

**A Decade of Growth and
a Look to the Future**

HOLY TRINITY - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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Foreword

God gives his children many promises in his Word. Besides the promise of our salvation, no other promise holds more meaning for future pastors than Isaiah 55:10,11. The Lord reminds his prophet that his church will continue to grow. Despite all of Satan's efforts, his hellish kingdom will never prevail over the church. This past year of vicaring has brought this point home to me. When one first studies Holy Trinity's beginnings, you wonder how the mission ever grew. It grew only by God's grace. The first fifteen years tell of lean times for this South side congregation. The past ten years have seen unbelievable growth. Having the honor of being Holy Trinity's first vicar (1987-88), I could witness God's grace at work, both in the congregation and in myself. A study of this congregation gives encouragement to *green* pastors. From Holy Trinity, God teaches us not to give up and to depend upon him for success in preaching the gospel. In studying this and all our churches, God tells his story. Each of us can learn many practical lessons from this congregation. All of us, as God's children, can be strengthened knowing that God will continue to keep his promises. Keeping his promises to Holy Trinity, we know God will keep his promise to us and our flocks.

A Decade of Growth and a Look to the Future

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it," (Is. 55:11). These words recorded by Isaiah are used often to prove the effectiveness of God's Word. The Lord first spoke these words to assure his prophet that his work was not in vain. God reminded Isaiah that his message had a purpose--to call a hardened Judah to repentance. These same words contain a soothing comfort and promise for us. Each of us has personally experienced the comfort and effectiveness of the Word on our hearts. It gives us a comfort and an assured effectiveness that we will draw on during our ministries. God gives us that comfort for those times when we feel our preaching goes without notice among the congregation. With his Word the Lord reminds us that his church will continually spread and grow.

The Lord encourages us even in our work outside the congregation. He gives us needed confidence to bring his Word to those not in his church. With this same confidence, the mission board of the Michigan District began exploratory work in the Grand Rapids area, (1961). Trust in the Lord's words was needed. In this area of southwestern Michigan, resides a strong Dutch influence. Most of these people have their religious rooting in the Christian Reformed church. The demographics of the Grand Rapids area offers some problems, but tremendous opportunities. One of the biggest problems facing a mission church in this area is the strong family ties to the Reformed church. (Another problem facing both the Reformed and Wisconsin Synod is

the rapid growth of Assembly of God churches.) At the same time this area of Michigan offers limitless possibilities. A major *plus* for a mission is the conservative and Christian attitude of the area. This attitude allows a welcome reception to any type of outreach effort. One of the fastest growing cities in Michigan, Grand Rapids provides a wealthy supply of potential prospects.

With these opportunities favoring any type of mission work, Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church was established in 1963. The new mission congregation had sixty-six (66) souls in its care. In the same year the congregation was able to secure a loan from the synod to build a worship facility. To the dismay of the members, the synod *allowed* them to build a school instead of a chapel. The synod felt that a school would best fit the needs for growth in this area. Christian Reformed churches supplied all levels of educational needs for their children. The mission board thought that future members could be gained through the school. Holy Trinity constructed their school. The building housed two classrooms and an area for worship. For this reason Holy Trinity had a unique beginning. Only five mission churches were begun in this fashion.

Looking back at the first two years of the congregation, steady growth can be seen. Having a precursor to the *WEF* (worship, education and fellowship building), is more than most mission congregations begin with. God's hand supported his mission effort. Struggling to make Holy Trinity successful, the Lord's words must have rung out in the ears of the church's members. Growth did not occur with large jumps in membership, but continued slowly and steadily. The steady growth came from members of other congregations transferring to Holy Trinity or from within (*ie.* births). In those first few years, the school did not attract the students as was

hoped. Many of the students were members of the congregation. Why was growth so slow? One of the main reasons came from the attitude of the community itself. There was a type of wait and see attitude maintained by those who lived in the area around Holy Trinity. Being such a small school, some wondered if the congregation would *be there in the morning*.

This attitude and not having a church building delayed the tremendous growth one could expect in such an area. "As each year went by, the members were able to dispel the notion that we were only a school and not a church," (Pastor Raabe). While the church continued to grow, again, most of it was from within. By 1978 the worship area inside of the school was filling quickly. More and more people were beginning to hear about this small conservative church on the South side. Growth did not result from any type of organized evangelism program, there was none. Most prospects were visitors contacted by the pastor. With the chapel becoming crowded, the congregation went to two services, but this did not solve the problem. Many members had to sit in the hallway or an adjacent classroom. More space was needed. Special services (*eg.* Easter; confirmation) were difficult to conduct. Fellowship activities became somewhat crowded; organizations had to reserve a time for their activities.

A steady growth helped Holy Trinity to outgrow its worship facility. God was keeping the promise he made to the people at Holy Trinity. Outgrowing a worship facility is a good sign of growth in a congregation. Crowding, however, causes more problems than it solves. Church growth experts tell us that when a nave becomes eighty percent (80%) full, it is time to have another service or build. This was the fact at Holy Trinity. With closed quarters the average attendance began to drop drastically. (Average church attendance dropped twelve percent [12%] in three years.)

