

1992: Long-Range Planning Committee formed by action of Council to address significant maintenance issues as well as current and future building and space needs.

Archives Committee begins collecting oral histories from former Pastors.

Our Missionary in Japan, Pastor Debra Hippen visits in July. Later in the year she comes back to the USA and Trinity begins sponsorship of Pastor John and Barbara Melin in Moscow, Russia.

Long-Range Planning Committee and Church Council meet with ELCA Building Consultant, Richard Linde. That committee begins *Church and Community* self study.

Scott Jackson resigns as Youth Director.

Jill Lovstuen hired.

Contemporary worship moves to third Sunday and includes Holy Communion.

Noah's Ark Preschool hires Ginny Lien as a second teacher to accommodate expanding enrollment.

First Habitat for Humanity house being built in Eau Claire.

1993: Ginny Lien elected first female president of Trinity.

Church and Community self-study completed and results presented to congregation.

Social Concerns Committee responds to urgent request by the Red Cross to develop new blood donors.

First Bloodmobile sponsored by Trinity held in January.

Yong Thao Moua family arrives from Thailand in March. Moua family reunion along with Trinity friends held at Trinity in April.

New Pewter communion ware is designed and hand-made including individual cups for a new method of communing used for the first time on May 2.

The Community Table meal ministry is formed and implemented by Social Concerns Committee in conjunction with the Junior League of Eau Claire. The first meal was served on July 22nd downtown at the Unitarian Church. Trinity has a team that serves each month.

Trinity hosts Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Assembly worship led by Harmony in Spirit.

Pastor John and Barbara Melin visit in July. They begin work in Israel in November.

First group goes to Outlaw Ranch in the Black Hills for Family Camp, a tradition that would garner up to 50 people each summer through 2007.

Long-Range Planning Committee tours several metro-area churches. Three information gathering meetings held with representatives of all major ministries within Trinity. A preliminary list of concerns compiled and presented to the congregation. Council approves retaining Seymour, Davis & Seymour to develop working drawings of renovation and expansion. Six "Vision Gatherings" were held to solicit congregational input regarding working drawings.

"Children In Worship" emphasis begins effort to intentionally include participation by children of all ages in Sunday worship.

"Helping Hands" caring ministry begins.

Luther Park Bible Camp conducts capital fund campaign for replacement of cabins. Trinity members conduct campaign within congregation and secure pledges of \$40,422.

Sweater Drive for people in Bosnia conducted in November. Over 10,000 sweaters collected and shipped to Bosnia.

1994: New two-year old Sunday program implemented.

Our participation with Load A Truck began – a food drive by local churches to benefit Feed My People Food Bank.

40th Anniversary of Trinity.

In February, Trinity helps the effort to provide shelter for homeless families. Plans are forming to bring the Interfaith Hospitality Network to Eau Claire.

1995: Senior Choir Director George Utphall resigned.

Gary Rambo is hired to be the director.

Missionary sponsorship of Rev. John Merlin in Jerusalem and Rev. Bea Vue in St. Paul begins.

1996: Our first week of housing homeless families in the building (for one week periods) starts in cooperation with a few other local churches. We provided dinner, evening hosts, overnight hosts, breakfast hosts,

and we haul beds from one location to another. Several years later Trinity assists in purchasing the former cosmetology school downtown which is now the shelter known as the Beacon House.
Sabbatical policy for full-time pastors approved by Council. Pastor Kurt's sabbatical in August.
Chippewa Valley Free Clinic opening soon.
Began selling fair trade products.
Requests were made for our in house food pantry.
Angel breakfast held.
In house CPR training began.

1998: Ground was broken in April for a new Trinity Room, kitchen, restrooms, and music rooms. Old Trinity Room is remodeled to become Noah's Ark preschool.
Farewell to Fran Broten who served as organist for nine years on July 19.
Farewell to Jill Lovstuen, Director of Youth Ministries on July 26.
The building was vandalized on September 3rd with near total destruction of the offices.
Jane Lien installed as Director of Music on September 13th.
Dedication on November 8th of new Trinity Room, kitchen, music room.
Farewell to Pastor Jim Haerter on December 20th.

1999: In January, envelopes were mailed monthly to members for the first time.
Kurt Mattison installed as Director of Youth Ministries on February 1st.
Purchased "With One Voice" hymnal.
Interim Pastor Tom Anderson begins February 1 and resigns June 1.
On June 8 Pastor Kurt Jacobson became Administrative Pastor with 90% approval. He was installed in new position on August 8th.
Harmony in Spirit rehearsals began in August.
Interim Pastor Karen Ditlefsen started on September 19th.

