

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... (Matt. 28:19)

The History of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Livonia, MI.

by

Tod Vertz

for

Prof. Brenner

Church History

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Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
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Mequon, Wisconsin

Our Lord Jesus has given His command to all His people to spread the gospel message. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20.

This is what Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Livonia, Michigan, located at the corner of Merriman Rd. and W. Chicago, has been doing since August of 1950. Peace has just dedicated their new church, June 14, 1992, which holds close to 500 people. The current membership is, 630 souls, 450 communicants. For 43 years, through the lips of four pastors, Peace Lutheran Church has been spreading the gospel message to many people.

This church has not only touched people in Livonia, but also people from surrounding cities such as Westland, Plymouth, Canton, Farmington Hills, Garden City, Redford and other cities as well. People have come and gone from this church, as with any church. But this church, by the grace of God, continues to reach out to new people every year.

The current pastor, Pastor Karl Vertz, in his nineteen years at Peace, has given these statistics: From 1974 - 1992 he has had an average per year of 5 funerals, (total 98); 9 weddings, (total 171); 10 children's confirmations, (total 191); 6 adult confirmations, (total 116); 18 children's baptisms, (total 338); and 2 adult baptisms, (total 27).

The city of Livonia is a large city of about 36 square miles. It is a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. In this year of 1993, Livonia

is a city of many businesses and a population of over 100,000 people. There are several Wisconsin Synod churches within a twenty minute drive or less. One is at the North end of Livonia, St. Paul's, while the rest are in surrounding cities mentioned earlier. While the Word of God has been preached faithfully in this south-east corner of Michigan for many years, we want to focus on the city of Livonia, on this church which God has blessed for 43 years. We will look at how it has developed through the years. PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, 9415 Merriman Rd, Livonia, Michigan 48150.

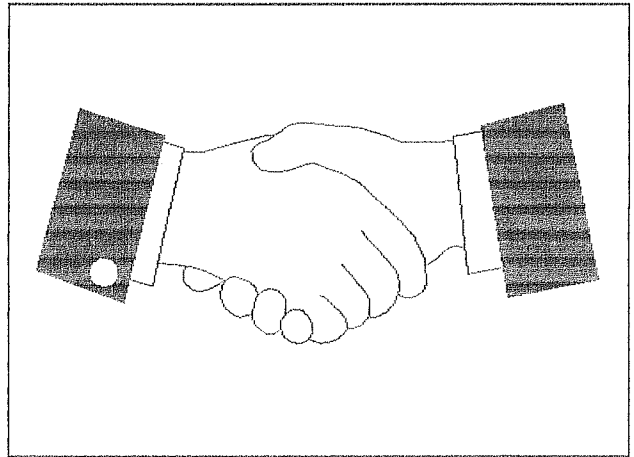
Back in the year 1950, the city of Livonia was developing into a highly respected residential area. The Mission Board of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod decided to look into the Plymouth Rd. - Merriman Rd. area to see if this area had any potential for developing a new mission. In the one square mile that the Mission Board was looking into, it was discovered that there were only two other churches, ~~in that area~~. One was catholic and the other Protestant. The area had 700 homes with the promise of much increase in the near future.

Deciding that there was good potential for beginning a new congregation, the Mission Board assigned Pastor Edward Zell the responsibility of starting a new mission in the Plymouth-Merriman area.

Pastor Zell was a missionary and still is the pastor at Lola Park Lutheran Church in Redford Township, Michigan. (It is interesting to note that Pastor Zell was still in his Mission

Church while he was starting the new Peace Mission. He didn't get his permanent building until later on.) When asked why he was chosen to start the new mission, he first of all said that he was a young guy in a mission and close to the area. Then he said, "In those days, it was simply expected of missionaries, young guys, that the Mission Board asked you to do a job, that you just did it."

The ball was set in motion. Pastor Zell began to organize the mission with the help of his people at Lola Park. He had young people from his church, four 8th & 9th graders, distribute door hangers in the Plymouth-Merriman area. Along with this, they recorded all the



Canvassing for the Mission

house numbers. This was done not only to keep an accurate record of where they had been, but also for subsequent mailings to publicize the mission before its first service. Pastor Zell said that he believed they covered 496 homes in the subdivision during their canvass.

The invitation read like this:

Lutheran Church Services

in

Rosedale Gardens

beginning
August 6, 1950 at 9:00 a.m.

in the Rosedale Gardens Clubhouse
9611 Hubbard at W. Chicago

WELCOME

If you are interested in this church and her message of salvation, then please come and hear it at firsthand. Should you desire further information, the pastor will gladly call at your home. However, he can do that only if you introduce yourself and give him your address. In any event, however, may we express our sincere hope that you too may come to the knowledge of Christ as He revealed Himself by word and deed in His Holy Book, through our preaching.