This posed a problem for the congregation. Many members were becoming discouraged in regard to their attendance. Some thought, "Why come to church when there will be no place for me to sit?" One member, after worshipping a number of years with folding chairs, noted his dislike for them.

Worship was taking a beating because of the crowded conditions. In 1982 Holy Trinity took a major step. Serious thoughts were given to building a new church. The congregation quickly realized without a new worship facility their church would take a step backwards. Hard decisions laid ahead for the congregation. There were many angles to view before beginning a building project. In this respect, Holy Trinity is no different than any other church considering a building project. The congregation had a large unpaid balance of a loan from synod looming before them. Just three years earlier the synod withdrew the subsidy which had been supporting Holy Trinity. With the subsidy withdrawn, a teacher had to be released. Bitter feelings from this incident scared the congregation. Now money had to be budgeted tighter than before. All of these things made the financial decisions a bit harder to make.

These are tough decisions for any congregation to make. Holy Trinity kept their eyes focused on the Lord and depended on him for help. The congregation chose to go ahead to build the church. Instead of dividing the congregation, the members now pulled together to make this project work. The building program became an adherent to bind the congregation together. Holy Trinity was a close knit congregation before the building project. This undertaking of the church drew them even closer together. A local architect was picked to design the new church. His plans became the building proposal Holy Trinity submitted to the bank. Three banks were willing to

work with them in financing a new church. United Bank and Trust of Grand Rapids was chosen. The approved loan enabled the first shovels of dirt to be removed; a new church would soon be built.

The planning of the church itself took a little over one year. Drafting the final plans and receiving the building permit, Holy Trinity broke ground on May 20th, 1984. This was an important step for the church. Soon they would have a new worship facility. Dedication for the new church happened on February 17, 1985. Twenty-two (22) years after their first service as a mission, the members had a *real church* to worship in. Having a church building tugs at the heart strings of a congregation. There is a special feeling members have inside when they are able to worship in their own building. We, as pastors, try to remind our members and ourselves that a church is only a building. So often, worship takes on a whole new meaning when conducted inside of a church. Holy Trinity could see what God had allowed them to accomplish.

Not only was building a new church a step forward for the congregation, it began a period of tremendous growth. Church membership increased by one hundred fourteen (114) souls in the two years after the church was built. (Eighty-four [84] of those souls were brought in from outside of the church.) Having a permanent building helped in the addition of new members. Those living around the church no longer saw Holy Trinity as a struggling mission congregation. Their view changed to seeing Holy Trinity as an established church and school.

The church building acted as an evangelism tool. This may sound odd, but people were attracted by the construction. Curious to see what this church looked like on the inside, many stopped for a quick peek. Some visitors even came back to worship. When the plans for the completed

church were in the making, there was a renewed interest in the church. An evangelism committee was formed. The three men on the board, began working to promote the congregation and to win souls for Christ. The first few years found the board struggling. Like many other congregations in the synod, *evangelism* was something new. Most of the outreach efforts consisted of *cold* canvassing. In a city which was predominantly Christian, many prospects were found. Only a handful of these prospects became members of Holy Trinity.

The biggest problem the evangelism board faced with these outreach programs was--follow-up. (Follow-up is the key to any evangelism program.) With a large number of prospects, it was difficult for the pastor and the board members to make a second contact. At the time the Evangelism Committee felt that their efforts were not doing much good. Numbers are not the sole measure of success. Despite feeling the efforts were a failure, a large number of adult *converts* who became members after the building of the church. God's Word continues to work despite our efforts to spread his *Good News*. In 1986 the Evangelism Committee began to stall. A lack of leadership and a lack of synodical direction for evangelism groups, hurt Holy Trinity's outreach efforts. There were still visitors who were interested in membership, but not like the previous years.

The two years of 1986 and '87 appear to be slow years. Every church experiences trends of expansion and stagnation. This slow period occurred a bit more than a year after the new church was built. What caused this *downturn* period at Holy Trinity? Coincidence points to an occurrence in many churches. When a building or other type of major project takes place, the congregation seems to rejuvenate. Members pull together and a positive attitude toward the church develops. Approximately a year after completing

that project the congregation slips back into its old rut. The positive attitude toward the church tends to fade away. Church growth analysts suggest a reason for such a decline of interest in the church. They mention that the *novelty* of the new church wears off.

In the fall of 1987, evangelism efforts at Holy Trinity picked up. For the fall a new type of outreach was planned. Instead of canvassing as many homes as possible, the Evangelism Board decided to visit a specific group of people. Being a fast growing city, the Board decided to visit those people who had just moved into the area. By begging the city assessor's office, a list of newly purchased homes were given to Holy Trinity. Homes within two square miles of the church were targeted for the fall outreach. Past canvass efforts covered a large amount of homes with little chance of follow-up. This method offered a smaller and more targeted group of potential prospects.

