

The History of Grace

*A Church Blessed for 75 Years
With the Wonderful Acts of
Our Gracious God*



*Charter members of Grace Lutheran Church,
back row Ruth and Bill Petzold, front Ted and Esther Rott.
on March 11, 1973 nearly 40 years after they and
six others signed the constitution June 14, 1933.*

Published by
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church and School
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

Preface

This book is the story of God at work, spreading His love and grace in the community of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. It is a story that is told by the way His faithful people have responded to the love they have learned to know through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While it is a story that was *acted out* by faithful Christians, it is a story *about* the acts of a gracious, loving God.

In this book you will find the personal stories and reflections of three Senior Pastors who were prepared and called by God to inspire and lead His flock at Grace Lutheran Church. Each was uniquely equipped by God to carry out His mission during the years he served. Each faced special challenges, and often each turned to God for the strength needed to carry on with His work.

Grace Church started with a gathering of 17 families with 25 adults and six children in September 1932. Since then it has grown to over 2,300 members where weekly services often exceed 1,000 worshipers. This book documents the trials and challenges this congregation has faced, and the difficult decisions that were required to provide needed facilities and staff for a growing church and school.

The growth of Grace is the result of much hard work by pastors, teachers and church staff as well as the many volunteers who served as elders, trustees, Sunday school teachers, members of circles, boards and committees. But above all, this book is about what Pastor Fahl states so well in the opening chapter of his reminiscences. This book is about “*the wonderful acts of our gracious God,*” during 75 years in the history of Grace Lutheran Church.

This book does not have an ending. From this *first 75 years* in the history of Grace Lutheran Church we have learned that God has a purpose and a plan for this congregation in this place and this time. Only He knows what the future holds, but with faith in Jesus Christ we pray that He will guide us to see His purposes and plans clearly so we can carry on with His work for the next 75 years and beyond.

Contents

Section I:	Highlights of Grace Church History	7
	The Story of Grace Lutheran Church	7
	The Story of Grace Lutheran School	23
Section II:	The Times and Memories of the Rev. E. P. Fahl	27
	Reminiscences of Pastor Fahl, page 28	
	The Early Years, page 29	
	Starting Ministry in Time of War, page 30	
	A Period of Growth, page 32	
	Mountain Peak Experiences, page 33	
	Dedicating the New Church, page 34	
	The Final Years, page 35	
	The leadership of the Rev E.P. Fahl, page 39	
	Stressing Christian Education, page 40	
	Planning and Building the New Church, page 42	
	The Challenge to Reach Out, page 43	
	Building and Starting a School, page 44	
	Managing a Growing Church, page 45	
	Time for a “Wake Up” Call, page 46	
	The Decision to Remain at Grace, page 48	
	Preparing for Retirement, page 49	
	A Tribute to a Strong Leader, page 50	
	Words of Encouragement for Grace Church, page 53	
	The Retirement Sermon of the Rev. E.P. Fahl	
Section III:	The Times and Memories of the Rev. Dr, Paul Dietz	5
	Born and Raised into Ministry, page 58	
	The Call Back to Concordia, page 62	

The Call to Grace, page 65
 Changing the Constitution, page 69
 Remembering the Seasons, Advent, Christmas, page 75
 Epiphany, Preparing for Lent, page 79
 The Meaning of Lent, page 82
 Holy Week and Easter, page 86
 Ascension Day and Pentecost, page 91
 Remembering Summers, 1978-82, page 95
 Celebrating 50 Years of Grace in 1983, page 100
 Final Years, Farewell Blessings, page 106

Section IV: The Times and Memories of the Rev. Warren Granke 111

From Boy to Man to Ministry, 1945-71, page 112
 Beginning in Ministry, Moving to Grace, page 119
 On My Own, 1989-91, page 125
 Planning our Future, 1991-97, page 131
 Making a New Start, 1997-2001, page 137
 Looking Ahead to Growth and Change, page 141
 Reaching out, Ministry, Manna, Missions, page 147
 Caring, Praying, Making Contact, page 153
 Teaching, Learning and Fellowship, page 158
 Following His Lead, From 2004 Forward, page 163
 Searching for Answers, Considering Options, page 167
 The Story of the Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson, page 173

Section V: Vision for the Future of Grace Lutheran Church 177

Looking Back to See the Way Forward, page 177
 Leading the Way Forward, page 179
 Our Mission, Our Vision, page 185

Section I Highlights of Grace History

The Story of Grace Lutheran Church 1932-33 to 2007-08

The history of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Menomonee Falls dates back to 1932 when two sisters, Esther and Ruth Wilke, who grew up on a farm just east of Pilgrim Road, married Theophil Rott and William Petzold. The two couples made their home in Menomonee Falls, but they were disappointed that there was no Lutheran church in the village where they could worship and hear the Word of God with other Lutherans. So they took steps to solve their worship problem. They contacted the South Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and convinced District officials to start a mission church in Menomonee Falls.

The story of the early history of Grace Lutheran Church is first a story of determined, young believers who wanted to worship in a Lutheran church. It also is a story that hints of hard times. Historic facts confirm that it was indeed a difficult time to start a new church. Average wages in Wisconsin had dropped 60 percent from 1929 to 1932. There was also widespread unemployment. The number of industrial jobs in Wisconsin fell by 37 percent and farm prices fell 57 percent. These hard times were a part of the reason why the founders of Grace wanted to have their own church in Menomonee Falls. Driving into Milwaukee to worship each week was difficult and expensive.

The Rev. E. P. Fahl, who served as Senior Pastor of Grace for 36 years from 1941 to 1977, documented much of this early history in a series of articles he wrote in 1986. Pastor Fahl points out that the story of Grace Lutheran Church is much more than a story of human effort. He described the history of Grace as times “*fraught with manifold trials and joys*,” but through it all it was “*the Lord of the Church who manifested Himself as the one who is in control*.” Pastor Fahl said his purpose for

writing these articles was to acquaint members of Grace with the “*wonderful acts of our gracious God*” in the fifty-three years of Grace’s history. Today we can look back 75 years and see clearly that the “*Lord of the Church*” is still in control. He continues to perform His wonderful *acts of grace* at Grace Lutheran Church

Keep Pastor Fahl’s words in mind as you review the Timeline of Key Events. You will find more about the times and memories of Pastor Fahl in Section II of this book. Note that it was the Holy Spirit that planted the seeds of faith in the hearts of the founders. It was God who wanted Grace Lutheran Church and School here where He could carry out His *wonderful acts of grace*.