The Rev. Edw. Zell - KENwood 1-4574

(interesting printing of Phone Number)

(To the best of the ability of this writer, without the page division of this paper of course, this is how the flier appeared to the public back in 1950.)

When asked how long it took to prepare for the first service, Pastor Zell recalled that it was from either May or June when he started canvassing until August when the first service was held.

So, the first service of Peace, at that time called ROSEDALE GARDENS MISSION CHURCH, was conducted in the Rosedale Gardens Club House having 18 persons in attendance. (Incidentally, Rosedale Gardens is a subdivision in which the current Peace Lutheran Church stands today. Although, the present church is about six blocks from the club house which was owned by the Presbyterian Church in Rosedale Gardens.) Pastor Edward Zell conducted the service,

having Betty Hass as the pianist. He also brought ushers from his church to help with the service.

The order of service was page 5, and the hymns for the day were 4, 360, 288, and 283. The Scripture Readings were: Exodus 17:1-7 and Matt. 14:22-34.

The rest of the bulletin for that day talked about what the offering was for. It explained the Synod which according to the bulletin was the Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other States. It gave a brief history of Pastor Zell's schooling and also told where he was serving. Finally, it gave a ~~W~~elcome to all who were in attendance.

To get an idea of the set up of this club house church, Pastor Zell gave these comments. They had to use his wife's wash baskets to carry the hymnals to the club house. The notes quoted 18 people for the first service, he says he remembers starting with 8 or 9 people. (This comment may have referred to those prior to the first service). The altar that was used was part of a bar that had a Coca - Cola sign on it. The organ that was used he said was " a field organ that the chaplains used in the army." It was a pump organ that could be folded up.

In recalling the first service, Pastor Zell recalls the first person to come through the doors of the chapel. This man, by the name of Immanuel Marion, who had one finger missing of his hand, came out after the service, shook Pastor's hand and said, "I'll be joining here." He had been a member of St. Paul's (mentioned earlier) but was now joining Peace. This man turned out to be one

of the prime movers of the church.

The club house was a good meeting place for only one month. The Presbyterian Church that was renting the club house to the mission had prior commitments. (Pastor Zell said that Woodrow Willy, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church had told them they had prior commitments to the Sunday School). They just did not want to co-operate with the people of Peace as far as the time schedule went. So the services were discontinued here.

They looked around and were able to move their worship to a furniture store in Livonia, the Horace Thatcher furniture store. It was called, "Livonia Furniture." Pastor Zell referred to it as the "House of Maple Furniture". They were able to worship here for a time free of charge "provided through Mr. Thatcher's good graces rent-free." (Notes). Zell said they would move the baby furniture out of the way so they could conduct services. Pastor Zell recalls that these Sundays of worshipping were very busy for him. He would have an 8:30 service at his church, then he would go to the furniture store, then race back for his second service. Pastor Zell did add a comment here, not directly associated with Peace, but it has bearing on how busy Pastor Zell was. Due to the fact he had to run two missions, he left his Sunday School in the hands of an ex-Marine. He was not able to monitor his Sunday School as closely as he wanted. Because of this, the ex-Marine ran Pastor Zell's Sunday School into the ground. He was trying to run Sunday School like the military. It didn't work.

The small group of people continued to worship at the

furniture store for a few months. Zell recalls just a little less than a year. But the atmosphere of worshipping in a furniture store did not do much to attract the outside world. In fact it is said that rather than fostering the growth of the mission, worship in the furniture store was detrimental to the mission. Zell quotes, they were getting the reputation of "that funny little bunch that goes over by Horace's store and sits in the back room". Because of these conditions, worship was discontinued altogether. The efforts of Pastor Zell, having the first service in August 1950, discontinued worship in February 1951.

Although services were discontinued, this did not mark the death of the little mission. It was decided in February 1951, to meet with the Mission Board and discuss what steps to take next in order to keep this little mission alive.

The Mission Board met in March 1951 to determine what to do. (side note, Pastor Kenneth Vertz, the Grandfather of this writer was on the Mission Board - yes, probably only interesting to the writer). Data was presented by neighboring pastors and laymen, the notes quote Zell, Sauer, Press, and "vitaly interested" laymen Marion and Schreiber.

It was decided at this time on a step unusual in our Synod. One source says, "The Mission Board, in a great leap of faith, took the unprecedented step of applying to the Church Extension Fund for monies to erect a chapel at W. Chicago and Merriman in Livonia."

A chapel was going to be built, and a full time pastor was going to be called. The interesting and questionable part about

this was, that there was no congregation yet. The notes say, "although there was no congregation yet in existence, indeed a venture of faith." Indeed it was a great leap of faith, but looking back on this, as the notes say it was "proven the wisdom of choice." "While the chapel first stood with empty fields stretching for miles in three directions, it now stands in the heart of a beautiful residential area."