A week before the outreach was to take place, each of the targeted families would receive a letter. The letter was personally addressed, welcoming the family to the area and telling them when our canvass would take place, (cf. Appendix B). With this method those families who were not interested in Holy Trinity could tell the congregation. Canvassers found many prospects who demonstrated an interest in the church. Out of the ninety-five (95) families contacted, sixty-three (63) prospects were discovered. With such a good response, a similar canvass was conducted the following spring. One hundred thirty-eight (138) homes were visited producing seventy-eight (78) prospects. On paper the amount of prospects appeared phenomenal, but once again the inability of adequate follow-up hindered this harvest of souls. Even though its success was limited, the Evangelism Board began planning goals and outreaches for future dates.

The Board developed a variety of plans for its outreach efforts in Grand Rapids. Its primary goal effected the congregation. The members of the Evangelism Board wanted to instill a *mission mindedness* among the people of Holy Trinity. In order for the evangelism program at Holy Trinity to be truly successful, the members had to help in outreach efforts. The goal of the Board was not to have the whole congregation show up to ring doorbells during a day of canvassing. Instead, they encouraged each member *to canvass* friends and relatives who did not have a church home. Just within the members of the church exists an endless group of people who needed to hear God's Word. Through *friendship evangelism*, the people of Holy Trinity would be able to nurture their unchurched friends.

Workshops, Bible classes and sermons addressed the need of friendship evangelism. In order for the evangelism effort to reach out farther into the community, the members had to have a witnessing attitude.

Effective evangelism happens when the members recognize that they are super tools in God's hands. They know who can be invited to church; they have an endless prospect list. Strong and consistent growth comes only when all members think this way. (Fred Brailey Jr.)

What Mr. Brailey mentions is true. While at the Seminary, we study the theories and even receive some practice making an evangelism call. Arriving at our first parish, we prepare ourselves to *convert the neighborhood*. Calling on future members of our church, is only one side of evangelism. We need to get our flock interested and involved in witnessing their faith to others. Evangelism outreach of the whole congregation is a necessary aspect of a church's ministry.

Again God's promise given in Isaiah came true for the members at Holy Trinity. The congregation continued to experience slow steady, growth. A steady growth which Holy Trinity has always been blessed with. Within the past ten years, the souls entrusted to Holy Trinity have more than doubled. A fairly impressive figure. Why such an expansion? Three reasons can be cited for the gain in size. 1) The majority of its members are relatively young families. Being a young congregation the number of baptisms has kept a steady pace. In this way, the *small* members are brought into the church each year, (*cf.* Appendix C). 2) Transfers aid the increase of the church's soul total. Grand Rapids is one of the fastest growing areas of Michigan. Well known for their printing, office furniture and *high tech* industry, Grand Rapids entices people from other parts of the state to seek employment. This influx of people includes members of sister congregations. In the past three years fifty-seven (57) members have transferred to Holy Trinity from other *WELS* congregations, (while 17 transferred out). 3) A final reason for enlarged membership comes from evangelism. Within that same three year period, thirty-three (33) prospects have become members.

For these three reasons Holy Trinity has grown within the past ten years. A closer look at the congregation shows another important reason for growth. There has to be more than just having a good location that causes new people to join the church. It is said that if your church cares about its members, people will make the effort to attend. This holds true with Holy Trinity. Pastor Adrian strives to make his sermons and Bible classes understandable and applicable to his members. Nothing can be worse from a pastor's perspective than members who did not understand what we have said. Members become disgruntled with sermons that do not apply to their

lives. They give up on Bible classes when subjects are dull or beyond comprehension.

Another area in which Pastor Adrian concerns himself involves the general attitude of the congregation. We in the Wisconsin Synod did not have to work hard for our reputation of being *the cold church*. Thankfully this trend has begun to reverse itself. At Holy Trinity, the members strive for a friendly and accepting attitude. Members are not afraid to introduce themselves and their friends to you. Visitors are made to feel welcome. Many first time visitors commented on their surprise as they entered church. Hardening themselves to the *cold* reputation our synod had, they are surprised when introduced to a majority of the people in the narthex. This welcoming attitude promotes a warm feeling to visitors. First impressions play a large role in whether a visitor will return or not. Holy Trinity makes the visitor relax and enjoy their worship time.

Worshiping for that one hour is important to the visitor and the congregation. A one hour presentation of the gospel may be the only *good news* that person may hear. The same holds true for the average member. Only on Sunday will the pastor have a chance to teach the majority of his flock. This very reason makes pastoral visitation necessary. Pastor Adrian related how he takes time to visit members and visitors to the church. He believes that much of the growth and better than average attendance (51.7%) results from this. "Taking this time and effort shows our people that the church cares for them," (Pastor Adrian). Showing that you care for people by your actions, will encourage prospects and members to keep returning to God's house. People are looking for a group which cares for them. There is no one who cares for us better than our Heavenly Father.

Since the new worship facility was built, Holy Trinity continued to grow. Growth proven by the yearly statistics. Growth fostered by a new evangelism program and a warm congregational attitude. The church had pulled together. Continuing to work together, they soon discovered that more room was needed. There was enough room in the new church, but the old chapel which served as the fellowship hall was too, too small. A room which held 150 (wall to wall) had a great demand on its use. Pioneers, youth group, and Ladies' Guild were some of the organizations which had to *reserve* the fellowship hall for activities. Organizations of the church had no problem adapting to the size of the room. Fellowship gatherings faced different problems.