Imagine yourself being present at that first service on a Sunday morning in September, 1932. As you walk up the steps to enter the “store front”

*“Welcome
in Christ’s Name,
We Preach
Christ Crucified”*

church you are greeted with the words “*Welcome in Christ’s name*.” You are going there to worship with a small group who proclaimed boldly that “*We Preach Christ Crucified*.”

The place of worship that Sunday morning was a store-front building on the corner of Main and Water Street that later became the Heebie Jeebie tavern. It’s now a vacant lot next to Mohrhussen Heating and Plumbing. As you enter, you see a room just large enough for a couple dozen old theater seats, a small pump-style reed organ, and a small white altar in the front. These furnishings had

Timeline of Key Events

The 1930s

- ** 1932 Two families contact the Mission Board with concerns over the lack of a Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls.
- ** The board assigns Rev. Erich Keller to help organize two new mission churches.
- ** July and August 1932 Pastor Keller completes the preliminary work to start a mission church in Menomonee Falls.
- ** August 1932 Seminary student John Pingel is introduced to Menomonee Falls families.
- ** September 4, 1932 The first worship service and Sunday school is held.
- ** March 13, 1933 Audrey Petzold is baptized, the first baptism at Grace Church.
- ** May 19, 1933 A proposed constitution for a mission church is presented.
- ** June 14, 1933 Grace Evangelical Lutheran, Menomonee Falls is formally organized, with 10 charter members signing the constitution.
- ** October 1933 Pastor Pingel accepts a call to Emmaus Lutheran Church in Poy Sippi, Wisconsin and Rev. Erich Keller becomes Pastor of Grace Church.
- ** 1934 A choir is organized with five singers and an accompanist.
- ** May 8, 1934 The Grace Ladies Aid holds its first meeting.
- ** By 1936 the group has outgrown the store front and a building fund is started.
- ** By 1938 the building fund has grown to \$400.
- ** May 23, 1938 Articles of Incorporation are signed and filed with the state of Wisconsin.
- ** 1938 The Mission Board moves Gospel Lutheran chapel building from Milwaukee to Menomonee Falls.

been donated by the Mission Board to make the inside look a little like a church. While the surroundings were meager, a grand, historic event was about to take place. Only 25 adults and six children attended the service, but the Spirit of God was there to perform His wonderful *acts of grace*. While the Mission Board had provided a young pastor to conduct the service, it was God who had called the Rev. John Pingel to be there and preach God's word to His flock. Fifty years later, Pastor Pingel remembered that day in a letter of congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of Grace church. His sermon text that day was Romans 1:16, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believeth.*"

The text chosen by Pastor Pingel was very meaningful for that small gathering. Soon they would face opposition in the community when a petition was circulated opposing the organization of another church in Menomonee Falls. It was a message of courage, faith and hope for a group that had stated its purpose clearly: "*We Preach Christ Crucified!*"

Few who were there that day could have imagined what would grow out of the seeds of faith God had planted in their hearts. Few would have guessed that their small gathering would grow into a congregation of more than 2,300 members. God, however, had a plan for them, and for all the faithful who would receive God's grace through Grace Church in the years that would follow.

For 75 years, the pure Word of God has been preached at Grace Lutheran Church. Lives have been changed. People have heard the Gospel, have believed and have been given hope. Sins have been confessed and forgiven. Members have come together to sing praises and thank God for all He has done. People have rejoiced for having been given the promise and gift of eternal life with our Savior in heaven.

Couples have been joined in marriage with God's blessing. Babies have been baptized; the first was Audrey Petzold on March 13, 1933. The Lord's Supper has been celebrated and the faith of the people has been strengthened. Families have been comforted as loved ones were laid to rest. All of this is a result of the wonderful acts of our good and

gracious God over 75 years in the history of Grace.

The founders of our church may have had these “*acts of grace*” in mind when they were faced with a decision on what to name their new church. Three names were suggested: “Christ,” “Our Savior” and “Grace.” The founders chose Grace, a name that states clearly that this church is all about the love and mercy of God and not about the works of men.

To carry out His *acts of grace*, God called many faithful servants to preach the Word, administer the Sacraments and provide spiritual leadership for the members of Grace. In addition, God provided inspired teachers, a hard working church staff and willing volunteers. All played a role in spreading the Gospel and bringing the love and mercy of God to the members of Grace and to all who have found help through Grace ministries and outreach efforts.

The Revs. Erich Keller and John Pingel: Pastors of Grace 1932-41

The first clergyman to enter the scene was the Rev. Erich Keller, Missionary at Large for the District. Pastor Keller helped to establish two mission congregations in this area: Grace in Menomonee Falls and Our Savior in Whitefish Bay. Pastor Keller also introduced the founders of Grace to John Pingel, a graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and a candidate for the ministry. Pastor Pingel preached at the first Grace worship service and continued to serve as the first pastor of Grace until October 1933 when he accepted a call to serve at Emmaus Lutheran Church at Poy Sippi, Wisconsin.

When Pastor Pingel left in October 1933, Pastor Keller stepped back into the scene. It was Pastor Keller who held the group together through the difficult Depression years. Pastor Keller helped them with their struggles to remain united despite strong community opposition.

There already were well established Christian churches in the community: a Methodist church, an Evangelical Reformed congregation and a Catholic church. But with the perspective of history, it is

Timeline of Key Events

** Grace members accept \$7,000 of debt to complete the building project.

** November 1938 Grace moves into their new church on Main Street and Hayes Avenue.

** Sunday November 27, 1938 The little white church is dedicated.

** June 1939 Edwin Fahl graduates from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis

The 1940s

** January 1940 Edwin Fahl begins vicarage at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Horicon.

** July 13, 1941 Pastor Keller accepts a call to Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Sheboygan.

** August 1941 The Mission Board calls seminary graduate Edwin Fahl to serve the two missions started by Pastor Keller, Grace and Our Savior.

