

“A 110 YEARS OF GRACE FOR TRINITY
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF
BAY CITY, MICHIGAN”

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran church of Bay City, MI 110 years of grace

It is truly by the ^gGrace of God that a congregation such as Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church on the South East side of Bay City, MI can endure and flourish for over a hundred years. Trinity began as a branch of the cross town church, Bethel. The members wanted a church in their part of the town because of poor travel conditions. The south end of Bay City was a German community which offered many prospects for outreach in the neighborhood. On March 1, 1886 Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church was established. Pastor Oehlert of Bethel agreed to serve the congregation through its initial stages until a full-time ^fPastor would be called. In its very first year of existence, having only twenty voting members, the congregation became affiliated with the WELS and built the church and school. ¹ This is noteworthy undertaking when we look at the length of time it often takes today for a mission congregation to build a church yet alone a school.

In January of 1887 Mr. F. Bertling was called as the teacher of the school. In July of the same year Pastor G. Bergemann was installed as the first full time Pastor at Trinity. Over the next 52 years Trinity was served by Pastor Bergemann and six other pastors: Sauer(1892-1895), Hoffman (1895-1896), Haase (1897-1906), Lederer (1907-1914), Eggert (1914-1918), Zink (1918-1938). ²

In 1938 Pastor Emil Kasischke was called to serve as Pastor at Trinity. He served there for the next thirty eight years. Under this pastor Trinity had many changes. There were a number of building projects undertaken under the leadership of Pastor Kasischke. 1948 saw the completion of the present day school building on Broadway but the work was not yet done. 1960 marked the dedication of the new parsonage which is still in use today on the corner of

Jennison and 33rd. The following year construction began on the new church building across the street from the parsonage. On November 11, 1962 the new building was dedicated.

The new structure replaces an original church on Broadway, built in 1886 by charter members of the congregation. Sunday school classrooms and meeting rooms, in addition to worship space, are housed in the L-shaped building, which is located on property formerly owned by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad.³

The cost for the construction of this facility was \$344,189.59. The retirement of this debt was celebrated on March 19, 1972.⁴ Under the leadership of the beloved Pastor Kasischke Trinity saw God prosper the congregation both in facilities and in souls as the congregation more than doubled in size. In June of 1976 Pastor Kasischke retired. Throughout his service at Trinity the work of the Holy Spirit was evident as it was throughout the service of all of its Pastors.

The preceding serves as a brief history of Trinity through its first 90 years of ministry. The majority of this paper has been dedicated to the period of service from 1976- 1995. The following will explore the last twenty years with more detail. The twenty years between 1976-1995 show us how God uses difficulties and challenges to lead his children into a closer relationship with him. Frequently in these twenty years God uses events to prepare the hearts of the members of Trinity for more study of his Word. A look at these twenty years brings to mind the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. One plants, one waters, but God makes it grow. As I progress through the next twenty years watch to see how God prepares the soil for seed, sows it, and makes it grow despite the attacks of the Devil. For the celebration of the 100th anniversary the theme "Trinity's Century of Grace" was chosen. How fitting this theme is for the congregation which God continues to bless immeasurably with his grace.

Upon the retirement of Pastor Kasischke, Pastor John Kurth of Bethel served as the vacancy Pastor at Trinity. In order to allow him time to preach at both Bethel and Trinity on Sunday mornings, the worship service times were changed to 8:00AM and 11:00 AM. The vacancy was filled quickly as Pastor Karl Plocher was ^{led} by the Holy Spirit to accept the call as the shepherd of Trinity. The installation service for the new Pastor was held on July 18, 1976. Pastor Plocher had previously served congregations in Kansas City, MO and Swartz Creek, MI.

Pastor Plocher inherited a congregation of 958 souls and 722 communicants in 1976 with an average Sunday worship attendance of 366. The average number of times that a communicant knelt at the Lord's altar in 1976 was 3.7 times a year.⁵ In regard to the Lord's Supper Pastor continued in the tradition of the congregation of announcing to the Pastor in person on the Friday before receiving the sacrament. Perhaps this custom contributed to the low average for receiving the sacrament and may be one of the reasons it was gradually phased out at Trinity and replaced by a sign up sheet in the narthex.

The Plocher family of Pastor, ^{his} wife Dorothy, and boys Andrew, Matthew, Michael, Marc, and Jonathan (youngest son, Joel made his appearance later) were not the only new faces at Trinity in 1976. In May, Miss Nancy Polzin was assigned from the graduating class at Doctor Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota to Trinity. Miss Polzin was called to teach grades 4 and 5 as well as part of the 6 grade courses. Miss Polzin was installed on August 15. She joined a faculty of Annetta Koeppen (K-1), Carol Fein (2-3), and Wayne Keller (6-8 and principle) teaching an enrollment of 87 students.