One problem which arose was ample room. It is enjoyable to be close to your brothers and sisters in Christ, but not to enjoyable sitting shoulder to shoulder in a crowded room. The number of fellowship gatherings increased, but attendance fell. At first, people did not come so others could attend. Soon an attitude developed that the functions were too crowded. "After all, who will miss me in that big group?" Somebody noticed their absence. The congregation knew that a fellowship hall was needed. In 1988, Holy Trinity decided that it was time to plan for further expansion.

It was obvious, to the congregation, the type of building they would need. The congregation noticed that it equally needed a fellowship hall large enough for the members and for future growth. Having a day school, they saw the need and advantages of having a gymnasium. A Building Committee was formed; plans were begun for this next project. Questions concerning finances were raised once again. Different banks created various financial plans. Holy Trinity's financial position was much better than before. With the growth of the congregation, the church was able to

accelerate the payment of its loan principle. The congregation knew expansion was needed. They did not want to jump into an expansion project without looking. A number of mechanical contractors and one architect were contacted. Each submitted a proposal to the Building Committee. Price, congregational needs and appearance were the main factors involved in choosing a site plan. The Committee brought the two best proposals to the congregation. In these open forum and voter meetings, the congregation chose the plan supported by the Building Committee.

Having had problems with the previous architect, a design-construct company received the bid for the construction. The first shovels of dirt were removed from the site June 5th, 1988. Ground breaking for the fellowship hall marked another milestone for Holy Trinity. The fellowship hall/gym was a welcomed addition to the church. The 100' by 102' building housed a large kitchen, two additional classrooms, locker rooms and a multipurpose area. The new building fits in well with Holy Trinity's plans for the future, (treated later). It supplies the necessary room for growth of school and church. The contractor kept the construction schedule on track, even through some of the hottest days of the past summer. The building was completed just before the 1988-89 school year. It could not be occupied until early spring of 1989, because of permit problems. The dedication of the fellowship hall occurred April 23, 1989. God's hand can easily be seen guiding and blessing the work of Holy Trinity.

The past ten years have seen the congregation *take off* with growth. When the church was first established, growth like this may have been only a dream. What began mainly as a school has become a permanent church and school (God willing) in the Grand Rapids area. In these last ten years, the church was not the only member of the congregation which experienced

growth. Holy Trinity Lutheran School has also grown. Growing from nine (9) students in 1964 to fifty-five (55) pupils in 1988, the school has profited under God's promise.

Holy Trinity primarily, in the eyes of the synod, began as a school. It offered an opportunity for the members to give their children a Christian education. In an area where Christian Reformed churches have an abundance of schools, there was no chance for the day school to *compete*. Trying to gain students for numbers' sake, was not the school's purpose. In its early years enrollment remained small. Like the church, the school did not grow much. It maintained an average enrollment of twenty (20). "As the church grew the day school enrollment increased proportionately," (Mr. Janke). This growth was a welcomed sight. The education arm of the congregation viewed itself with pride. A pride stemming from its effectiveness in training Holy Trinity's future members and leaders.

Since 1980 the school has grown. Growth has not come from recruitment from without the church. Support within the church has grown. With the number of young families with small children the future appears promising. In an area with a heavy concentration of parochial schools, you might be tempted to think some type of advertising goes on. This is not the case. Grand Rapids, like Milwaukee, contains many private schools. There are those who show an interest in sending their children to Holy Trinity. *School shoppers* are common in the area. As the month of August begins, the telephone constantly rings with people inquiring about the school. In this regard the day school uses itself for evangelism. Those non-members who are serious about the school are not turned away. After a meeting explaining the curriculum, the parents are encouraged to attend church and adult information class. Very few of parents of *tuition* students become

members of the church. At least the church and school have done their best to preach the gospel to them.

In 1980 the school grew in another way. The new principal, Mr. Steven Janke, encouraged the congregation to open a kindergarten. This move drew the interest of parents who were not thinking of sending their younger children to Holy Trinity. A kindergarten class makes a good addition to the school. With each incoming group of five year olds, church and school draw closer together as a working unit. During the 1970s, dissension arose between those families who supported the school and those supporting the church. The schism hurt both school and the church. Without a united effort in all areas of ministry, the life of any congregation will be short lived, especially for a school. The evil foe works best when he can divide and conquer. Time and cooperation have begun the healing process.