** August 24, 1941 Pastor Fahl is ordained into the ministry at his home congregation, Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.

** August 31, 1941 Young Pastor Fahl preaches his first sermon at Grace and assumes official duties for the dual parish at Grace and Our Savior in September 1941.

** October 15, 1941 Pastor Fahl marries Elizabeth Looysen of Milwaukee.

** The congregation rents a home at 245 W Fourth St. to serve as a parsonage.

** December 7, 1941 The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor starting World War II.

** In the months that follow, seven young members of Grace joined the call to duty. Three of them would give their lives to defend our country.

Timeline of Key Events

- ** 1942 The Mission Board calls Pastor Fahl to serve Grace on a full time basis.
- ** August 1945 The congregation purchases a parsonage at W161 N8940 Hayes Ave.
- ** 1946 Members of Grace agree to become a self-sustaining congregation.
- ** June 13, 1949 The congregation adopts a resolution to establish and maintain a Christian Day School in Menomonee Falls.
- ** 1949 Grace also purchases six lots on Park Boulevard for potential expansion.

The 1950s

- ** May 18, 1951 The voting members agree to purchase an additional 5 1/2 acres.
- ** 1951 The congregation replaces its old reed organ with a new electronic organ.
- ** 1952 Grace builds an annex to provide more Sunday school and meeting space.
- ** 1953 Grace becomes a member of the Lutheran High School Association and takes part in a High School building fund drive.
- ** 1955 Grace begins to make building plans.
- ** Spring 1956 Grace launches a building fund campaign.
- ** July 1956 Grace employs an architect to draw plans for a new church and parsonage.
- ** December 1957 The first issue of Voice of Grace is published.
- ** May 1958 The members of Grace accepted a bid of \$259,000 to build a new church with attached parsonage on the land they had purchased.

now clear that God wanted Grace Lutheran Church to grow and prosper. He called Pastor Keller to help get it started and hold it together. Pastor Keller served Grace for nearly eight years, from October 1933 to July 1941. The services he conducted at the store front location attracted an increasing number of worshipers each Sunday. During this time it became evident that the church established to "*Preach Christ Crucified*" would prosper.

When more space was needed, Pastor Keller was able to get help from the District Mission Board to acquire the Gospel Chapel on Capitol Drive and move it to Menomonee Falls. This chapel became the little white church that still stands on the corner of Main and Hayes. It provided Grace with its own house of worship, dedicated as the home of Grace Church on Sunday, November 27, 1938.

The Rev. Edwin P. Fahl: Senior Pastor 1941-77

In mid-1941 Pastor Keller accepted a call to Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Sheboygan. The Mission Board then sent a call to Edwin P. Fahl to serve at Grace and Our Savior. Fahl had graduated from the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1939 and had completed a year as Vicar at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Horicon, Wisconsin. He was then ordained at his home church, Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. He served as the Senior Pastor of Grace until 1977 when he retired, but continued to serve as Pastor Emeritus. In 1986 Pastor Fahl wrote a series of articles for the Voice of Grace in which he reflected on the history and growth of Grace Lutheran from the start through his years of service.

The population of Menomonee Falls grew rapidly during the 36 years that Pastor Fahl served at Grace. Pastor Fahl was a skillful, determined evangelist. He watched as new subdivisions were laid out and new homes were being built. He was among the first to call on new families shortly after they moved into their new homes.

Pastor Fahl had a good memory for names and faces and greeted everyone by name. Grace was founded with 13 communicant members. In the first

10 years the communicant membership had reached 122 and by January 1948 it had grown to 200. In the next 10 years, by 1958, communicant membership more than doubled to 572. Pastor Fahl and his small but growing flock had great foresight! In 1949 and 1950 they were already purchasing land, planning for a much larger church and a parochial school. In June 1959 our current church was dedicated. In January 1963, ground was broken for the school and by fall classes began.

Pastor Fahl was a hard working, humble and determined servant. He would not tolerate any compromise on doctrinal issues. He faithfully preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ as is recorded in Holy Scripture. Throughout his ministry, he lived up to the original purpose stated by the founders: *"We preach Christ Crucified."*

As hard as he worked, Pastor Fahl always acknowledged the blessings of God in all that was being accomplished at Grace Church. When Grace celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 1958, the congregation had seen a strong growth in membership, had completed a successful building fund drive and the construction of a new church was about to begin. It was a time with much to celebrate. A booklet published that year on the history of Grace had the words "Twenty Five Years of Divine Blessings," printed on the cover. On the inside, next to his picture Pastor inserted the following words:

"Not unto us, O Lord, Not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." Psalm 115:1.

Throughout his years of service, Pastor Fahl was a dedicated supporter of Christian education. He encouraged Bible study and Sunday school. He helped Grace to start a Christian day school and encouraged the congregation to support a Lutheran High School. Grace started its Sunday school after its first worship service September 4, 1932. Pastor Fahl continued to support a strong Sunday school program during his early years at Grace. By the early 1950s, the Sunday school had outgrown the space available at the little white church.

At the same time, Pastor Fahl also had a strong desire for Grace to start a Christian day school. His efforts on that date back to 1949 when the congregation was already faced with a growing need to build a larger church. Under Pastor Fahl's

Timeline of Key Events

** June 8, 1958 Grace celebrates its 25th Anniversary with a banquet at Milwaukee Lutheran High School.

** June 14, 1958 Grace holds 25th Anniversary Service and ground-breaking ceremony.

** June 16, 1958 Voting members approve a resolution to borrow \$140,000 to finance construction of new church and parsonage.

** November 2, 1958 Grace holds the cornerstone laying ceremony for their new church.

** June 7, 1959 Grace dedicates its new church, starting with a grand procession walking down Hayes Avenue led by Pastor Fahl to the new church.

The 1960s

** January 18, 1962 Members of Grace vote to go ahead with plans for construction of an eight classroom Christian Day School.

** August 19, 1962 Ardon Albrecht, a member of Grace, is ordained into the ministry at Grace Church.

** January 20, 1963 Grace holds groundbreaking ceremony for its new school.

** Fall 1963 School building is completed and school opens with 71 children.

** July 5, 1964 Rev. Lyle Klemz accepts a call to serve Grace as an assistant pastor.

** September 1966 Delores (Dee) Jobe begins 32 years of teaching at Grace School, 1966, 1967 and 1976-2006.

** July 16, 1967 Kenneth Potratz is ordained at Grace Church. Pastor Potratz served Grace as pulpit assistant in 1967 and 1968.