A suitable site was found for the new chapel, and on June 17, 1952, the land was purchased from the Sheldon Land Company which was located at the corner of Plymouth and Farmington Roads. (This company is no longer there. It is now Sheldon shopping center). The land was purchased for \$5,000, and is located at the corner of Merriman Rd. and W. Chicago Blvd. The plot of land had 300 ft. on Merriman Rd., and 200 ft. on W. Chicago. (more land is owned today - 1993). "This parcel of land is in the very heart of an extensive building program which offers promise of many prospects for years to come."

Pastor Zell gave a few stats on these events as well. First of all, he recalls the Synod sending, he believed, ~~\$~~[#]26,500 to go and buy land and build a chapel. He noted that this, ^v building a church and calling a full time pastor, ^v has never happened before this time or after in our Synod.

He said that he got to know Mr. Sheldon of the Sheldon Land Company pretty well. Zell says that they also got a pretty good deal on the land from this man.

A local professional pilot took him up, in a single engine

Piper Cub, to take pictures of the area where Peace would be. He recalls hanging out the side of the plane on one of the struts. He used a pullout accordion Kodak camera to take pictures of the area.

After the land was purchased, plans had to be made for the chapel. Between June and September, 1952, Pastor Zell had to go to Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, to get the plans for the new chapel. The Synod had a standard plan for all mission chapels through architects Steffen and Kemp. The design for all the chapels was a wood frame building. So, Zell came back with the design.

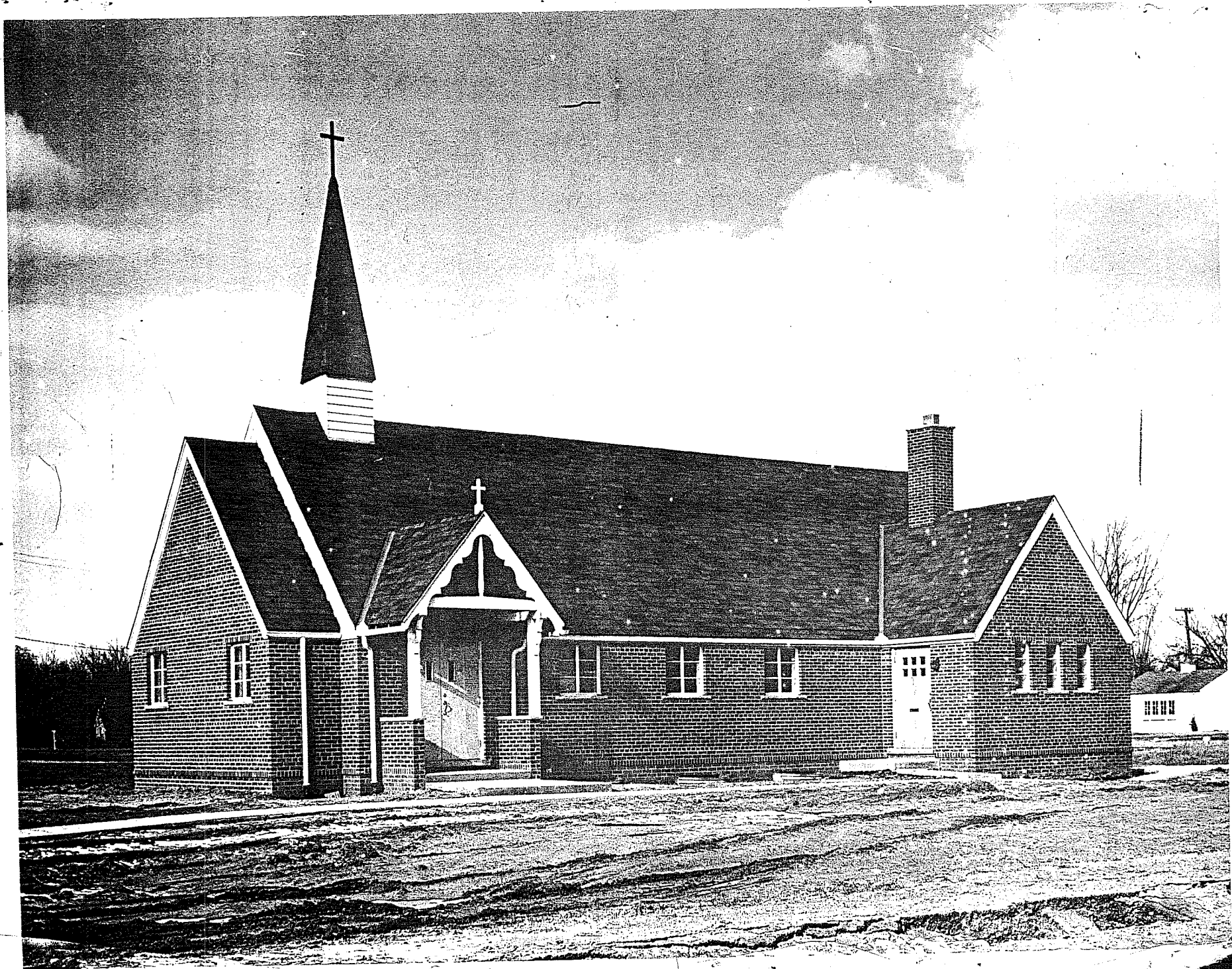
The contract to build the church was given to Mr. Lionel Viau, a member of Zell's church. The notes tell us that the contract was given to Mr. Viau "because of the generosity of his offer". (Pastor Zell noted that Mr. Viau was a convert from Catholicism and quoted, "one of the finest men I knew"). They ran into problems because the subdivision in Livonia would not allow wood frame buildings in that area. So the plans had to be modified to a brick building. Pastor Zell said this drove the contractor crazy because every measurement came out different than the original because of the change from wood to brick.