In the Fall of 1976 Trinity said goodbye to a few traditions in the congregation. In

October the church council voted to dispose of the old German hymnals which had been stored in a church workroom since the German was discontinued in 1959. The hymnals were offered to the members as mementos. In November the Voter's decided to change the times of the worship service from 8AM and 10AM to 8:30 AM with a 9:45 Sunday school class and a 10:45 AM service. The services times have remained the same since then. The voter's also decided to discontinue the tradition of printing the annual amounts of offerings per member in the annual report.

Pastor Plocher began his ministry at Trinity with a focus on education of children and adults in the Word of God. In September of 1976 Pastor Plocher held a special evening catechism class for all of his catechism students. The reason that this class was special was that Pastor requested that all the parents of these children attend this class with their children. Pastor Plocher then taught a lesson which modeled his classroom procedure for the next year. This allowed the parents to observe how Pastor was going to teach their children. It also alerted them to the expectations and the workload the children would have. This lesson also taught the parents how they would be able to assist their children in their learning of the catechism. Pastor Plocher hoped that in this way the parents would take an active role in the education of their children and not cast the responsibility solely upon the church. With pastor's approach the parents and the congregation would work together to teach the children the Word of God⁶

Pastor Plocher continued to concentrate upon education as 1977 began. He approached the church council and voters for the approval to teach a Bible class for adults. The suggestion was given to the church council for study and recommendation at the next voter's meeting. The

voters agreed to hold a Bible class on a trial basis on Wednesday evenings. Pastor Plocher presented the Bible class in a series of mini courses which studied topics for a number of weeks and then took a couple of weeks off before the next course would start. These Bible classes had an attendance of 16-32 people.

As the 1976-77 school year came to a close Trinity demonstrated their appreciation for the dedicated service of Mrs. Koeppen. Mrs Koeppen retired from teaching after 20 years at Trinity. Special recognition of her service was made in the graduation service of 1977. Mrs. Koeppen was a teacher who took great joy in teaching her students. This joy was reflected by the love that her students had for her. Being a student in her class, for me, was indeed a privilege. Upon her retirement the congregation called Miss Susan Jaehnke from the graduating class of DMLC to replace Mrs. Koeppen in the K-1 classroom.

Trinity also took the opportunity to honor Mr. Wayne Keller on April 24. The congregation planned a surprise celebration for Mr. Keller in observance of his 10 years of teaching at Trinity. The surprise celebration was a desert potluck which was enjoyed by all.

1978 brought a number of things to pass for the school which were a cause for rejoicing. The Holy Spirit ^{led} Mrs. Janet Batkoski to accept the call to teach grades 2-3. Mrs. Batkoski was called because Mrs. Fein resigned from her call. The rejoicing in our new teacher was followed by rejoicing over the number of children in the school to start the 1978-79 school year. There were 105 students enrolled which necessitated the borrowing of desks from some of the sister schools in the area. September 16 marked the 30 year anniversary of the present school building and the 92nd year of the school at Trinity. The decision was also made to combine the

Christmas service of the grade school with the service of the Sunday School since the same children participated in both. This allowed the children to focus on learning one Christmas service instead of two since most of the Sunday school ^{children} kids attended the grade school.

Trinity continued the renewal which was begun under Pastor Kasischke, the new buildings and parsonage, by rewriting the constitution and bylaws of the congregation under Pastor Plocher. One very noticeable change in the congregation as a result of the new constitution was that the Deacons were replaced by a board of elders.⁷ The constitution defined and outlined the function of this board. The board of elders was to assist the pastor in the spiritual nurturing of the congregation. The board went right to work in assessing the spiritual life of the congregation. Their assessment raised concerns regarding the frequency of communion attendance, offerings, fellowship within the congregation, and the over all work of the congregation.

The concern of the elders prompted the elders to visit every family unit in the congregation. Nine men would visit the approximately 400 families in the congregation between January 16 and February 25 of 1979. In order to accomplish this task the elders chose to implement a plan known as "cottage visits". The cottage visits were intended to bring 3-5 families into one house for a meeting with and elder. It was reported in the quarterly report for April 1979 that only 35% of the families participated in the "cottage visits" program.⁸ There was no follow up program for the remaining 65%. In the words of elder Frank Seafert "These cottage visits were very beneficial. It is a shame that more people did not make time for them". When asked why the elders did not attempt a program of some kind for the remaining 65% of the families Mr. Seafert said that "Pastor's health may have been what kept such a follow up from