** March 27, 1968 Pastor Fahl considers a "Divine Call" from Pilgrim Lutheran Church, West Bend.

** October 14, 1968 the Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld accepts a call to Grace and is installed as assistant pastor.

leadership, the congregation adopted a resolution to “establish and maintain our own Christian Day School in Menomonee Falls.” The plan was to start the school in the church basement, but that would require financial aid from the South Wisconsin District. The request for aid was refused because District funds had been depleted. In addition, it was the policy of the District to subsidize churches and parsonages but not schools.

In 1949 the congregation was also taking steps toward building a new church by purchasing six lots. In 1951 it purchased another 5 1/2 acres. Those two purchases provided the site where our current church and school are located.

After the basement school plan had been put on the shelf in early 1950, the congregation employed an architect from Milwaukee to prepare sketches for a new church and adjoining school building. When the cost estimates came in at \$350,000 the building plan was also put on hold, but not abandoned.

The congregation continued to grow and the white church became increasingly crowded. In the spring of 1956 the congregation employed a fund raising organization to conduct a building fund drive. By July 1956, pledges had reached \$114,000 and the congregation agreed to move ahead with a plan to build a church with adjoining parsonage at an estimated cost of \$260,000. That project was completed in the spring of 1959 and the new church was dedicated in June.

Phase two of Pastor Fahl’s objectives was to build a school. He started working on it shortly after the new church was completed. Fund raising efforts began with an Every Member Visitation drive in the fall of 1960. Members of Grace voted to move ahead with a school construction plan in January 1962 and ground was broken for the project a year later. In September 1963, the first classes were held in Grace Lutheran School.

During the first 23 years that Pastor Fahl was at Grace he served alone, as the only called pastor in the growing parish. In 1964, Grace called the Rev. Lyle Klemz to assist Pastor Fahl. After two years of service Pastor Klemz accepted another call and the Rev. Kenneth Potratz was employed as a pulpit assistant during the remainder of 1966 and 1967. The Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld was called in 1968 and served for four years assisting Pastor Fahl. In 1972

Grace called the Rev. James Zehnder to serve with Pastor Fahl. During those years, Pastor Fahl was nearing retirement age and was concerned about how the work of the Lord would be carried forward at Grace after he retired.

In 1976 Pastor Fahl wrote a letter announcing his intentions to retire. He wrote that he was humbled by the thought that the Lord of the church had permitted him to serve this congregation for well over a third of a century, and that despite his own personal weakness the Lord has so bountifully blessed this parish. All of this prompted him to repeat the words of Psalm 115:1 that he had used 18 years earlier in a brochure prepared for the 25th Anniversary of Grace Church. In that letter Pastor

*“Not unto us, O Lord,
but unto Thy Name be
all the Glory.”*

-- Psalm 115:1

Fahl also wrote that Pastor Zehnder “has proven himself to be a dedicated servant of God” and that “he possesses the necessary leadership qualities to administer the complex affairs of a large congregation such as Grace.”

Pastor Zehnder was an energetic, innovative person with strong public relations skills. He created events and activities that were not typical of traditional Lutheran Churches, but with the aim of attracting more people to hear the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The *Grace Tent Ministries* are a memorable example of his innovative ideas. For a week in August 1974 Grace conducted evening evangelistic services in a tent set up in the church yard. Thousands of circulars, tracts and Gospels were distributed in Menomonee Falls and nearby communities inviting people to the evening services. Special choirs and soloists performed. The services included the singing of familiar hymns and favorite Gospel songs. Grace was the talk of the town that summer. The story and pictures of the tent ministry were featured in the local newspaper.

Despite the skill and energy Pastor Zehnder had demonstrated in his work at Grace, he decided that

he did not want to continue in parish ministry. In May 1978 Pastor Zehnder announced to the congregation that he had accepted a position as Vice President of Public Relations for the Zehnder family business in Ohio.

God had called Pastor Zehnder to serve at Grace for a time. He was a part of God's plan. During his time here he brought new energy and new perspectives on outreach. But for the long term, God had already prepared and trained other servants to lead Grace into the future.

The Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz: Senior Pastor, 1978-89

Pastor Dietz came to Grace after a long career as a professor of history and librarian at Concordia University in Milwaukee. Before he was called he had often served as a pulpit assistant, preaching sermons at Grace. He was well acquainted with Grace and he was well known and well liked by the members of Grace.

Pastor Dietz was called to Grace to serve as a Co-pastor with Pastor Zehnder who was serving as Senior Administrative Pastor. Pastor Dietz saw the call as an opportunity for a change of pace and a chance to serve the Lord as a parish pastor during the later years of his career. He did not expect all that the Lord had in mind for him over the next 11 years that he served as Senior Pastor of Grace.

Pastor Dietz accepted the call to Grace and was installed as Co-pastor on Sunday, April 23, 1978. Two weeks later, on Sunday May 7, Pastor Zehnder announced that he intended to resign from the ministry and return to private business. With that announcement, it was clear to Pastor Dietz that God had a much bigger challenge in mind for him. Would he accept and become the Senior Pastor of Grace? He did, and the history of the years that followed show that God in His wisdom had again prepared and sent the right person at the right time to do His work at Grace Lutheran Church.

When Pastor Dietz began his ministry at Grace, the congregation had already become very large, but it was organized and operated in the same way it had been when it was a small traditional Lutheran parish. Pastor Dietz understood ministry in large

Timeline of Key Events

The 1970s

** September 1970 Richard Maas begins serving the first of 22 years as Principal of Grace School.

** July 19, 1971 James Juers, a member of Grace, is ordained into the ministry at Grace Church.

** 1972 The Rev. James Zehnder becomes an associate pastor to serve with Pastor Fahl.

** June 10, 1973 Grace celebrates its 40th Anniversary.

** August 1974 Grace conducts a week-long evangelistic tent ministry on the church grounds.

** December 1, 1975 The Board of Elders approves a Manna Program proposed by the Mission Evangelism Circle of the Grace Women's Guild.