Until 1984 two teachers conducted classes for all of Holy Trinity's students. In 1984 classes became too large to be held in one multi-grade room. (Kindergarten had its own classroom.) The congregation called Mrs Janet Rosin to teach grades 1-4. It was in this five year period that the church enjoyed a sharp rise in membership. Building the new church involved many new people in the congregation. A new building stirred interest in Holy Trinity. At an enrollment of fifty-eight (58) pupils, the members of the congregation extended a call to Miss Jodi Kammholz (1987). Teaching duties were rearranged:

Mr. Steven Janke	grades 5-8
Mrs. Peggy Janke	kindergarten
Mrs. Janet Rosin	grades 3 & 4
Miss. Jodi Kammholz	grades 1 & 2

Mr. Janke feels that the four called teachers will be able to serve the needs of the school well for at least the next five years. Added space in the

school building itself will be a plus for the school. All four class groups can meet in the same building. With the new fellowship hall/gym, room is available for future expansion. (There is a place to have gym classes and athletic activities.)

In the past five years a growth spurt happened in the school. Interviewing the principle, he sees tremendous potential for expansion in the school. Within five years, he can see the possibility of having eighty (80) students in the school. A large school can become a drawing card for families to enter into the church. This past decade has seen the school become a powerful tool in the hands of the congregation. Using both church and school Holy Trinity has been able to strengthen her members. Having grown to the need of adding not one but two new buildings in six years, Holy Trinity was ready to grow once more by reaching out into the community. Holy Trinity did not need another building; the congregation desired to begin a new congregation. They began preliminary plans to open a mission in the northeast sector of Grand Rapids.

One of Holy Trinity's goals was to open a mission congregation somewhere in greater Grand Rapids. The members of the congregation did not want Holy Trinity to become *the* WELS church in Grand Rapids. Pastor Adrian saw that many smaller churches would serve better than one large church. Discussions for the beginning of a mission started in the early summer of 1987. Already in September (16th) a meeting, of those who were interested in starting a mission, was held. In this preliminary gathering, procedures for opening a mission were explained to those in attendance. The first step to be taken involved a demographic study of areas able to support a mission. The completed studies pointed to an area northeast of Grand Rapids. Plainfield Township appeared to be a choice area. Mainly zoned as

residential and area where many people were moving into, Plainfield Township appeared to be a good mission location.

Along with a good location, a mission needs a solid nucleus. Support for the mission was there. Nine (9) families (a total of thirty-four souls) showed an interest in this endeavor. Those families showing an interest in the mission lived on the North side of town. They were not leaving because of problems, but wanted to expand the Word to another section of the city. As talk about the mission grew around church, some concern was expressed on how the loss of these families would effect Holy Trinity. With a congregation serving one hundred eighty (180) families, the loss of nine should not effect Holy Trinity in any big way. The Evangelism Committee and Pastor Adrian expect to fill this void with ten to fifteen new families within the next year.

As the mission entered its developmental stages, Holy Trinity was in the process of building their new fellowship hall. At such a critical time, discord can arise as families begin discussing moving from Holy Trinity to the mission. Would the congregation be able to handle their increased financial obligations with the loss of those families? The congregation's answer was, "yes!" Once again the Holy Trinity realized that its purpose was to spread the good news; the members did not want to become a lumbering church giant. Nervous feelings were expressed about everything that was taking place. It is our nature to feel hesitant about anything which is new and uncertain. Turning to the Lord for help Holy Trinity knew that they could succeed. Pulling together the members met the challenges that were placed before them.

April of '88 was an important time for the mission. At this meeting of the Board for Home Missions, the mission group would be told if they

could receive any help from synod in starting up. Crucial to any work, an exploratory status would be granted or denied. The families interested in the mission delivered their request. In the request for opening the mission, those interested in the mission asked for a subsidized worker to assist in outreach. As the meeting drew to a close, the request was denied. Not receiving the answer hoped for, placed a temporary damper on the mission. This had to be frustrating from the group's point of view. Wanting to open a new mission and expand service, would be something the synod would jump at. After all of the applications, the endless paperwork for demographic studies and the waiting, the answer was still, "No." Frustration does not limit itself to laity. It also effects those who fill the pulpits. Five requests for exploratory missions came from the Michigan District. All five were denied. Limited finances and lacking manpower frustrate all of those involved with mission work.

Work on the mission was placed on hold. The mission group was not able to begin any type of outreach in the Plainfield area until they received their exploratory status. Mission work had to wait until the following meeting in September. In this meeting,(September 1988), the Board gave the green light to continue work on the mission. After exploratory status was granted, a check for two thousand dollars (\$2000) was advanced to help with start-up costs. With the permission to open the mission, the next step was to choose a name for the new church. The new mission wanted a name which would distinguish them from other churches in Grand Rapids. They wanted the name to set them apart according to their doctrine. A name would help give the new mission a sense of permanence. The mission did not want to suffer as their sister congregation did when it was first established. *Christ Our Savior Ev. Lutheran Church* became the name for the new

mission. Having chosen a name, Christ Our Savior focused its attention on an evangelism program.

Traditional canvassing was out of the question. The amount of territory and the small number of people could not get the job done. An efficient and far reaching system was needed. They chose a new method of finding prospects called *The Phone's for You! The Phone's for You* concentrated on covering a large area in a small amount of time. Using basic telemarketing methods, the method promised ten percent (10%) of those people contacted would become potential prospects. Following up on the prospects could be taken care of by mailers until personal visits could be made. Costs of this program were shown to be lower than traditional methods of outreach. Basic expenses, as telephones and line charges, were less than the time and leg work of a canvass. The estimated cost of this program was two thousand dollars (\$2000).