Before actual building could start, they had to go to the Zoning Board to get approval for the building. Pastor Zell said that back in those days there were not so many rules. All they needed to take along were pictures or slides of the plans for the church. "That was relatively common back then," he said. They got the okay with no problem. Pastor Zell said, "No difficulty was

said to be given already by January 15, 1953. And on February 8, 1953, the dedication service was held at 3:30 in the afternoon. Pastor Zell, who was the mission's founder, preached the sermon and dedicated the church. Pastor Baer spoke as the Mission Board Representative. The attendance for this service was 165.

The writer of the notes said, "...we were permitted to dedicate this house of worship to the service of the Triune God." Other notes said, "...the chapel was dedicated to the glory and to the service of the Triune God." Pastor Zell noted that all this took place between the ending of the services in February 1952, to the starting of the service February 1953.

There was a paper called the "Detroit Lutheran" published every other Friday, which ran an article on the new mission. A portion of the story commented the little chapel, and also gives us an accurate description of what a Synod Mission Church looked like. "The edifice, which boasts a full basement, is constructed of cinder-block with a red brick exterior, and has white wood trim. A slim spire points to the skies. The interior of the church is painted a pastel green, with an open ceiling having stained beams and trusses. An asphalt tile floor in two shades of green completes a pleasing color scheme. The chancel furniture, consisting of an altar, lectern, and pulpit were also constructed by Mr. Viau. They are made of birch panelling in a natural finish. A wine colored dossal curtain rises behind the altar to a height of ten feet. An automatic, oil-fired furnace is to provide ample heat through the winter months and cooling circulation of air through



the summer." The final cost of the project was \$27,500.

Pastor Zell added a side note here concerning the night before the dedication service. He commented on the wine colored dossal curtain that used to hang behind the altar. Zell said that he and Pastor Westendorf, the pastor who accepted the call to Peace, spent almost the whole night hanging this curtain. He recalls that it was around four o'clock in the morning when they were finished. He said that, before they got the curtain straight, they drilled about 15 to 20 holes into the front wall of the church. (thank goodness the curtain covered the holes.)

During the time of the construction of the chapel, the services were held by other neighboring pastors, not just by Pastor Zell. Also during this time, the Mission Board was calling pastors so one could take over the new church at the time of dedication. Two calls during this time were returned. The third call issued was accepted by Pastor John Westendorf. He had been serving a mission in Williamston, Michigan. He was installed on February 15, 1953, at 7:30 P.M. Pastor Sauer from St. Paul's preached the installation sermon on John 4: 35-36. Attendance for this service was 155. At that time Pastor Westendorf had to live several blocks from the church at 11440 Loveland St. in Livonia. No parsonage had been purchased yet.

Peace had a permanent sight and started with only a few members. The charter members of Peace were:

Mr.\ Mrs. E.W. Marion; Mr.\ Mrs. & Karen Schreiber; Mr.\ Mrs. E. Wobrock, Robert Wobrock, Carol Wobrock; Mr.\ Mrs. W.H. Rolen; Julie

Rolen; Mr.\Mrs. P. Brockman; Mr.\Mrs. C. Rohde; Edward Rohde; Kenneth Rohde; Mr.\Mrs. L. Gray; Mrs. C. Gray; Mr.\Mrs. L. Reichel and Mrs. L. Segler.

Pastor Zell said that he caught a lot of flack for buying so much land back in 1952. Incidentally, Peace could stand to have more land. This is true, because, by the grace of God, this mission, started by Pastor Zell, is a self supporting church that continues to operate today.

The work of Pastor Zell at Peace was now completed. Pastor Zell looks back fondly on the pilot members of Peace. He said they were a great group to work with. In the closing words of the interview with Pastor Zell, he gave this quote. "In conclusion, if there's one lesson that I think should have been learned from the experience at Peace, 'We were there with the most.' The only other church that was there was the Presbyterian Church and I think St. Michael's that started up the road." Pastor Zell's dates of service at Peace were: August 6, 1950 - February 8, 1953. Pastor Zell continues his ministry at Lola Park in Redford Township, Michigan.