** July 4, 1976 Grace participates in a Religious Convocation with nine other Menomonee Falls congregations to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

** October 10, 1976 Grace celebrates Pastor Fahl's 35 years in the ministry, 35 years of service at Grace Menomonee Falls, and 35 years of marriage.

** June 5, 1977 Pastor Fahl retires and preaches his farewell sermon.

** Pastor Zehnder becomes senior pastor of Grace after serving five years as an associate pastor.

** 1978 Grace sends a call to the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, a professor at Concordia University to serve as a co-pastor with Pastor Zehnder.

** April 23, 1978 Pastor Dietz is installed as co-pastor of Grace church

** May 1, 1978, Grace Voters' Assembly agrees to proceed with construction of a Christian Activity Center.

** May 7, 1978 Pastor Zehnder announces that he has decided to resign from the ministry and return to his family's business in August 1978.

Timeline of Key Events

** August 31, 1978 Pastor Dietz becomes senior pastor of Grace.

** January 14, 1979 Grace dedicates its new Christian Activity Center.

** November 4, 1979 The Rev. James C. Redmann is installed as assistant pastor.

The 1980s

** April 15, 1980 A new constitution is approved. The changes included granting voting rights and the right to hold certain offices to women of the congregation.

** February 14, 1982 The Rev. Tom Paul Willadsen is installed as assistant pastor.

** May 15, 1983 Grace celebrates 50th Anniversary on Education Sunday.

** June 5, 1983 Grace celebrates 50th Anniversary with a Jubilee Service and Banquet.

** December 4, 1983 Grace celebrates its 50th Anniversary with a Concert of Praise and Thanksgiving.

** May 1987 Shirley Hermann retires and Grace honors for 25 years of teaching.

** Late 1987 Pastor Dietz informs the congregation that he plans to retire and begins working with church leaders to find an experienced pastor to take his place.

** May 1988 The Rev. Warren Granke joins the Grace staff to assist Pastor Dietz during his last year as senior pastor of Grace.

** Spring 1989 The members of Grace agree in a unanimous vote to send a call to the Rev. Warren Granke to serve as senior pastor of Grace after the retirement of Pastor Dietz.

** Spring 1989 The Voters' Assembly makes a controversial decision to use funds set aside for debt reduction to cover current operating deficits.

congregations. While growing up he belonged to Immanuel Lutheran Church, a large congregation in Milwaukee. He had trained and worked with pastors of large congregations while serving at Concordia.

Shortly after Pastor Dietz had accepted his call to Grace, the congregation decided to make a major investment in a new Christian Activity Center with a very slim margin of support. There were serious disagreements over this decision because of other debts and obligations that were not being met. Pastor Dietz was faced with trying to heal the wounds and hold the congregation together.

Much changed at Grace under the leadership of pastor Dietz. Perhaps one of the most significant breaks with tradition was the extending of voting rights and the right to hold offices to women of the congregation. While Pastor Dietz saw the need for some non-doctrinal changes, such as coming out of the pulpit to preach sermons, he stood firm on doctrinal issues. His missions were to "*Preach Christ Crucified*" and to *teach the same Gospel* message that had been the primary purpose of Grace Lutheran Church from the very beginning.

Pastor Dietz took two important management steps to help establish his leadership. First he organized a "kitchen cabinet" of church leaders and met with them regularly to discuss issues that needed to be addressed. In addition, he developed a team ministry to help him with his preaching duties. Assistant pastors who served with pastor Dietz included the Rev. James C. Redmann, installed in November 1979, followed by the Rev. Tom Paul Willadsen installed in February 1982. Pastor Dietz also got help from a number of part-time pulpit assistants, including Rev. Prof. Ron Berg.

Throughout his career of more than 50 years in ministry, Pastor Dietz had strong interest in the training of young men for the ministry, to carry on the work of the Lord in the future. The Grace Board of Directors took that into account when they contemplated how Grace could show proper honor for this dedicated faithful servant of the Lord.

In July, 2007 the Grace Board announced that they were cooperating with Concordia University Wisconsin to establish the *Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz Pastoral Ministry Endowment* at Concordia. This lasting legacy will provide important scholarship support to pastoral ministry students at Concordia.

An important legacy Pastor Dietz handed down to Grace came as a result of the wisdom he applied and the work he did to find a suitable replacement to lead Grace after he had retired. In late 1987 when Pastor Dietz began his search, God had already prepared and selected just the right person for Grace. He had put His plan into motion 42 years earlier when Warren A. Granke was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Holy Spirit then moved young Warren Granke to study for the ministry and become a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

In late 1987, Pastor Granke was serving as pastor of an ELS church in Madison, Wisconsin also named Grace. He had become restless and felt limited by working in a small synod, and by a congregation that had little interest in growth and outreach. Pastor Granke was interested in moving to a Missouri Synod church. He made his wishes known to Harvey Krueger who was then president of the South Wisconsin District and a life-long friend of Pastor Dietz.

In early 1988, President Krueger introduced Pastor Granke to Pastor Dietz. But before Pastor Granke could serve in the Missouri Synod church, he would first need to spend a year working and studying with a Missouri Synod pastor.

Arrangements were made for Pastor Granke to serve one year as "Assisting Pastor" with Pastor Dietz. After that, the congregation could decide if they wanted to send a Divine Call to Pastor Granke. You will find more about the times and memories of Pastor Dietz in Section II of this book.

The Rev. Warren A. Granke: Senior Pastor 1989 - Present

In spring of 1989 the Voters' Assembly agreed unanimously to send the call. Pastor Granke accepted and was installed as Senior Pastor of Grace in July 1989. Pastor Granke saw it as a "call from my Lord" to serve Him in Menomonee Falls. "The pieces of the puzzle of my life had been put together so well by His loving hands," he said.

"It appeared that God wanted someone here who could pick up and carry on what Pastor Dietz had started," he adds.

The next 18 years Pastor Granke dedicated himself

Timeline of Key Events

** June 25, 1989 Pastor Dietz preaches his farewell sermon as senior pastor of Grace.

** July 16, 1989 Pastor Granke is installed as senior pastor of Grace Lutheran Church.

The 1990s

** 1990 Pastor Granke calls on church leaders with business experience to begin a process of strategic planning to advance the ministry of Grace Church.