occurring".⁹

The elders did not have a plan to follow up on the cottage visits but in 1980 they began the year by implementing a program for dealing with delinquent members. The voters approved the elders' plan to use a program in which letters were sent to each delinquent. The letter would then be followed by a personal visit from an elder or elders. The elders reported to the quarterly voter's meeting in April that 127 letters were mailed out and 43 positive responses were received. The elders also presented the concept of Trinity entering into the vicar program in 1980. This move was made to assist the pastor with his workload. The vicar would especially help the pastor in the areas of evangelism, young peoples (which had died out ^{due} to lack of interest), and to get the Bible classes restarted. The recommendation for a vicar passed the voter's assembly unanimously. James Proeber was assigned to Trinity for the 1980-81 school year as a vicar. The Spring of 1980 brought Mr. Tod Bartholomew to Trinity as a student teacher under Mr. Keller. Mr. Bartholomew spent eight weeks at Trinity as he fulfilled his professional training requirement for DMLC.

In April of 1980 Pastor Plocher reported that he was having some eyesight problems which were hindering his reading and driving. This condition progressed throughout the summer months until he began to have problems with his legs, arm and speech. In November pastor reported that he had been diagnosed as having Multiple Sclerosis. This disease attacks the nerves in the body; he also said that presently there is no cure for it. He reported that he is undergoing ^{W/S} treatment in hope that the disease will go into remission.

1981 marked the fifth year of ministry at trinity for Pastor Plocher. After five years the

congregation was at 871 souls, 695 communicant, with the average Sunday attendance at 254 and the average visit to the Lord's Table was 4.2 per communicant.¹⁰ These numbers reflect the work of the elders working with the delinquent members as well as Pastor Plocher's stress on faithful use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. 1981 brought a new face and two new names to the staff at Trinity. In May Richard Krause was assigned as the vicar for the 1981-82 school year. The other new name that came to the staff was Mrs. Ned Kleinke. The face was familiar but the name new. On August first Miss Polzin married Mr. Ned Kleinke a member of Trinity. I remember being in her class when she said that we would have a new teacher the next year. She said the teacher will look a lot like me but her name will be different. That threw us all for a moment until we realized she was not leaving, she was simply getting married.

The annual report in 1982 brought the welcomed news that the extensive cortisone treatments that have been given to Pastor Plocher seem^{e d} to have put the MS into remission. Pastor reminded the congregation however, that it could reoccur at any time. He also asked the congregation to continue praying for him and his family.

The spring and summer of 1982 brought a lot of new faces to Trinity especially to the school. Mr Keller accepted a call to Menominee Falls, WI and Mrs Kleinke and Miss Jaehnke resigned from their calls. This left the school with one teacher, Mrs Batkoski. Vicar Krause also returned to the Seminary and was replaced by David Huebner. The congregation was faced with the challenge of restaffing its school. Trinity went to the assignment committee at DMLC for a 7-8 grade teacher and principal and for the 5-6 grades teacher. The call to teach K-1 was extended to and accepted by a member of Trinity, Mrs. Mary Herbst, who was currently serving

as the teacher's aid. Mrs. Plocher was called to the position of teacher's aid. The assignment committee filled both of the calls submitted. Randy Cochran received the call to teach 7-8 grades, principal, head organist, and choir. Brian Abraham received the call to teach 5-6 grade and coaching.

The Lord gave the congregation a challenge when he replaced most of the called workers in 1982. The congregation responded and was blessed with an extremely talented faculty. God used a situation which could have been very stressful and discouraging to bestow even more blessings upon his church. The challenges from the Lord did not end with the replacement of the school faculty. God had an even bigger challenge ahead for his people and their shepherd Pastor Plocher.

In November and December Pastor Plocher's battle with Multiple Sclerosis became even tougher as it flared up again. This flare up left him unable to write or walk restricting him to a wheelchair for mobility. Yet Pastor Plocher continued to encourage the congregation and urged them to continue praying for him. He was very happy that his mind was still intact which allowed him to work with Vicar Huebner in carrying out the work of the congregation. Pastor's health continued to decline throughout the winter and the spring of 1983. This placed the workload of the congregation upon the shoulders of Vicar Huebner. He was a man of great talent and with the help of God was able to serve the congregation admirably during Pastor Plocher's absence.

In May of 1983 the congregation was informed that they had received a new vicar for the 1983-84 school year, Vicar Kevin Hastings. Shortly after, the voter's assembly accepted the resignation of Pastor Plocher on June 12, 1983 for health reasons.¹¹ The voters then called Pastor

Steven Korth from Mount Olive Lutheran Church Bay City to serve the vacancy. The congregation expressed their love and thankfulness for the years of service Pastor Plocher had given Trinity by taking a collection to help the Plocher's relocate and to help with Medical costs. Together with sister congregations in the area and AAL, Trinity raised \$20,000.00 for the Plochers.