Pastor Westendorf took over as pastor, and immediately began holding regular worship services. After only a short time, on April 8, 1953, the congregation formally organized with the 16 charter members mentioned earlier. On this date, the constitution was adopted and signed by 7 men, and the congregation was officially named Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In the first two months of its existence, the congregation

built up a membership of 30 communicants and 40 souls. The Sunday School in these first two months grew to 40 children. The average Sunday attendance was about 57. But in only three and one half years later, the congregation grew to 165 communicants and 300 souls. The Sunday School grew to 140 children. The writer of the church notes concludes his notes with these words. "Thus in this short time, faith has been rewarded and foresight has been proved. May the Lord continue to bless this congregation in years to come as He has in its short history thus far."

Highlights of the early years at Peace.

1953

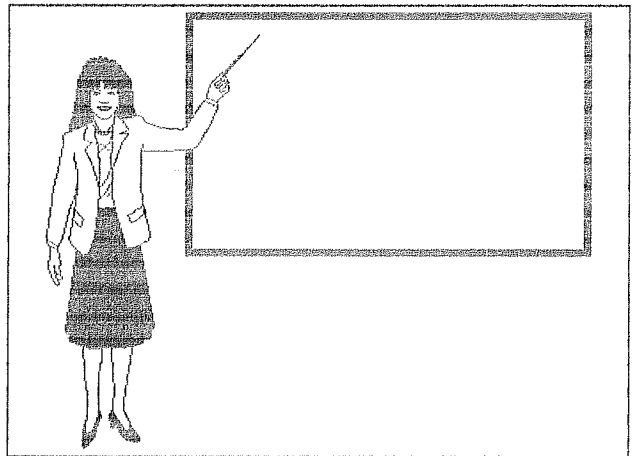
Already on April 20, 1953, the congregation took steps to becoming self supporting. They passed the motion on this date to pay \$20 toward the pastor's salary. On May 4, 1953, the motion was passed to add "of Livonia" to the name of the church. They did this only for corporate reasons, to comply with the Michigan Corporation and Security Commission. July 6, 1953 Peace began to use the envelope system, dropping their envelopes in a box as they entered church. Also at this meeting, Pastor Westendorf was authorized to purchase a baptismal font - not to exceed \$50. September 8, 1953 the church service was changed from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. and the Sunday School would then start at 9:45 a.m. At this meeting it was passed to add a vestibule to the front entrance to the church. This project was carried out in November of that year. At the November 3, 1953 meeting, it is interesting to note that the motion prevailed that the whole congregation discuss at

meetings, the information from Synod pertaining to the differences in doctrine with the Missouri Synod.

1954

January 10, 1954, the congregation was in the process of looking for additional property. The parsonage fund was started. A special meeting was held on May 30, 1954 to request to become affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other States. At the June 7, 1954 meeting, results of a poll were followed and beginning July 11, 1954, another service would be added. Services would be at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. Incidentally, the service times remain the same today. On July 3, 1954, the Mission Board approved purchase of a

parsonage and gave funds of \$16,100. On August 16, 1954, it was passed that a committee study the feasibility of purchasing land for a future school. November 8, 1954 there were 200 souls, 89 communicant members. December 13, 1954 it



"School Opens Fall 1956"

was recommended they rent out the basement of the church to the Livonia Public School because they needed a classroom desperately.

1955-56

On February 20, 1955 the parsonage was dedicated. The cost was only \$14,000 and it was conveniently located on the lot next to

the church on W. Chicago. Pews were purchased that same year on March 7. In September 1955, the congregation agreed to go ahead with a school of their own. The vote for the school was passed, with the recommendation of starting with only grades 1-3. On April 10, 1956, Peace Lutheran Church called its first teacher Miss Thelma Storm.