** May 13, 1990 Grace dedicates new stained glass windows chosen to be a visual reminder of our deep-rooted Christian heritage.

** September 9, 1990 The Rev. Wayne Rasmussen is ordained at Grace Church. Pastor Rasmussen served as a pulpit assistant while teaching at Concordia University.

** May 20, 1991 A new Constitution and By Laws is approved by the Voters' Assembly, providing a Board of Directors empowered to handle the routine business decisions of the congregation.

** An Endowment Fund is created under the new constitution, to receive gifts, memorials and bequests used to support the mission and ministry of Grace Church, the Synod, its seminaries and agencies.

** A mission statement is written declaring that the three-fold mission of Grace Lutheran Church is to proclaim the Gospel, teach the Word and minister to those in need of our care.

** January 13, 1991 The Rev. Jerome Stecker is installed as associate pastor.

** August 1992 Marlene Anderson begins work as the first deaconess to serve at Grace Lutheran Church.

** September 1992 Pastor Rasmussen begins serving as Minister of Education and Principal of Grace School.

** April 1993 Grace launches "Freedom to Serve" capital campaign to pay off debts. A year later, in April 1994, Grace paid off an AAL mortgage.

Timeline of Key Events

- ** September 1995 Steve Anderson begins serving seven years as Principal of Grace School.
- ** 1996 The Freedom to Serve campaign contributions reach \$700,000, enough to retire long-term debt.
- ** June 1997 Pastor Stecker accepts a call to St. Martini in Milwaukee.
- ** Fall 1997 Roy Peterson begins serving his vicarage at Grace Lutheran Church.
- ** 1998 The Board of Directors appoints a Strategic Planning Committee to make recommendations on managing the future growth of Grace church.
- ** March 15, 1998 Grace dedicates a new Rogers organ.
- ** November 15, 1998 The Rev. Roy Peterson is ordained and installed as Associate Pastor of Grace.
- ** 1999 The Board of Directors appoints a Facilities Committee to develop long range expansion plans.

The 2000s

- ** 2000 The Facilities Committee identifies 80 acres as a potential site for a larger church and school.
- ** May 21, 2000 Grace celebrates the 50th anniversary in ministry of the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz.
- ** November 15, 2000 Grace approves a resolution authorizing the Board of Directors to begin negotiations with the owners of the 80 acres.
- ** March 18, 2001 The voters authorize the Board of Directors to acquire an option to purchase the 80 acres on County Highway Q, just west of Maple Road.
- ** September 2001 Grace launches the “Foundation of Faith – A Future Built on Grace” capital fund drive, with a goal of \$1 million over the next three years.
- ** October, 2001 Members of Grace take part in small group informational prayer meetings to consider their commitment to the ministry and future of Grace.

to moving forward with what he saw as “the Lord’s plan” for Grace Lutheran Church. As he started his work here he was struck by the number of weddings and funerals he had to conduct. For the first year he was on his own. In late 1990, the congregation called the Rev. Jerome Stecker to help Pastor Granke. Pastor Granke also got help from the Rev. Wayne Rasmussen who served as a part-time pulpit assistant and was Minister of Education from 1992 to 1995.

Pastor Granke was assisted in his ministry by Kristy Miller, who served as Lay Minister from 1989 to 1992 and by Marlene Anderson who began serving as the first deaconess of Grace in 1992.

As Pastor Granke became acquainted with Grace, he concluded that the congregation would need to focus on two new priorities. *“Before we could plan for the future we would need to pay off some debts; and before we could find a way to pay off debts we would need to change our organizational structure and decision-making processes,”* he explained.

The first step would be to make some important changes in the constitution and bylaws. A new document was drafted and adopted by the Voters’ Assembly May 20, 1991. The new constitution established an elected Board of Directors with the power to make many of the routine business decisions.

In addition to drafting a new constitution, Pastor Granke worked with leaders in the congregation who had business and management experience to start a process of *strategic planning*. That included developing a mission statement to help the congregation to set future goals and objectives.

The statement was short, but meaningful. It reflected what Grace had been doing from the start, but for the first time stated it clearly and officially. The threefold mission of Grace Church was to:

- * **Proclaim** the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the church and unchurched in this community and beyond;

- * **Teach** individuals of all ages the Biblical and Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament;

- * **Minister** to the physical and spiritual needs of its members and others who come within its care.

The new constitution became effective on January 1, 1992. The first priority of the new Board of Directors was to address financial problems. Grace was carrying a significant amount of debt. What could be done?

Fund drives to pay off debts often fail, but the Board had little choice. If it could not conduct a successful debt reduction fund raiser, Grace would continue to be bogged down by debts and high interest payments.

In April 1993, Grace launched a fund raising campaign called “Freedom to Serve.” While there were many doubts about the campaign, a year later Grace was already able to pay off some long-term debt. It was a very important turning point in the history of Grace. Not only did it provide a stronger financial picture, it also created a more positive attitude among the members of Grace. “The debt issue and mistakes of the past had been resolved,” Pastor Granke explained. “Grace would now be able to move ahead and do the things we needed to do.” Still, the years 1994-98 were a difficult time. Even with the success of “Freedom to Serve,” Pastor Granke describes it as a time when things were not moving ahead as he had expected. “Perhaps the Lord didn’t feel we were ready for it and allowed our problems to stand in the way,” Pastor Granke concludes.

In mid 1997, Pastor Stecker accepted a call to St. Martini in Milwaukee and Pastor Granke was alone again. In the fall of 1997, Roy Peterson started serving his year of vicarage at Grace Church. By 1998 the picture began to change for the better. Roy Peterson was completing his year of vicarage with Pastor Granke. A call committee was formed and recommended calling Roy Peterson to serve as an associate pastor of Grace with Pastor Granke. The congregation agreed, and on November 15, 1998 the Rev. Roy Peterson was ordained and installed.

Pastor Granke was optimistic as he and Pastor Peterson began making plans for the future. He describes the years after Pastor Peterson arrived as “an excellent time in the ministry of Grace.” Each of them brought some unique talents to Grace. “I’m convinced that it was really the hand of God that brought him to us,” Pastor Granke said.