Still the Lord had another challenge in store for the members of Trinity in 1983. In November one of the grade school children was killed in a bicycle/ car accident. It seemed that the Lord was bringing one challenge after another into this congregation. In November, Pastor Ronald Muetzel was installed as Pastor of Trinity, November 20th. Pastor Muetzel said he had only one goal for his first year at Trinity when he arrived; that goal was to visit every member of the congregation. "My visits had two purposes. One was to get to know the people on a personal level. The other was to impress on them the importance of being in God's Word."¹²

Taking a look back from today, it is clear that the Holy Spirit used the challenges cited earlier to till the soil as He prepared the hearts of the people of Trinity for further growth in the Word. The visits of Pastor Muetzel planted the seed, encouraging them to be in the Word during his in home visits and from the pulpit. The Holy Spirit took that seed and nurtured it so that so many of the people were asking Pastor Muetzel when his Bible class would start that he started to hold class much sooner than he had anticipated. Based on the fact that Bible class was relatively a new thing at Trinity and attendance at Pastor Plocher's class was very poor Pastor Muetzel thought it would take a little longer to get the Bible class off the ground. It is comforting to know that the Holy Spirit's time table often is different than ours. He had prepared

the hearts so that they were eager to learn. The congregation was indeed eager to study God's Word. The first Bible class was held on January 8th, 1984 between the worship services. It was attended by 100 people.¹³ The attendance held throughout this course and the following courses.

In his first annual report to the congregation Pastor Muetzel wrote

Bible study- By this time most people know that Bible Study receives a major emphasis in my ministry. By the end of 1994 I expect to be offering Bible study opportunities on Sunday morning, Tuesday morning and evening, and Wednesday morning and evening.¹⁴

The Tuesday class which Pastor Muetzel started in February of 1984 was entitled "Our Wonderful God". One goal of Pastor Muetzel was to have every member in the congregation participate in this course. It was a 13 week course which taught the key teachings of the Bible. Pastor Muetzel continued to offer this class back to back for the first few years he served Trinity.

On February 5, 1984 the Lord brought an answer to the prayers of the Plocher family and the members of Trinity. It was on that day that the Lord delivered Pastor Plocher from his affliction of MS by taking him to Heaven. The funeral was conducted at Trinity on February 8th. As the congregation joined in the grief over the loss they also rejoiced in the sure fact that Pastor Plocher was taken to the side of his Savior. The Lord through his wisdom taught the congregation that his church will endure though the hardships of this life for He is stronger than they.

The Church indeed did endure and in June began planning the celebration of the 100 years of ministry which God had granted Trinity. In preparation for the anniversary celebration the congregation took the school and its property off the market. It had been put up for sale in favor

of building an addition to the Sunday school rooms at the church. In July it was decided that remodeling and repairs would be done to the school and it would be retained.

The Lord blessed Trinity in 1984 by only bringing one new face onto the staff. Rodney Warnecke was assigned as the new vicar for the 1984-85 school year. All the teachers remained in place until 1989. The only changes that took place in between were the coming and going of vicars. After a period of turmoil the Lord granted stability with an extremely talented faculty and Pastor. This allowed the congregation to focus its attention upon the arrangements for the celebration of the 100 year anniversary in 1986.

1985 at Trinity could be summed up in one word "PREPARATIONS". The majority of the congregation's time, energy and talent was used to prepare for the anniversary year. The projects which were undertaken in this preparation are as follows:

- 1) Decision was made and followed through that Sunday school rooms 1 and 2 would be converted into offices for the pastor and the vicar.
- 2) Sunday school room 5 was converted into a nursery.
- 3) The pews in the sanctuary were padded.
- 4) The ^hcancel area was renovated. The planters extending from the pulpit and lectern to the walls were removed^d to make the above free standing. This allowed for better traffic flow for communion. Stained ^glass in wood frames were installed on the front wall of the church on both sides of the altar. Steps were continued across the chancel area to the walls and hand railings for communion installed along the steps. The work was headed by Mr. Harold Vandriessche.¹⁵
- 5) The church carpet was replaced.
- 6) The outside grounds were relandscaped by Bay Landscaping.
- 7) A pictorial directory of the congregation was assembled and published.
- 8) A Trinity church cookbook was assembled and published.

- 9) Plans were made for the special services throughout the coming year and the dinners.
- 10) Guest Speakers were invited for each service.

At the same time that all of this activity was proceeding the board of elders and the Pastor was conducting a stewardship program called "Putting God's House in order". This was a program which addressed the stewardship of time, treasure and talent. Each session consisted of a "half-hour pastoral bible study and a half-hour breakout with trained lay leaders who helped the members do specific stewardship planning in the three areas".¹⁶ This program brought a \$6,000.00 deficit in the general fund down to \$500.00 by August for the year. This was a start toward repaying the debt the congregation was in.