The synod agreed to partially underwrite the cost of this program. (Synod's support came in the initial check to cover start-up costs.) Since this type of evangelism is relatively new, the Mission Board asked to be kept informed of the results. This program has been successful for other church bodies when setting up their mission congregations. The phone program began in October (1988). In order to achieve the results promised by the phone program, all of the mission members had to be involved. Members of Holy Trinity showed their support by helping in making the phone calls. Christ Our Savior's telephone outreach was to last one month. During that month, an average of four callers manned the phones each weeknight plus Saturday mornings for five hours per night. The program statistics:

Calls Made	14,170
Calls Answered	8,630

Attended Church	5,623
Negative Response	1,603
Prospects	708

Calls having been made, the members of Christ Our Savior had to follow up. After looking at the final results of the phone survey, members of both Holy Trinity and the mission were disappointed. *The Phone's for You* promised a net prospect result of ten percent (10%). Statistics can be interpreted in any way to say what you want them to say. Only 4.9 percent of the total calls made turned out to be prospects. A closer look shows different results. To figure out a true percentage, you need to start with those whom you had contact with, (calls answered). Using this figure, the phone program produced a good number of prospects. 8.2 percent of the people contacted had some interest in the new church. Members of Christ Our Savior can be pleased with the efforts. God had blessed their outreach project.

The numbers for the outreach were there, but the program was not as cost effective as first thought. The telephone installation and line charges were expected. Postage and printing expenses for the mailers almost made the project too costly for a small mission. Total cost of *The Phone's for You* amounted to 3, 686 dollars. The phone survey effectively contacted people who were potential prospects. The mailing follow-up keeps the church in contact with those prospects. If the financial resources are there, this method may work well. Two questions arise from such a survey. 1) Could such an intense effort with so few people cause *burn out* among the mission members? Mr. Brailey wrote that the members *were burned out* after the survey. It effected visiting the prospects in their follow-up campaign. 2) With so many telemarketing campaigns taking place today, how long will this program be an effective method of outreach?

Christ Our Savior had a base of potential members. December 18th (1988) was chosen for the first worship date. As the first service approached, the mission contacted all of those people who thought they might attend. Sixty-six (66) people attended the first worship service. They worshiped in a rented hall at the *President's Inn* in Grand Rapids. Most of the people who attended the service were WELS members. Since that first service, four prospects have become members. Christ Our Savior has a good start. Averaging thirty-five (35) people for Sunday worship, they are able to pay for all of their expenses. The synod has only had to give the initial start-up check to them. At present, the mission shares Holy Trinity's pastor and vicar. The existing manpower cannot help the mission fully in its follow-up efforts. The Home Mission Board has approved worker subsidy once a pastor accepts the call from Christ Our Savior. This spring the congregation has turned to the assignment committee for a graduate. God's blessings to their work and their need for a called servant.

Holy Trinity and her sister congregation, Christ Our Savior, have grown with God's help. In the past ten years, the Lord's work has prospered in greater Grand Rapids. After years of rapid expansion, we may think that the churches might enjoy the success God has given them. Both congregations do not plan to look at what they have done, but what else God will allow them to do. Christ Our Savior plans to continue its outreach effort into the North side. With a called worker they hope to raise their average Sunday attendance to fifty-five (55) at year's end.

Holy Trinity has had to revise their future plans. In 1981, Pastor Adrian set down some goals. Goals which he thought were highly attainable. For the year 1983, the congregation had planned to build their new worship facility. This goal they achieved, because the planning for the church began

in that year. Any goal set after that has been reached. Holy Trinity's school had four teachers by 1987. A fourth teacher was not in the future plans until 1999. A vicar had been called to assist the pastor six years ahead of schedule. Their planned mission and fellowship hall have also come ahead of schedule. Goals are something which we try to reach. Not very often does a congregation surpass its expected goals so quickly. How can this be? There are a number of reasons.

- 1) God's hand has been with Holy Trinity and Christ Our Savior. He has been helping them to grow keeping his promise to them.
- 2) Holy Trinity is located in a good, accessible area. The church is only 1/2 block North of a major intersection on the South side of Grand Rapids.
- 3) The congregation takes part in activities outside of church services (*eg.* softball league). This gives the congregation some added exposure in the community.
- 4) Holy Trinity (and Christ Our Savior) are the only conservative churches in the area. Many other churches, as the ELCA, have become very liberal stretching their Lutheran affiliation, (Pastor Adrian).

Pastor Adrian has one main future plan for Holy Trinity. He does not want the congregation to become one huge church on the South side. He wants the church to continue starting up other missions in the greater Grand Rapids area. He would like to see a church in every quadrant of the city. Pastor Adrian believes that when a church has over five hundred (500) souls, it is time to branch out. (If there are no other WELS churches around as in Grand Rapids.) Other goals, he feels, will difficult to set because of the rapid growth in the past ten years. Setting goals is fine. They too can become the only reason for growth. It is good that Holy Trinity keeps the

primary commission of the church before its eyes--going out and spreading the gospel to all people, (Mt. 28:20; Mk. 16:15).

