History of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Congregation

The following is taken from the "Brief History of the Congregation" prepared for the celebration of the congregation's 50th Anniversary on November 16, 1986.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church was started in December, 1936, with a meeting in the home of Charles and Hilda Purcell, 2411 Randolph Avenue, Del Ray. The first services were held at Town Hall, with Rev. Albert Harkins serving as the first Pastor. A Sunday School was begun and a Ladies' Guild formed. Services were moved to the old Palm Theatre on Mt. Vernon Avenue, where on Saturday evenings the members gathered after the last film showing to clean up the popcorn and bottles and transform the hall for church services. The first church council members were Arthur Bosserman, Marvin Bosserman, George Killiam, Jr., Charles Purcell and Eugene Recker. At that time the church was called Advent Lutheran Church. With the help of Joanna Barry and her husband, the lot at Braddock Road and Luray Avenue was purchased on June 8, 1938, for the sum of $2,700. That money was raised by the Ladies' Guild holding church suppers.

In May 1940, Rev. Hilbert J. Wuebbens was installed as Pastor and shortly thereafter the congregation moved across the street into a renovated bank building at Mt. Vernon and Oxford Avenues. Music was provided first by a piano and later by a pump organ. A parsonage was located at 115 E. Monroe Street.

In February, 1941, Rev. Wuebbens resigned to go into the Chaplaincy service and Rev. Spoehr began his duties as Pastor in April of that year. The parsonage was relocated to 103 E. Luray Avenue. The first class was confirmed in 1942.

Pastor A. E. Gysan was installed in 1943, and in November of that year the name of the church was changed to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. In December, 1943, a loan in the amount of $25,000 was granted by the Mission Board of the American Lutheran Church to build a church on the existing debt-free lot. Ground was broken March 12, 1944. The bulletin for the Groundbreaking Ceremony (held on a very inclement day) noted that the total cost of the building, including furnishings, was approximately $29,000. The ALC loan for $25,000 carried 1% interest, payable semi-annually.

Two plans were offered to defray the loan: (1) New Church Contribution, and (2) Material purchase plan as follows:

Windows (16) at $40.00 each
Pews at $44.00 each
Altar $100.00
Pulpit $150.00
Lectern $125.00
Bricks at $22.50 per 1,000 (44,000 needed)

The cornerstone was laid May 21, 1944, and dedication of the building was held September 10, 1944. At that time the building consisted of the sanctuary, lounge area, two basement Sunday School rooms, the kitchen and furnace room.

During this time a Luther League was formed and the Daughters of Good Shepherd (known as DOGS), the latter "taking interest in teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir and conducting a
nursery during church services". A Senior Choir under the direction of Mrs. Windsor (Clova) Demains, and Jr. Choir were started, as well as Vacation Bible School.

In November, 1944, the present 1931 Moeller pipe organ was bought used from someone's residence and installed at a cost of $3,500.00. Also that month the first wedding of Jack Hansen, USMC, and Barbara M. Fimrite, was held, and evening services established.

In 1946 Doris Green (later Mrs. William Brideson) began her work as Parish Worker. A Day School was started in September, 1947 with Doris as the teacher. Mrs. Helen Speetzen joined the staff in 1948 as the second grade teacher. A school bus was purchased and an operator hired. On Sunday morning the bus was driven by the parishioners to bring children to Sunday School. Mr. Leonard joined the teaching staff of the Day School in 1949.

On the third anniversary of the church building dedication in 1947, the bank indebtedness of $6,000 was paid. The pews were installed at a cost of $2,582.56, and used for the first time October 31, 1948.

In April, 1950, the present parsonage at 303 W. Glendale Avenue was purchased at a cost of $25,000. Pastor H. J. Wuebbens returned to the pastorate on December 9, 1951. The Rev. J. O. Ensrud, retired Army Chaplain, served as Assistant Pastor during these years.

On March 7, 1954, the mortgage burning ceremony was held. The mortgage was held by David Albright (Treasurer of the church in 1944) and William Brideson (Acting Treasurer in 1954). Mr. E. W. Recker, a member of both Church Councils, held the candle.

At that same time the church was reaching out into the community and had established a mission church. The March 7, 1954 bulletin noted: "Last Sunday our mission adopted a name, Messiah Lutheran Church. Today Messiah Lutheran is having its organization church service here at Good Shepherd at 3:30 p.m. All our members are invited. Also this evening Messiah Lutheran is having its first congregational meeting. Our prayers and best wishes we give to this young congregation."

Also noted was that the Rev. H. C. Osterman, D.D., President, Eastern District, was preaching the sermon at Good Shepherd at 11 a.m. and also at the 3:30 p.m. organizational service of Messiah. The flowers on the altar that day were given by Messiah Lutheran Church.

On November 11, 1956, the Sunday School rooms and Fellowship Hall were dedicated, the same having been added after careful excavation under the sanctuary.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church was 23 years old when Rev. Carl W. Beyer was installed as Pastor on January 3, 1960. By this time the Day School was no longer in existence, but the congregation had grown in members and was busy fulfilling its mission within and without the confines of the church building.

In December, 1962, a luncheon program was started for the retired members of the congregation. What began with about a dozen people blossomed out into the community and now has monthly programs and a luncheon for about 75 people.

The usual church maintenance took place through the years; carpet was installed in the sanctuary and various memorials provided the chancel furnishings.

On June 18, 1978, the tall dark folding doors at the rear of the church were replaced with the glass memorial wall. Offices have been relocated as the need arose, and in 1984 the grounds were redesigned and replanted. A full time lay staff person, Linda Sheets, was installed in October of 1986.

During these years many Interns were trained and served the congregation:
The Rev. Thomas Hudson 1971-72
The Rev. Barry Snowden 1972-73
The Rev. James Caton 1974-75
The Rev. Hans Bayer - Bavaria, West Germany 1976-77
The Rev. Faye Schott 1977-78
The Rev. Thomas Skrenes 1978-79
Mr. Bradley Binau (awaiting Call) 1979-80
Mr. Martin Keller 1980-81

The Congregation is also proud to claim as our "sons and daughters" in the Ordained Ministry of the Lutheran Church:
The Rev. James L. Caton
The Rev. Jann Esther Boyd Fullenweider
The Rev. Kathleen Dawn Haase
The Rev. Rebecca Miller Heber.
Sons of previous pastors also became Ordained Ministers.

The mission of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church continues. Children are baptized, attend Sunday School and affirm their faith in Confirmation classes. The Church Council, Choir and many committees are faithfully carrying out their duties. The Women of the Church (as the name evolved over the years) are active in many aspects of the congregational life. Weddings are solemnized and funerals and memorial services are held for the saints. The congregation gathers for worship each Sunday and at special services during Lent and other appropriate times. Our presence is felt within the changing community.

Throughout the last 27 years Pastor Beyer has served with love and concern for his flock, through joys and sorrows. He has endeared himself to everyone in the congregation and we owe him our deepest gratitude for his untiring ministry in our midst.

A Festival Eucharist marking the 50th Anniversary was held on Sunday, November 16, 1986, at 10:30 a.m. The Rev. Dr. E. Harold Jansen, Bishop of the Eastern District of The American Lutheran Church was present to give the sermon.

_The material in this booklet was prepared by Patricia Martin from her research into the records of this congregation._