The board of elders devised a division of responsibility for the board. This made an elder responsible for a specific portion of the ministry at Trinity. The division of responsibilities is as follows:¹⁷

- 1) The Chairman - supervision and pastoral contact
- 2) Worship elder - services, ushers, altar committee, greeters
- 3) Missions elder - mission festival, synod publicity, *Northwestern Lutheran*
- 4) Outreach elder - evangelism, prospect list, visitor follow up, VBS, youth ministry
- 5) Stewardship elder - education, abilities, budget
- 6) Comfort elder - hospital visitation, shut ins, tape services, funerals
- 7) Fellowship elder - new member assimilation, organization, picnic, potlucks, sponsor program
- 8) Spiritual life elders (2) - Bible study, spiritual growth, discipline, member zones

This division of responsibilities lent itself to the forming of committees under each elder to assist

him in carrying out the ^{of}are of ministry he was responsible for. These committees allow a lot of the work to be done outside of the elders meetings. In this way when the elders meet many of the issues have been put through a committee which takes care of the preliminary work. This allows the elder meetings to keep moving and shortens them considerably. More work gets done and time is used more wisely through this division of elder responsibility and oversight. "Let everything be done in a fitting and orderly way"²

The close of 1985 brought anticipation and excitement to the members of Trinity. The work, which they had done throughout the year in preparation for the anniversary year, they would soon be able to enjoy as the program unfolded. According to the annual report presented in February of 1986 Trinity had 798 souls, 638 communicants. The average Sunday worship attendance was 356 and the average number of times a communicant partook of the sacrament was 5.8. These were the statistics that Trinity carried into the anniversary year celebration.

The congregation put a great deal of effort and planning into the anniversary celebration. Many changes were made in the appearance of the building as stated above. A program was incorporated for the entire year. This program was the work of the anniversary committee. This committee was assembled to organize the efforts and plans for the entire year. The anniversary committee consisted of Jim and Janet Batkoski, Joe and Garnet Bogner, Randy and Kim Cochran, Smokey and Hazel Ebel, John and Dolores Guettler, Nancy Mehnert, Pastor and Lois Muetzel, Jack and Verna Smith, Dick and Darlene Spannagel.¹⁸ This anniversary committee did a lot of work to make the necessary arrangements for the program they planned. The program for the year of celebration began on March 2, 1986 and closed on January 25, 1987.¹⁹

March 2, 1986 began the celebration with Pastor Kasischke as the guest preacher. This Sunday marked the 100 anniversary of the organization of Trinity on March 1, 1886. The service was followed by a meal and program at the Prestolite hall.

April 27, 1986 was designated as the Sunday to honor all the confirmands of Trinity over the years. Pastor James Berger, a son of the congregation, was the guest preacher.

June 15, 1986 was designated to honor all the former pastors and teachers who served the congregation over the 100 years as well as all the called workers which were sons and daughters of the congregation. Pastor Richard Schleicher was the guest preacher.

September 14, 1986 was set aside to honor and recognize all of the organization within the congregation. Pastor Fred Berger was the guest preacher.

October 26, 1986 Trinity celebrated its 100 years of affiliation to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Synod President, Pastor Carl Mischke, served as the guest preacher.

November 23, 1986 Trinity celebrated its affiliation with the Michigan District. District President Robert Mueller was the guest preacher.

January 25, 1987 marked the end of the anniversary celebration. This day marked the 100 years of a Lutheran Elementary School at Trinity. President Lloyd Huebner of DMLC, the synod's teacher training college, was the guest preacher.

Even though the year was full of celebration the work of Trinity continued in 1986. Vicar Kevin Lisk was assigned to Trinity for the 1986-87 school year. Vicar Lisk started at Trinity in July since in 1985 no vicar had been assigned to Trinity because of a shortage of candidates for the number of requests. In August the decision was made to engage an architect in order to

undertake the building of a gymnasium addition to the school building. This would give Trinity an estimate of the expense which would be placed upon the congregation. The actual building was held back until more money could be accumulated for the project. In August the congregation also decided to order the *Sampler* which was the hymnal committee's way of field testing new hymns and orders of service.

In September of 1986 a decision was made which made a large impact upon Trinity. This decision would impact the budget which was finally in the black. This decision the Lord would use as another way of preparing the hearts of his people for service in his kingdom. The decision was made to extend a call for a second^f Pastor in July of 1987. This pastor would be called as an Outreach Pastor. "We began the calling process with the determination to get a pastor from the field who made a deliberate decision to come and concentrate on outreach work" said Pastor Muetzel.²⁰ Pastor Muetzel had placed emphasis on evangelism awareness in his Bible classes encouraging members to seek evangelism opportunities. Soon the pastor and congregation recognized the tremendous potential which existed around Trinity for evangelism. The workload of Pastor Muetzel did not leave much time on the calendar for heading up an evangelism program. The pastor and the board of elders decided that the only way outreach could get done properly was to call an outreach pastor. The congregation approved the recommendation.