2000: On July 23rd, the first Service of Healing was held along with outdoor worship and a pie and ice cream social.
New Pictorial Directory arrives and is distributed.
Pastor Vicki Simon called as an Associate Pastor.
Erik Phelps installed as Director of Congregational Ministries.
Marti Hofer installed as first Parish Nurse. Health Ministries instituted.

2001: Pastor Robert Berg re-elected as Northwest Wisconsin Synod Bishop.
Josh Corbett became Youth Director.
Shirley Sands new music director.
Mark Hanson installed as 3rd Presiding Bishop.
Empty Bowls began in April.
New mission trip to Haiti planned.

2002: Amber Moltzau named office administrator of Trinity in January.
Trinity becomes a sister congregation with Blantyre Parish in Malawi, Africa
Farewell to Pastor Vicki Simon in April.
Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood become Thrivent.

New sound and video system installed in August.
In September the Prayer Shawl Ministry began.
Jeanne Markquart was ordained on October 11th.
Pastor Andrew Hinwood accepts our call in December.

2003: Tim Voigts installed as a synodically authorized minister at Little Plum Lutheran Church on August 24.
Pastor Hinwood is installed.

“Building on the Firm Foundation Together” capital stewardship campaign began to secure funding for expansion of Worship Center and new lobby. \$25,000 of the first contributions received go to build three church in our companion parish in Blantyre, Malawi.
Trinity’s Community Thanksgiving Dinner began.

2004: Lenten Soup Lunches began

Groundbreaking and construction began on major remodeling and expansion of sanctuary and new lobby, nursery, restrooms and Fireside room. The orientation of the sanctuary will move 45 degrees with the chancel on the south wall.

Simply Giving (automatic giving) offered.

Our first intern, Christine Emerson, began internship on August 29th.

Nick Utphall ordination on September 25th.

Let Every Instrument be Tuned for Praise – Renewal of Pipe Organ project began.

Care Team Training offered.

50th Anniversary Celebration on May 2nd.

Delegation from Trinity went to Malawi.

2005: February 5, First worship in new Worship Center and Lobby opens for the first time.

Re-dedication of the Steiner pipe organ in February with a hymn-sing by Mark Sedio, organist/cantor from Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis.

Christine Emerson finished her internship with us.

2006: Pastor Andrew Hinwood’s last Sunday on August 20th.

Pastor John Mikkelson will serve as a visitation pastor as an interim.

Pat Garber began in her role in New Health Ministry.

2007: Pastor Jim Page installed in February.

Pastor Mary Jorgensen departs in September for a new call to Our Saviors Lutheran Church, Menomonie.

VISA/Master Card Giving Online is now an option.

Mission to New Orleans to rebuild after Hurricane Katrina.

Textile Wall Art “The Great Communion” a swinging panel display installed in narthex.

2008: Chad Anderson began his one year internship on April 20th.

Pastor Ned Lenhart serving as interim pastor.

Pastor Kurt Jacobson 20th anniversary on June 8th.

Pastor Heather Wigdahl was installed on June 15th.

New power-assist doors installed and first used July 20th.

New Wednesday night service began on September 10th.

Newsletter is now available on line.

2009: Ordination of Robert Schoenknecht at Trinity on July 19th. He will serve Norton, Holden and Running Valley Lutheran Churches in the Colfax area.

2010: Trinity's Food Pantry received a \$5,000 grant from Thrivent.
In September, a Fresh Look Survey was made available to the congregation to help staff plan for the future.

2011: Pastor John Mikkelson retired in January.
Began a new global mission with Haiti Partners in February.
Pat Garber began as Director of Visitation Ministries.
Partnership with Flynn Elementary School started in April.
Food Pantry makeover and client choice pantry began in August.
New green paraments in memory of VonnieWangen.
Sojourner House – shelter for homeless adults opens in September. Trinity contributes financially to start this effort led by Catholic Charities.

2012: In January, we begin providing volunteers at the Sojourner House.
In April, the Prayer Chain become the Prayer Link.
The roof replacement project is completed over the preschool and the nearby classroom area.
In September, we switched to the electronic version of Trinity Tidings.
Pastor Heather Wigdahl departs for a new call at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, Menomonie.

2013: In January, a team of men from Trinity began building a classroom for the Jabneth Christian School in Jamaica.
On March 31, Pastor Duane Peterson, the Bishop of the Northwest Synod, resigns.
In April, Pastor Kurt Jacobson celebrated his 25th year at Trinity.
On June 9th, Pastor Sarah Semmler Smith is installed as a full time pastor at Trinity.
On that same day, Pastor Brahm Semmler Smith is installed as a one half time pastor at Trinity.
In July, the St. John's Bible Page Turners Society was formed. This Bible is the first completely handwritten and illuminated Bible to have been commissioned by a Benedictine Abbey since the invention of the printing press. We have a library edition at Trinity.
On September 8th, Pastor Rick Hoyme was installed as the new bishop of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin in a ceremony at Trinity.
On October 5th, Elizabeth A. Eaton (the first woman ever) was installed as ELCA Presiding Bishop.