Pastor Peterson served as Associate Pastor of Grace for over nine years, from November 1998 through February of 2007. In early February 2007 Pastor Peterson announced that he had accepted a call to Concordia University Milwaukee to serve as Assistant Vice President of Advancement.

While serving here, Pastor Peterson became a very important factor in the ministry of Grace Church. He worked closely with Pastor Granke and

Timeline of Key Events

** November 11, 2001 Grace celebrates “A Foundation of Faith – A Future Built on Grace” in a special service in the Menomonee Falls High School gymnasium.

** January 2002 Total Foundation of Faith campaign pledges reach \$1, 073, 000.

** February 17, 2002 Members of Grace authorize the Board of Directors to enter into a purchase contract to purchase the 80 acres of land on County Highway Q.

** May 1, 2002 Closing papers are signed completing the purchase of the 80 acres.

** Spring of 2003 The Facilities Committee holds Town Meetings with members to get input on plans to build a new church and campus on the 80 acres.

** September 2003 Neal Hinze begins serving as Principal of Grace School.

** March 2004 The facilities committee conducts a needs analysis, with 38 groups and over 100 people providing input to help with building plans.

** June 1, 2004 The members of Grace express a strong desire to build both church and school at the same time.

** September 19, 2004 Grace voters approve a resolution to continue with plans to build a church, school and gym at costs not to exceed \$9.5 million.

** September 30, 2004 Total contribution for the Foundation of Faith capital campaign exceeded the original goal, reaching a total of \$1,150,000.

** “Building to Reach Out” is selected as the theme of the next three-year capital campaign with a goal of \$3 million to help finance the new building plan.

** November 14, 2004 Building to Reach Out is presented in a special celebration service at Menomonee Falls High School.

** January 2005 Pledges for the Building to Reach Out campaign reach \$1,543,000, the largest commitment in Grace history, but short of the \$3 million goal.

Timeline of Key Events

- ** January 30, 2005 The Grace Facilities Committee recommends a multi-phase building plan.
- ** March 13, 2005 The Facilities Committee suggests 2006 as a possible groundbreaking for a new church.
- ** November 2005 The facilities committee completes a three-phase building plan to be approved by the voters.
- ** January 11, 2006 The Grace Board of Directors tables the building plan due to concern over the amount of debt servicing costs the plan would require.
- ** April 2, 2006 Grace burns a \$464,600 mortgage used to help purchase its 80 acres in May 2001.
- ** July 1 Will Miller and his wife Ana arrive to spend a year as Vicar at Grace Church. Vicar Miller was the first in a new on-going vicar training program at Grace.
- ** 2006 Grace invests about \$125,000 to help maintain and improve its current facilities.
- ** August 20, 2006 Pastor Granke is honored at Grace Church for 35 years in the ministry.
- ** Fall 2006 A new Strategic Planning Committee is organized to recommend future growth plans.
- ** February 2007 Pastor Peterson accepts a call to serve at Concordia University, Wisconsin. Pastor Peterson preached his farewell sermon March 4, 2007.
- ** April 25, 2007 The Synod Placement Office assigns Robert Goodwin to fill the pastoral vacancy at Grace and Jacob Gilbert to serve as Vicar for the 2007-08 seasons.
- ** Ryan Peterson, a member of Grace and son of Pastor Peterson is ordained into the ministry at Grace Church.
- ** June 10, 2007 Greg Truwe, a member of Grace is ordained into the ministry at Grace Church.
- ** July 8, 2007 Robert Lesley Goodwin is ordained into and installed as Associate Pastor of Grace Church.
- ** August 2007 Jacob Gilbert begins serving as Vicar of Grace for 2007-2008.

played an important role in leadership of the congregation. He helped with strategic planning and saw much potential for Grace to do “good ministry” in the future.

Pastor Peterson was also instrumental in two important new developments in the recent history of Grace Lutheran Church. One was the development of the Men in Christ and Women in Christ programs. The other was the leadership he provided in the compassionate response Grace Church provided to help victims of Hurricane Katrina.

When Pastor Peterson was installed Grace was experiencing growing pains. Church attendance was climbing from 38,987 annually in 1996 to 48,715 by the year 2000. Services were becoming more crowded, especially those being held at the most popular times, such as 9:30 on Sunday mornings. It also was becoming difficult to find enough space for all the meetings, Bible classes and other activities that take place in a growing congregation. In 1998, the Board of Directors appointed a Strategic Planning Committee to develop a new plan for managing future growth in church attendance. After the committee presented its report in 1999, the Board appointed a Facilities Committee to recommend a plan to expand or replace our current church facilities.

The facilities committee concluded that expanding the church and school at our current location would not be practical. Instead, they identified 80 acres of land on County Highway Q, west of Maple Road that was for sale and would provide a suitable site for a new Grace campus. Making the purchase would be difficult. The leaders of Grace wanted to minimize the amount of new debt required to make the purchase. They also wanted to be certain that the members of Grace would support the plan. The best way to measure that support was to ask for financial commitments in a fund drive.

Plans for the fund raiser were well under way on September 11, 2001 when terrorists flew hijacked air liners into the Trade Towers in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and a farm field in Pennsylvania. Widespread fears spread across the country. People were very hesitant about what the future might hold in terms of employment and economic conditions. This did not appear to be a good time for a new capital campaign.

After a short delay, however, the leadership decided to go ahead. On October 1, they launched their campaign under the theme “*A Foundation of Faith, A Future Built on Grace.*” When all the pledges were in the members had made commitments to contribute \$1,073,000 over three years, enough to go ahead with plans to buy land for a new church site.

The land purchase was completed on May 1, 2002. An interesting part of the story is that the land owners, the late Ken Dreger and his wife Barb, had hoped that one day a church would be built on the land they had farmed for so many years.