In the summer of 1987 the calling process began. This process would try the current pastor and the congregation as call after call were being returned. As the process continued each return would be more disheartening. Prayer after prayer was offered. Finally after 17 calls were issued the Lord ^{led} lead Pastor Mark Schulz to accept the call as the outreach pastor at Trinity in

April of 1989. The news of his acceptance filled hearts with joy. The wait had been difficult, especially upon ^{For} Pastor Muetzel, but at last God had answered the prayers of Pastor Muetzel and the congregation. When asked about the frustration of waiting through 17 calls to receive word that the last call had been accepted, Pastor Muetzel commented, "It soon became apparent that the wait was worthwhile. Pastor Schulz had the experience and drive to hit the ground running. We waited for him to come; once he came the congregation did not have to wait any longer to develop an aggressive outreach program".²¹

While the calling process was continuing the congregation decided to move forward on the gymnasium addition to the school. In October of 1988 the construction began. The dedication of the new addition was held in September of 1989. Finally Trinity had their own gym. Previously the basketball teams had practiced and played home games at the YWCA on the west side of town. The frustration of transporting players back and forth across town or not having the gym available when requested now came to an end. The gymnasium also gave the children a place to play on the days when the weather dictated they would stay inside for recess.

1989 opened with Trinity having 805 souls, 645 communicants with the average Sunday attendance at 319 and the communion reception at an average of 8.5.²² 1989 was another year of change for Trinity. On April 25 Mrs Janet Batkoski tendered her resignation from her call to teach 3-4 grades. Her husband Jim received a supervisor position with State Farm Insurance in the Detroit area which necessitated the resignation. May 14th was the day that was long awaited. On that day the outreach pastor, Pastor Mark Schulz was installed at Trinity. Pastor Schulz and his family were not the only new faces at Trinity in 1989, Miss Rachel Henning was assigned from

DMLC to assume the teaching of third and fourth grade. Part of her call responsibilities was to work with the new handbell choirs which were forming at Trinity since the bells were purchased at the end of 1988.

Earlier Pastor Mueztel said that Pastor Schulz hit the ground running and indeed he did. By July he had developed a visitation program. Members of this program would visit those people who had visited church on Sunday. These visits were to be made within 36 hours of the service. Each visit was 10-15 minutes long. The visitors expressed the joy of the congregation that this person had joined them to worship God on Sunday and left a tract as they left. Pastor Schulz also stated that he would like to build an evangelism team in the congregation of 150-200 people serving in different roles. Pastor Schulz started an 8 week training course in September to train members for witnessing to the unchurched.

In November of 1989 the congregation implemented a Monday night worship service. This service was added to increase the number of opportunities the members of the congregation had to worship God. The hope was that those who were unable to attend church on Sunday would attend on Monday evening. The attendance at the evening service indicated that the decision had been wise as many took the opportunity to worship their Savior.

The hard work of Pastor Schulz began to show itself clearly in 1990. At the time of the annual report pastor reported that he has^d a trained witness team of 3. He reported that packets of information about Trinity and the Lutheran church had been prepared for people who were visiting one of the services. The information was placed into a folder and the congregation was taught to greet people they saw with this folder. As new members came into the congregation the

concern was raised of assimilation and further study of the Word of God. To encourage the study of the Word cluster groups were formed throughout the congregation. Each cluster consisted of one trained lay leader and 10-15 families. The purpose of these groups was to encourage the use of the Word but also to help new members meet people.²³ To help in the assimilation the outreach committee organized a new member dinner. This dinner was to be held every six months.

At the beginning of the year the witness team consisted of three. By April five more people were taking the training course. This course was taught by Pastor Schulz and two members of the witness team. At this point the prospect list stood at 200, up 160 since pastor was installed. The Lord was truly giving this congregation a field in which to work right in their own backyard. By August the witness team had five lay members and the pastor. It had doubled in 6 months time. Not only was the Lord providing a field but He also provided the workers for that field.

1991 began with much reason for rejoicing. The annual report stated that 39 adults were confirmed in 1990. That is the largest number of adult confirmations at Trinity in its history since records were kept.²⁴ Not only were the confirmations up but so was the attendance, 393 people worship on average each week and the average number of times a communicant went to the Lord's table was up to 8.9. The witness team had grown again by April to 9 trained members making calls regularly. Another reason for rejoicing was that the Lord granted Trinity another 3-4 grade teacher, the third in as many years. Miss Robin Mundstock accepted the call to replace Miss Renee Heckendorf who resigned because she was getting married. Trinity also saw Mrs.