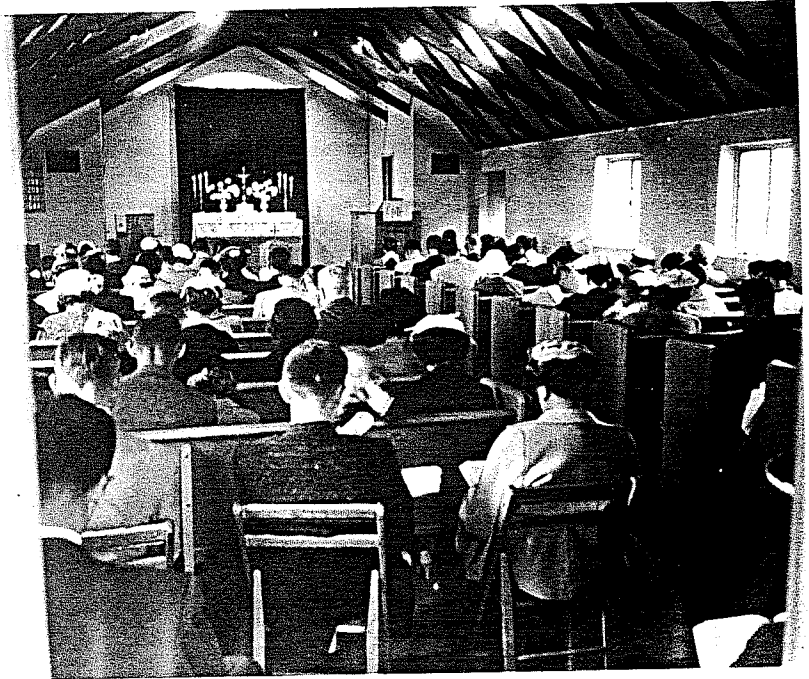
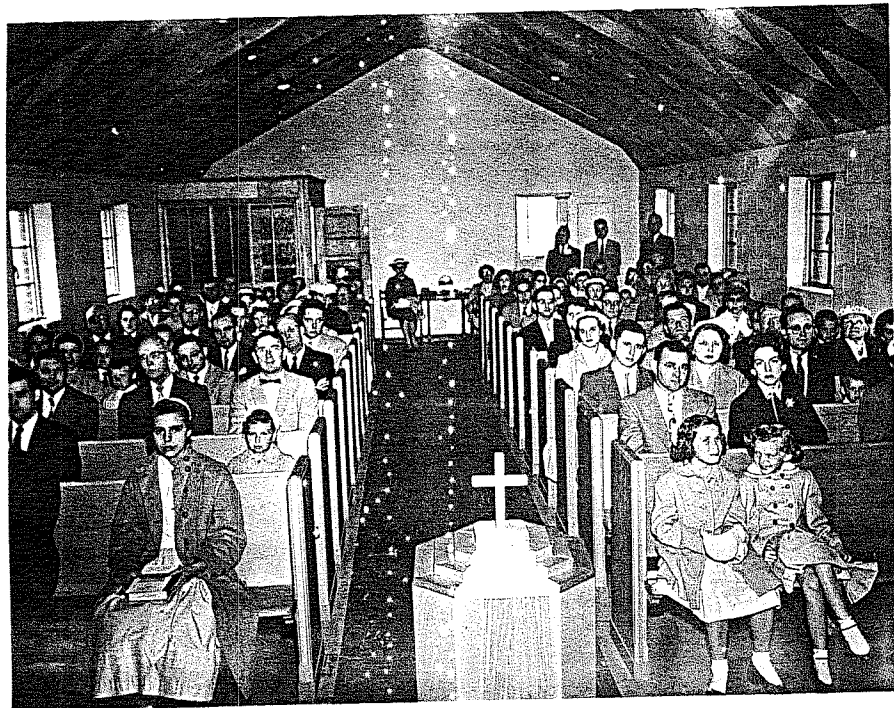
The first three years in the brief outline just given show the tremendous progress of a church that was built before the people. Indeed it was and is the hand of God.

Thelma Storm accepted the call and Peace Lutheran School started in the fall of 1956. School was held for the first two years in the church basement. The first year of school there were 24 students. In the second year of school, a fourth grade was added and there were 40 students.

But then the basement was getting too crowded. This was not only true because of the school, but the church services, Sunday School, Congregational assemblies too were getting crowded. This made Peace enter into a building and expansion program.

By the grace of God, on April 27, 1958, ground was broken for the building of a new school. Two months later on June 8, 1958, the service of the laying of the cornerstone was held. The sermon was given by Pastor W. Koelpin of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Livonia. The building committee consisted of Pastor Westendorf; Mr. Frank Wright, Building Committee Chairman; also Edward Gretel and Kenneth Sheldon, committee members.

One year later on June 14, 1959, Peace Lutheran School was



NEW
CHURCH
PEWS
1956

dedicated. Two services of dedication were held, one at 10:30 a.m. the other at 4:00 p.m. Pastor Engel of Saline, Michigan, chairman of the Michigan District Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod, conducted the first service while Pastor Wacker, the Executive Secretary of African Missions, conducted the second service.

The newspaper called "The Livonian" gave this description of the school. "The newly erected building, measuring 105 by 50 feet, will serve primarily as an educational unit, consisting of three large classrooms, office, workroom, library and kitchen area. Two classrooms divided by a folding partition, may be converted into a 30 by 60 assembly room capable of accommodating over 200 persons. Being attached directly to the existing church building by a large lobby, the new addition also provides overflow seating for more than 100 persons. The architect is Karl Kraus of Lansing." A note here, the contract for the school was also given to Mr. Viau of Lola Park Church.

The original cost of the building was estimated at \$85,000. But the members of Peace got together and held the cost to only \$62,000 by finishing a large amount of the work themselves. It is also interesting to note that one year later, 1960, Peace became a self supporting church.