The current president of the congregation, Harald Schillinger, has his visions for Holy Trinity's future. He also agrees with his shepherd that Holy Trinity cannot become a sleeping giant. He would like his congregation to be a *big sister* helping to start other mission endeavors in Grand Rapids. Since Holy Trinity has a school, the other churches could send their children to school here. This is a good idea. Schools cost less (per capita) as more students attend. The sister congregations, in the area, could help support the school. Even a busing system could be arranged to transport the students to and from Holy Trinity. Such an idea is also practical. A larger school could offer more opportunities to its students. Each congregation would not have to support a school on their own.

Holy Trinity has been blessed by the Lord. When it started as a mission in the heart of *Reformed territory*, who would have thought growth like this could happen? The coming years look bright for both of these young congregations. The Lord will continue to fulfill his promise to them. A promise he will keep while they look to him as their Shepherd. Holy Trinity has developed a good pattern for growth. The key to their growth is their evangelism program. As more and more members become witness minded, they will find it easier to express their faiths. With this ongoing outreach new people will be constantly coming to hear God's Word. As beginning or experienced shepherds, we can learn from Holy Trinity's experiences.

One thing is the key to a successful evangelism program. Our members are the success factor. They need to be educated in ways in which they can share their faith to friends and family. They need to be encouraged to continue in their efforts. Friendship evangelism is nothing new. Jesus

used it through out his ministry. When **we and our members** live lives of evangelism, through our witnessing and *faithlife*, we will not have difficulties inviting others to church. A second item we can learn--to trust in the Lord.

God has promised to send out his word for a purpose. His Word will accomplish what it was sent out to do. It is so easy for us to lose heart when we are out in the parish. There will be times when our ministries will seem fruitless. No matter what we try in the parish, our efforts fail. Depression sets in for we lose confidence in ourselves and the power of the Word. The Head of the church gives us a way out of such depression. Jesus shows us that our work is not useless, but has a purpose. Scripture tells us, the Word is sharper than a two edged sword having the power to change hearts, (He. 4:12; Mt. 18:3). We can be assured that God will keep his promise to us just as he has kept it to Holy Trinity. The Lord of Heaven has blessed this church and her sister congregation in this past decade. We ask the Lord to continue blessing the work of our synod as we bring the gospel to his children.

"My Word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I have sent it." (Is. 55:11)

Appendix A

Called Workers at Holy Trinity from 1980-89

Pastor Frederick Adrian	1980-
Mr. Steven Janke	1980-
Mrs. Peggy Janke	1980-
Mrs. Janet Rosin	1984-
Miss Jodi Kammholz	1987-

Pastors who have served Holy Trinity

Harold A. Hemple	1/13/63 - 5/17/70	7 yrs. 4 mos.
D. R. Sievert (vacancy)	5/17/70 - 9/13/70	4 mos.
Ronald A. Semro	9/13/70 - 9/19/70	6 yrs.
Patrick Bell (vacancy)	9/19/76 - 11/27/76	2 mos.
Richard Raabe	11/27/76 - 1/27/80	3 yrs. 2 mos.
Llyod Fager (vacancy)	1/27/80 - 4/27/80	3 mos.
Frederick S. Adrian	4/27/80 -	

Vicars who have served at Holy Trinity

Vicar Charles Duford	1987-1988
Vicar David Birsching	1988-1989

Teachers who have served Holy Trinity

Mr. Robert Mohr	1964 - 1969
Miss Carolyn Strum	1967 - 1968
Miss Celeste Schultz	1968 - 1973
Mr. Elmer Jirtle	1969 - 1976
Mrs. Nancy Young	1973 - 1974
Miss Ruth Kaiser	1974 - 1978
Miss Linda Meyer	1978 - 1980
Miss Kay Krichner	1979 - 1980
Mr. Steven Janke	1980 -
Mrs. Peggy Janke	1980 -
Mrs. Janet Rosin	1984 -
Miss Jodi Kammholz	1987 -

Appendix B

Dear Mr. Smith,

WELCOME to the neighborhood! We at Holy Trinity would like to welcome you. Moving into a new area can be a confusing time. If you have any questions please feel free to call us, **538-1122**. We will be glad to serve your spiritual needs and help you locate a church-home.

This coming Saturday, May 13th, we will be in your area from 9 'til noon. We are looking forward to meeting you to personally introduce ourselves. If this time is inconvenient for you please let us know so we can get together at another time.

*Vicar Charles Duford
Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church
44th & Burlingame
538-1122*

Appendix C

Yearly Statistical Report: Holy Trinity

Year	Communicants	Souls	Baptisms*	Confirmations*	Profession of faith	Net±
1980	213	287	4 / 0	9 / 8	6	+17
1981	232	317	12 / 3	6 / 10	3	+25
1982	260	360	8 / 1	7 / 6	7	+20
1983	264	368	12 / 4	4 / 12	2	+24
1984	300	426	10 / 6	5 / 9	7	+26
1985	321	471	14 / 3	2 / 10	23	+55
1986	346	511	17 / 6	3 / 9	7	+25
1987	355	528	16 / 0	2 / 4	4	+9
1988	385	564	9 / 0	8 / 8	3	+30

* Child baptisms and confirmations are listed before the slash. Adult baptisms and confirmations are listed after.