Nancy Kleinke return to the faculty as the Kindergarten teacher in 1991. This position was necessitated by the large number of students starting Kindergarten. The additions of these two teachers rounded out the faculty which is still intact as this paper is written.

God was truly blessing the efforts of his workers as the soaring attendance for 1992 demonstrated. An average of 448 people attended worship services weekly which was 52% of the congregation. The witness team had grown to 12 with 243 prospects. These numbers show the work of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men. The words spoken by the prophet Isaiah "My word will not return unto me empty" were evident. The Holy Spirit opened a new field for outreach among the Hispanic peoples in the area. Pastor Schulz and Professor Larry Retberg from Michigan Lutheran Seminary led Bible studies in the homes of Hispanics.

God opened yet another field for Trinity in 1993 when Pastor Schulz was named as the official jail chaplain at the Bay County Jail. Pastor Schulz and Pastor Schweppe from St. John's Bay City worked together at the jail. A service was held on Sunday afternoons and was attended by the maximum number of inmates that the guards would allow to attend. This too was a ripe field. ²⁵

As new fields were opening to outreach a new face was in the pulpit on Sunday mornings during the summer of 1993. Pastor David Schwartz the dean of students at MLS served during the summer in place of Pastor Muetzel who had been given a sabbatical to produce material for the synod's Board for Parish Services. The summer months also brought the product of the synod's hymnal committee to the pews of Trinity. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal went into the pews in August. It was introduced over the next few months and was favorably ^{received} accepted.

A brand new field opened to Trinity in 1994. The field of outreach was to the economically disadvantaged. In his annual report to the congregation Pastor Muetzel explained the new field of ministry.

I would mention a program for outreach to the economically disadvantaged that our Board of Elders has developed and discussed during 1993. A representative of the Synod's Home Mission Board approached us to determine our congregation's interest in such a program. The Mission Board has now approved a pilot program for our congregation. As it is planned, a full-time worker will be called to serve in the work of outreach to the economically disadvantaged. Salary and other costs will be born by the Synod during the first year of the program. Our congregation will gradually pick up the costs in successive years.²⁶

Calling for the full time worker began on September 18, 1994. In March of 1995 Mr. Duane Anderson accepts^{ed} the call to head the program of outreach to the economically disadvantaged. Duane had been working as an architect designing mission chapels for the Synod. He would now work to build the church in a different manner. Duane was installed on April 23, 1995. The service brought Synod President Karl Gurgel and other synod officials to Trinity for the official kick off of this new pilot program. Duane decided to call the program "Project Share".

1995 was a year of new things at Trinity. A new outreach program was started. Holy Communion was now offered in every service. A new organ was purchased to lead the congregation in the worship service. The organ was dedicated on April 30. Perhaps the most ambitious undertaking at Trinity in 1995 was the Living Christmas Card. The Living Christmas Card was initiated by Randy Cochran. This project incorporated the time and talents of many members. It consisted of an reenactment of the Christmas story using real people

dressed in appropriate costumes. Props were constructed to enhance the appearance of the presentation. A cast was chosen and roles were filled to act out the Christmas story on the grounds around the church building. The Living Christmas Card was advertised around the city through the newspaper and the local TV stations. The set was assembled so that people could drive through the church grounds and view the Scriptural message being acted out. "There was practically no pastoral involvement. We estimate as many as 10,000 people ^{drove} driving past our property to view a truly scriptural message. The contact with these people was very positive; the value is impossible to calculate."²⁷ The Living Christmas Card demonstrates the use of imagination in carrying out the work of God's kingdom. This project enlisted people of all talents giving them an opportunity to serve their Lord in an innovative way making use of their God-given talents. The Living Christmas Card was a beautiful way to close out another year of service in the kingdom of God.