Pastor Westendorf continued on as the pastor until April 29, 1962. By then the school was up to six grades and was ready to graduate its third class. In April 1962, Pastor Westendorf accepted a call to a Mission Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin. On April 15 he confirmed his last Peace confirmation class and on the

29th, he gave his farewell sermon. Regretfully there are no personal comments from Pastor Westendorf. He passed away several years prior to the writing of this paper. Therefore, all the information on his ministry is taken from the church minutes of his nine years of service. Pastor Westendorf served Peace from February 15, 1953 - April 29, 1962.

After a short vacancy, Peace installed their third pastor on July 29, 1962 at 4:00 p.m. Pastor Robert Mueller was called from a dual mission situation. He had served churches in Flatrock and Monroe Michigan since June 23, 1957. He was assigned to these churches from the Seminary.

He said that he didn't know what to think when he came to Peace. Coming into the big city as a young guy, he expected a white collar church. He figured it would be a church where the people would be much involved in their businesses. But to his surprise, when he got there, he found a "very warm, enthusiastic congregation. They were friendly and they shared their friendship with one another."

Pastor Mueller was asked what Peace was like when he got there as far as how the church was progressing. He mentioned that the community was still growing by God's grace. Because of this, the people were very excited about their school. There were many young families in the congregation. He emphasized that the school was the center of their lives and it was going strong.

One thing Pastor Mueller was able to start when he got there was Bible Study. There had not been regular Bible study, because

at Westendorf's own admission, Bible Class had not been his (Westendorf's) forte. Pastor Mueller said that the people responded very well to having Bible Class.

Less than one year later, Pastor Mueller had the privilege of celebrating a decade with the congregation. On April 28, 1963, Peace Lutheran Church celebrated their "10 eventful years in Livonia." (Notes). At this time, the membership had grown to 575 souls, 324 communicants, and 209 children in Sunday School. The Christian Day School still had only six grades.

A letter of congratulations on Peace's ten years, dated April 28, 1963, was among the notes. It was from St. Paul's, Livonia. It read, "Your sister congregation, St. Paul's Lutheran church, wishes to congratulate you on the occasion of your tenth anniversary. May the same Lord, Who has blessed you with spiritual and numerical growth in the past, continue to shower His blessings in the future. Yours in Christ, (signed) St. Paul's Lutheran Church, W. Koelpin, pastor."

The congregation continued to grow under Pastor Mueller. He mentioned that back then, they were already discussing a new church building, looking ahead at the growing church. In 1964 they added the 7th grade, and 1965 they added the 8th grade. From 1966-67, the school was served by one called graduate teacher and two emergency teachers. One year later, 1967, Mr. Barthel accepted the call as 7th and 8th grade teacher and principal.

One thing Pastor Mueller did note was that he thought the building of the school before the church was a hindrance. He said

this because new people moving into the community were not attracted to the little mission church. There was nothing special about the building. He said that people would come one Sunday, and then come back the next Sunday. But then they would visit other more attractive churches, St. Paul's for instance, and invariably join there.

On April 30, 1972, Peace had a special mortgage burning service at 4:00 p.m. Pastor Zell had the sermon, and Immanuel Marion, one of the charter members of Peace, gave his remarks looking back over the years. It is proper to note that the mortgage burning cake was made by Mrs. Mina Schultz, a very faithful woman to her church and to her God.

In 1973, another male teacher, Mr. Robert Filter, was called to the school. He too is still serving to the present day. That same year it was possible to purchase two additional houses which were adjacent to the church property. These continue to be the residences of the Barthel and Filter families. Pastor Mueller said that they acquired the new properties "with an eye toward expansion of the church and school." (Side note - in 1975, Peace joined with other WELS churches to form Huron Valley Lutheran High School. This school is still going to this day, although they are experiencing great financial difficulty).

On December 31, 1973, Peace "again hosted a sad farewell. Pastor Mueller accepted a call to Salem Lutheran Church, Owosso, Michigan."

When asked to reflect on his years at Peace, two things really

stood out in his mind. First of all, he emphasized the warmth and friendship he enjoyed in his "twelve joyous years at Peace." He said that Peace is a unique church in their closeness and that they were great people to work with.

The other thing he commented on was the outstanding lay leadership of the congregation. Among many, these names stood out: Immanuel Marion, Frank Wright, the building chairman for the school, Paul Griep, Herb Trapp - a workhorse for the church, and Ron Philips.

Pastor Mueller looks back very fondly on the people at Peace. He is now the pastor at Salem Lutheran Church in Owosso, Michigan. Plus, he is the president of the Michigan District. Pastor Mueller served at Peace from July 29, 1962 - December 31, 1973.

With that, Peace Lutheran once again had to call a pastor. To their pleasure, the first call was accepted by Pastor Karl Vertz. An invite to neighboring churches read, "The members of Peace feel most fortunate in having the first Call they extended accepted etc." He came from the west side of Michigan serving two churches in Allegan and Otsego. He had been serving there since July 12, 1964. This dual parish was his first call from the Seminary.