2014: First Annual Advent Tea
New tables and chairs purchased for lobby.
Pastor Kurt's sabbatical approved (one sabbatical each 7 years).
Marti Hofer retired as our first parish nurse (2002 - 2014)
Vicki Dueringer installed as parish nurse in October.
Jamie Brieski completed her Master of Divinity Degree and was ordained at Hope Lutheran in August.
(She has been supported through tuition grants from Trinity's Endowment Trust Fund).

- 2015: Shopko to replace K-Mart in our "Soles for Special Souls" ministry.
 Pastor Kurt announces that he will retire in mid 2016.
 Succession planning begins. Members invited to apply for Pastoral Succession Process Teams.
 Pictorial directory preparations began.
 Pastor Kurt's sabbatical April through July.
 New Children's Ministry Leader Sara Reed hired.
 Council voted for same sex marriages.
 Lots given to Trinity by Wayne Peters.
 Began using "The Story" for study and worship which is a narrative of the Bible told in story form.
 Blessing of the backpacks service began.
 Jeanne Cooper July 31, 2016 retirement announced.
 Noah's Ark 35th Anniversary.
 Women's Giving Circle kickoff.
 Marlee Knickerbocker will replace Jeanne Cooper as the Director of Noah's Ark Preschool when Jeanne retires.
- 2016: The final succession planning process is held in January. The Council approves the Ministry Site Profile and the Call Committee begins working.
 The 9th annual men's mission trip to Jamaica involves 12 men. This was Pastor Kurt's final trip. He the mission partnership in Jamaica in 1998 and over the years more than 300 people have been part of these trips.
 Pastor Jim resigns for a new position in Branden, Florida.
 Pastor Kurt retires in July after 28 years at Trinity.
 Jeanne Cooper retires in July.
 Study of "The Story" continues.
 Pastor Dave Whelan joined us as a Bridge Pastor in July to help "bridge the gap" between Pastor Kurt's retirement and the return of Pastor Sarah and Pastor Brahm's return from family leave.
 Pastor Peter Bredlau began serving at Trinity and was installed on August 7th.

Pastors who have served Trinity Lutheran Church

Rev. Luther Borgen	1954-1958
Rev. Waldo Johnson	1958-1968
Rev. Robert Arneson	1960-1966
Rev. Merlin Bartelt	1967-1969
Rev. Jack Olson	1968-1989
Rev. John Mager	1969-1970 (Part-time Visitation Pastor)
Rev. Zane Torgerude	1970-1973
Rev. Andy Boe	1974-1983
Rev. Dennis Napton	1983-1990
Rev. Kurt Jacobson	1988-2016
Rev. Jim Haerter	1989-1998
Rev. Mary Jorgenson	1991-2007
Rev. Vicki Simon	2000-2002
Rev. Andrew Hinwood	2003-2006

Rev. Jim Page	2007-2016
Rev. John Mikkelson	2006-2010 (Part-time Visitation pastor)
Rev. Heather Wigdahl	2008-2012
Rev. Sarah Semmler Smith	2013-Present
Rev. Brahm Semmler Smith	2013-Present
Rev. Peter Bredlau	2016-Present

Sons and Daughters of the Congregation

Paul Markquart
Jeanne Markquart
Bea Vue Benson
Nicholas Utphall
Robert Schoenknecht

Interns

Christine Emerson	2004-2005
Chad Anderson	2008-2009
Dave Christianson	2009-2010

The following article was written by Pastor Borgen in 1956 at the request of the Executive Director of Home Missions of the ELC for the purpose of promoting new congregations in the ELC. Your archives committee has decided that it is a great addition to the history of Trinity Lutheran Church.

Pastor Borgen wrote:

Old timers who have helped launch congregations on little more than a hymn and a prayer may say that Trinity Lutheran Church was born with a silver spoon in its mouth. Organized in May of 1954, it now has 780 members (remember this was written in 1956) representing 225 family units, a beautiful chapel seating 300, a parsonage and just recently completed and dedicated a new addition, a Sunday School Building. It has become entirely independent of all financial obligation to the Mother church who sponsored it and is at present beginning to dream of further expansion by adding a third unit, a large church. Trinity Lutheran is a story of a venture in pioneering – pioneering in the Kingdom of God.

My call to Eau Claire came to me from the Department of Home Missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, whose headquarters are in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Through their surveys, they had decided there was a need for a new congregation in our section of the city. The Board of Home Missions agreed to pay my salary for six months, provide minimum equipment like a typewriter, mimeograph, etc., and to lend money for the construction of the first unit of the church and parsonage.