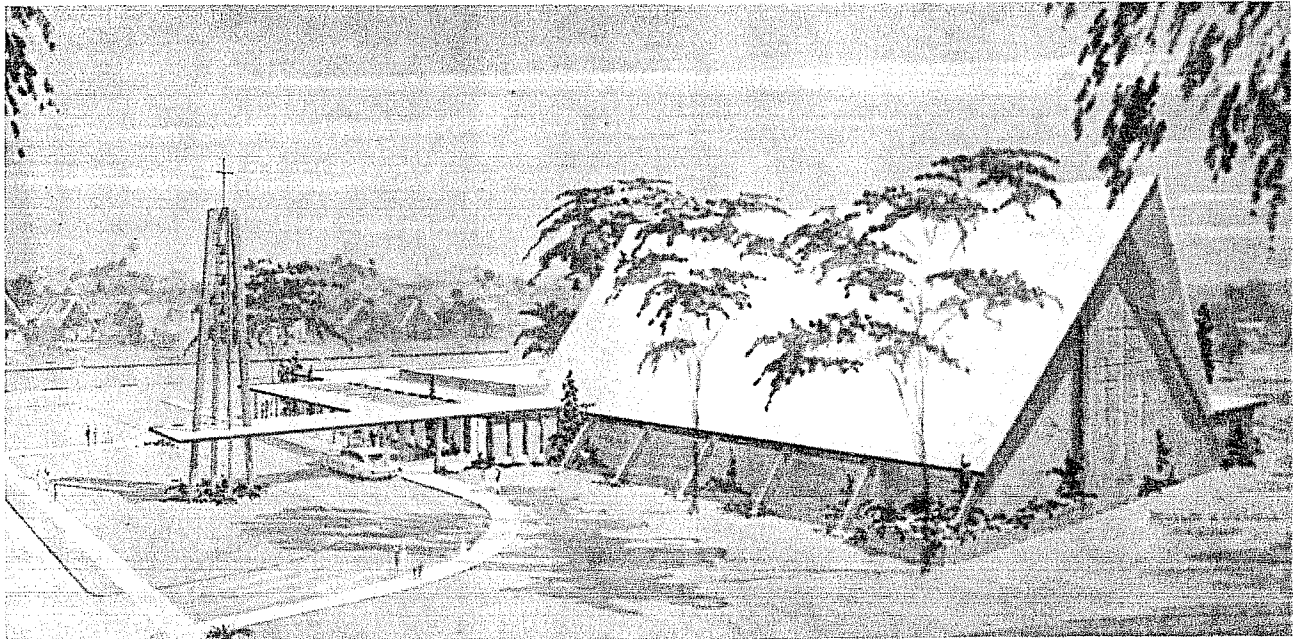
When Pastor Schulz started his ministry at Trinity he stated that he had job descriptions for about 150 different roles in the evangelism program. He also stated that he would like to have a 150 -200 member evangelism team. In this his seventh year at Trinity I asked him if he had reached those numbers yet. He told me that he has 141 people involved in his evangelism program plus another 150 involved in the Living Christmas Card which gives a total of 291 people involved in the outreach effort at Trinity each year. The Outreach program can be broken down into the following areas:²⁸

- 1) Assimilation committee
- 2) The Sunday Visitation Committee

- 3) Witness team
- 4) Greeters
- 5) Witness team secretary
- 6) Mission committee
- 7) Festival of Friendship Task Force
- 8) Vacation Bible school
- 9) Witness Training Class- taught to 7-8 classes for one semester
- 10) Witness Training class for Adults
- 11) Living Christmas Card

The Holy Spirit certainly is working with and through the members of Trinity as they strive to carry out the Great Commission to take the Word of God to those who do not know it. God has blessed Trinity Lutheran Church of Bay City throughout its 100 plus years of existence. Often in the history of Trinity we see the Lord using events to prepare the hearts of his people for more in depth study of his word. He also uses events to prepare hearts so that they go forth with the Gospel into a world who does not know its Savior. "A Century of Grace" it can not be stated any other way. May the Lord continue to shower his grace upon Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bay City, Michigan.

DEDICATION



TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

1010 Thirty-third Street

Bay City, Michigan

Rev. Emil E. Kosischke, Pastor
1015 Thirty-third Street

Twenty-first Sunday a. Trinity
November 11, 1962

ENDNOTES

- 1 Kleinke, Nancy. Page 1
- 2 *ibid* page Pages 1 and 2
- 3 *The Bay City Times* November 12, 1962.
- 4 Debt retirement service folder
- 5 "Messenger" February 1977
- 6 *ibid*. September 1976
- 7 *ibid*. February, 1978
- 8 *ibid*. May 1979 (Quarterly report of Elders)
- 9 Interview with Frank Seafert an elder at Trinity.
- 10 "Messenger" February of 1981(Annual report)
- 11 *ibid*. July of 1983
- 12 E-Mail with Pastor Muetzel.
- 13 "Messenger" February of 1984 (annual report)
- 14 *ibid*.
- 15 "Messenger" May of 1985
- 16 Email with Pastor Muetzel
- 17 "Messenger" October of 1985
- 18 "Messenger" February of 1987
- 19 *The Bay City Times* March 1, 1986
- 20 E-mail with Pastor Muetzel
- 21 *ibid*.
- 22 "Messenger" February of 1989 (annual report)

23 ibid. April of 1990

24 ibid. February of 1991 (annual report)

25 ibid. November of 1993

26 ibid. January of 1994 (Administrative Pastor's report)

27 E-mail with Pastor Muetzel

28 E-mail with Pastor Schulz

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