Pastor Vertz was installed on February 3, 1974 at 4:00 p.m. His father, Pastor Kenneth Vertz had the sermon, and his brother-in-law, Pastor Robert Diener, had the Liturgy.

In August of 1976, Peace had a restoration of the church. With the help of two members, Mr. R. Thayer and Mr. K. Doletzkey, the interior of the church was completed for only \$4,900. The

curtain in the front of the church was removed and paneling with a large wooden cross was put in its place. The tile floor was covered with red carpet, and the wooden rafters were redone in a darker stain. The red carpet was donated by Mr. and Mrs. R. Kelly.

With the addition of the Kindergarten in the Fall of 1976, Peace Lutheran School has a complete K - 8th grade program with a staff of four teachers. (It is sad to note here that in these past few years, early 90's, the school has shown a marked decrease. In speaking with the current pastor, there is serious talk of closing down the school).

On February 12, 1978, Peace Lutheran celebrated its 25th anniversary. A banner, that displayed the theme of the anniversary, hung in the front of the church for the whole year:

25 Years

AT

PEACE

WITH

GOD

The celebration on Feb. 12 lasted the whole day. The normal Sunday services were held with a special service at 3:00 p.m. Three pastors officiated that day: Pastors Zell, Westendorf, Mueller, and Gary Griep, a son of the congregation who was preparing for the ministry. The attendance at the special service was 290. At the time of the service, there was a communicant membership of 539.

From 1978 to 1982, Peace continued with no major events. On November 7, 1982, Peace dedicated a new organ. It was an Allen Organ. The cost was \$14,260. The interesting part about this is that in 25 years of operating, this is the first brand new organ the church owned. The other organs had been used.

It was mentioned earlier, during Pastor Mueller's ministry at Peace, that a building project was talked about. On October 30, 1986 Peace had a meeting. These were the options available to Peace: 1. Close the school and place the students at St. Paul's 2. Consolidate with Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Westland 3. Relocate 4. Buy an existing school in the area and remodel 5. Close church and school 6. Status quo 7. Make major repairs of existing building.

Pastor Vertz reported. "It had been apparent for many years that the physical plant at Peace was deteriorating and was not meeting the needs of the congregation. A larger sanctuary was desperately needed, the church secretary labored in a room (windowless!) etc." The point was, something needed to be done. Being a member of the church for many years, the writer of this paper will agree, the church was literally falling apart.

A building committee was formed in 1986 and the congregation started the "Building Blocks" program. With the options mentioned above, many questions were asked in regard to whether or not this new church was feasible.

Two years later on October 2, 1988, an open meeting was held and the answer was, "emphatically: now is "A TIME TO BUILD"! On

October 11, 1988 the voters recommended to build a new church, to engage an architect, get the necessary finances, and with the help of God increase their giving.

The architect they chose was John Meyer. "Needless to say, plans were made, plans were changed, plans were discarded, NEW plans were made, THOSE plans were changed and on and on. But we were on our way." (Dedication Booklet).

The final plans were eventually reached. The existing church was to be torn down, the school was to be remodeled, new offices were to be built, a kindergarten room added and a fellowship hall was to be built.

Tensions were high, many hours were put into the planning. But on September 8, 1991, over 275 members and friends gathered for the ground breaking ceremony. (A note here concerning the building committee chairman. His name is Chuck Wright, the son of Frank Wright who was the building committee chairman for the school back in 1958). On September 13, 1991, the little church, built back in 1953, was torn down. "Many people also came to watch with tears in their eyes but hope in their hearts as the existing church was taken down..."

Finally, one year later, June 14, 1992, Peace Lutheran Church dedicated their new building to the glory of God. The first service was at 10:00 a.m. with Pastor Mueller having the sermon, and Pastor Vertz having the Liturgy. The second service was at 4:00 p.m. with Pastor Zell having the sermon, and Tod Vertz, a son of the congregation, studying for the ministry (the writer of this

paper).

Pastor Vertz wrote these closing remarks in the dedication booklet. "Yes, this building program has been a leap of faith and we pray that God will continue to bless our efforts as we dedicate this building to his glory."

Not even a year later, as mentioned earlier, there are now serious talks of closing the school. The writer is not at liberty to comment on the happenings at Peace to this day because they are still being dealt with.

On February 14, 1993, the letter was read that Mr. E. Barthel accepted a call to Waupaca, Wisconsin. He had served as principal since 1967.

It is the sincere prayer of this writer, that the problems facing this congregation be resolved with the guidance and help of the Lord.

This is the history of Peace. May they continue to preach the true Word of God, bringing the light of the Gospel to this world filled with sin. May God bless this congregation, Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Bibliography

1. Notes and Minutes from the church files.
2. Peace Dedication Booklet.
3. Interviews with Pastors Zell, Mueller, Vertz.
4. Dedication Video.