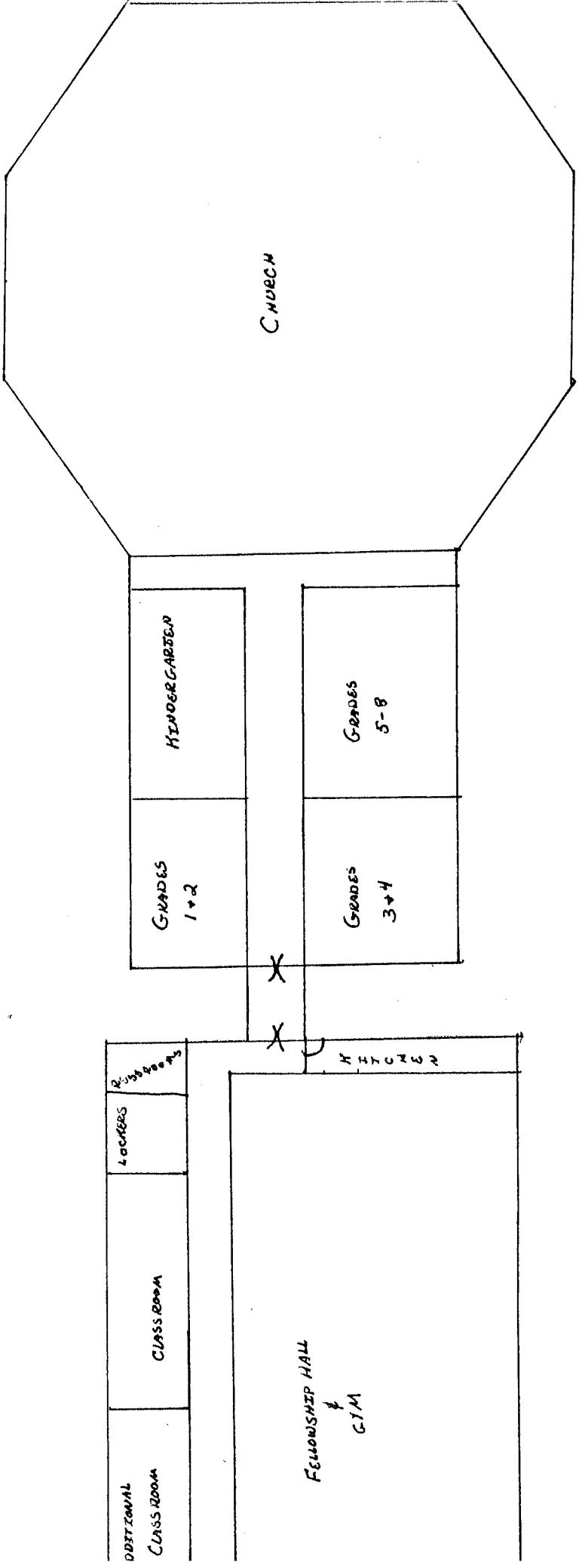
Yearly Statistical Report: Holy Trinity School

Year	Enrollment	Teachers*	Sunday School	Teachers*	YBS
1980	20	1 / 1	41	2 / 8	46
1981	28	1 / 1	40	1 / 4	43
1982	27	1 / 1	36	1 / 5	72
1983	24	1 / 1	34	1 / 4	59
1984	33	1 / 2	65	1 / 4	--
1985	35	1 / 2	104	1 / 5	41
1986	45	1 / 2	80	1 / 5	73
1987	58	1 / 3	87	2 / 5	84
1988	55	1 / 3	87	2 / 6	--

* Male teachers are listed before the slash and female teachers after.

** No YBS was conducted in 1984 & 1988 because of the building projects at Holy Trinity.

APPENDIX D
 BASIC SITE PLAN OF HOLY TRINITY.



BUILT 1984

BUILT 1962

BUILT 1988

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Statistics:

Adrian, Frederick. Holy Trinity Pastoral Reports and Statistical Reports. 1980-1989.

Raabe, Richard. Holy Trinity Pastoral Reports and Yearly Statistical Report. 1976-1978.

Interviews:

Adrian, Reverend Frederick: pastor at Holy Trinity from 1980 to present

Brailey, Fred Jr. : president of congregation from 1978-1980, chairman of the Evangelism Board 1981-88, president of Christ Our Savior (mission congregation) 1988 to present.

Janke, Steven: principle of Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran School from 1980 to present.

Raabe, Reverend and Mrs.: pastor at Holy Trinity from 1976-79.

Schillinger, Harald: president of congregation from 1980 to present and chairman of building committees (1981-88).

Steinbrecker, Dorothy: member of Holy Trinity since 1963.

Essays:

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