After serving Bethlehem Lutheran Church, a long-established and well-healed congregation, in Portland, Oregon, our coming to Eau Claire was a strange and somewhat frightening experience. We had no church and no congregation – only a dream of what might someday be accomplished. It was a challenge – only at that time I didn't know how big a challenge.

Early in February of 1954, assisted by a trained Parish Visitor (which had been provided by the Department of Home Missions) we began ringing doorbells. On Sunday, February 28, we gathered together a small group in a down-town movie theatre for the initial worship service. Since construction of the Chapel Unit of the Church did not get under way until April, we were compelled to conduct our Sunday Services at the downtown Y.M.C.A. until September of 1954. In the meantime, fifty-nine families had been recruited, and formal organization of the congregation was accomplished in May of 1954.

But time was moving one, and soon would be running out. At the end of June, the new congregation was expected to assume the cost of all its expenses, including the Pastor's salary. In addition to this, by the time we had finished buying sites and signed our contracts on the chapel and parsonage, the infant congregation was owing the Department of Home Missions the sum of \$72,000.00.

Something had to be done! We could no longer depend on "loose collections". Sometime previous to this, our far-sighted and capable Director of Home Mission, Dr. Philip Dybvig, had encouraged us to engage the Wells Organization to conduct our initial canvass. His department, he said, would advance us the fee. As a result, Wells Organization came into our congregation in July. At this time, it must be remembered, there were only 61 family units. At the end of our ten day canvass, we had 59 pledges averaging out at \$4.80 per pledge. Now we could breathe easier, but not for long. By the time we had completed and dedicated our Chapel unit, we had grown to over 500 members and our physical facilities were, as one person put it "miserable inadequate". Again, something had to be done, but how? That was the big question. We had to build, but it takes money to build, and furthermore we were under agreement with the Department of Home Missions that before we would be permitted to expand our physical facilities, we had to repay in full our entire indebtedness to them. We needed at least \$40,000 for our new Sunday School addition, plus \$72,000 of old debt. It often appeared like an impossibility. We were not old enough to have established any credit with any lending agency, and we had no "rich men" to which we could turn.

The congregation, in a tremendous expression of faith, charged its Board of Trustees to find the money to repay Home Missions, and get the new Sunday School Building ready as soon as possible. The Trustees decided the first step ought to be another every member canvass. In our second canvass, we had no Wells Director but we used the framework of the Wells Organization with Hostess Committee, Loyalty Dinner, training sessions, etc. Although the average pledge was naturally lower than our first canvass, we deemed it eminently successful. A lending agency thought so too and agreed to lend us \$65,000 if we could raise the money for the second unit by ourselves, and if we could secure a neighboring congregation to lend us their credit and co-sign the mortgage. As I recall, our second canvass had only two families (they had legitimate reasons) who refused to pledge. It demonstrated something more. We discovered that we had tremendous potential. Our canvass was conducted on the United Budget Plan to take care of local expenses, benevolences and debt retirement in one pledge, and as the results were tabulated, we discovered we could easily take care of an indebtedness of over \$100,000.00. But how could we get the \$40,000 more we needed for our new addition (by this time we had in faith engaged an architect)? Operating on the principle that one's investment creates interest and that where one's treasure is there will his heart be, we asked for volunteers among the congregation who would lend us some of their money in \$50.00 amounts or more in exchange for a signed note. To make a long story short, it worked! The overall participation was excellent.

Let no man say the day of miracles is past. I have seen with my own eyes what happens when, with faith in God, we live and move in Him. I said to our people on several occasions that if we will provide the faith – God

will somehow provide the resources. He did! All we had was \$500.00 in actual cash when we signed contracts for our new addition but we had faith. This is the miracle – we always had enough money in our treasury to pay every contractor when the bills were due. There were times when the balance was down as low as \$20.00 when some member would come in the very same day with enough money or more to cover the bill we received in the morning mail. It never failed, not even once. In fact – ever since our first Wells Canvass, our income has increasingly become greater than our output. We have never had a special offering of any kind. Our weekly offerings have been more than sufficient.

We have no wealthy people at Trinity Lutheran Church. I would guess that 98% have a sizeable mortgage on their home. In fact, we are located in a section, sometimes called “mortgage hill”. We do have people who have caught a vision of the Kingdom of God and who have discovered the real thrill of sacrificial giving. Perhaps all of this is best described by the man I shall call Mr. X. Not long ago he said to me “I never gave enough money to buy a dust rag for the church janitor before joining Trinity Lutheran Church, but now I have found that its fun to give and what I give to my church, strangely enough, I never miss. In fact, he continued, “the more I give, the more I live, and I seem to get it back again many fold”.