The pastors, the leadership and many of the members of Grace have continued to hope and pray that a church could be built on that land. They want to make a bold statement of faith in this community. Just as the founding members boldly stated, “*We Preach Christ Crucified,*” our members today want to plant a church high on a hill above County Highway Q where all will see the Cross of Christ and all will be “*Welcome in Christ’s Name.*”

In 2004, the leaders and many members of Grace wanted to move ahead with plans to build new church facilities. The mood was optimistic. The Foundation of Faith capital campaign had exceeded its goal, reaching \$1,150,000. There appeared to be a strong desire to move ahead quickly with a building plan. Many members wanted to build both church as school at the same time.

A new building fund campaign was launched in the fall of 2004. The goal was for \$3 million, enough to consider building both church and school at the same time. The theme “Building to Reach Out” was selected for the campaign. While the campaign fell short of its \$3 million goal it did reach \$1,553,244. This represents the largest financial commitment members of Grace have ever made in a single campaign, but was not enough to start building the complete set of new facilities.

In early 2005, there was still hope that Grace could go ahead with a multi-phased construction plan, starting with a new church to be built on the 80 acres. The year 2005, however, proved to be one of problems and setbacks. While the facilities committee worked with an architect and a building contractor to develop building plans, the Grace Board of Directors struggled to develop a plan to finance the church building project.

By fall of 2005, there were growing concerns about taking on new debt and the impact that might have on the long-range prospects for growth in the ministries of Grace. The first phase was expected to cost between \$5 and \$6 million.

A date was set for a mid-January 2006 special meeting of the Voters’ Assembly to present the plan to the congregation. In the first week of January, however, the Board of Directors concluded that plan required too much debt. They were doubtful that future contributions would generate enough cash flow to operate the church and school, while making interest and principal payments required by the new debt. The special meeting was cancelled and the building project was put on hold.

Through 2006 the leaders of Grace took a step back to reevaluate future plans. A new Strategic Planning Committee was appointed to gather input from the congregation, to review goals and objectives and to formulate plans for the future. You will find more about the times and memories of Pastor Granke in Section IV of this book.

The future for Grace: We Press on in the Work of the Lord

In 2007, Grace is celebrating the 75th Anniversary of its first worship service, held September 4, 1932 and the 45th Anniversary of Grace Lutheran School. Over those years God has continued to shower the people of Grace with His wonderful *acts of grace*. With His help, Grace Church has been able to grow and expand its ministries. From the 25 adults and six children who attended that first worship service, the membership of Grace has grown to more than 2,300 baptized members and sponsors a multitude of important ministries. But what lies ahead for Grace Lutheran Church and School?

Now Grace is looking to the future, *sowing the seeds for the next 75 years*. We can’t help but wonder what it will be like at the 100th Anniversary, and at the 150th! As we celebrate our first 75 years, new strategic plans are being put in place, with a

new mission statement and vision of how Grace can move forward to do the work of the Lord in Menomonee Falls and surrounding communities.

Thirty years ago, June 5, 1977 when Pastor Fahl preached his retirement sermon he encouraged us to look ahead and to continue in the “work of the Lord.” His message and text are just as meaningful today. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* I Corinthians 15:58.

Eighteen years ago, on June 25, 1989 when Pastor Dietz was retiring from Grace he advised us to keep tuned in to the “gentle whisper of our loving God.” He told the story from I Kings 19 of the prophet Elijah, who was afraid and tried to run away from his responsibilities. But God told him to go to the mountain and listen. There was a wind, and an earthquake and a fire but he did not hear God in the wind, the earthquake or the fire. *“And after the fire came a gentle whisper,”* I Kings 19:12.

The point: “Let God be God,” Pastor Dietz advised. As we look forward we should not run away as Elijah tried to do. We should “let God be God” and listen for “His gentle whisper” to guide our way forward.

In each case, Grace was facing an uncertain future under new leadership. In March 2007 we again faced a time of uncertainty. Pastor Peterson announced that he had accepted a call to Concordia University Wisconsin.

“This leaves a hole in our ministry,” Pastor Granke observed. “It has been nearly 10 years that Pastor Peterson and I served together and it was good.” Pastors Granke and Peterson had shared responsibilities and the ministries of Grace were moving forward. But now it is time to focus on the future rather than the past. “It is easy for us to forget that this is His ministry and that all things, yes, our church and our ministry are in the hands of God,” Pastor Granke said. “We are His instruments to carry out His will. He uses us in marvelous ways in our personal Christian lives, our faith life and in our ministry together.”

Pastor Granke referred to the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:12 to set the stage for as series of three sermons in March 2007 on looking forward where Paul wrote, *“I press on to take hold*

of that for which Christ took hold of me.” Paul’s words provide an example of what the members of Grace must do as they face tough times and are uncertain about how to proceed into the next 75 years. “When the going gets tough it’s time to *reflect, to plan, and then get going,*” Pastor Granke advised in his sermon series.

During the weeks when these sermons were being delivered, Grace was already taking action. The Voters’ Assembly approved extending the request for placement of a second career seminary graduate to serve at Grace with Pastor Granke. In April, Robert Goodwin was selected to fill the vacancy at Grace. Meanwhile, the Strategic Planning Committee was formulating a new Statement of Mission and clear Vision Statement to guide planning for the future of Grace church.

*“I press on to take hold
of that for which Christ
took hold of me.”*

--The Apostle Paul, Philippians 3:12

The new “Mission” and “Vision” have much in common with the bold statement made by the first members of Grace 75 years ago: *“Welcome in Christ’s Name. We Preach Christ Crucified.”* Today the Mission and Vision include all of what is required to preach Christ Crucified effectively in the 21st Century. You’ll find more about the Vision and Mission of Grace in Section V of this book.

The region served by Grace has a population of over 100,000 souls. Thirty six percent of these people do not belong to a church. These 36,000 souls are not hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the prime mission field for Grace Church.

How can Grace reach these unchurched souls?

The work of the Lord will require the prayers, dedication and support of the membership. Grace leadership has established objectives that require action by members. They’ve set an ambitious goal to double our membership in six years!

God willing, that goal will be reached, for we know that *“With God, all things are possible.”* Matthew 19:26.

Soli Deo Gloria!

*“The elders who direct
the affairs of the church well
are worthy of double honor
especially those whose work
is preaching and teaching.”*

-- 1 Timothy 5:17



Rev. Erich Keller



Rev. John Pingel



Rev. Edwin P. Fahl



Rev. James Zehnder



Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz



Rev. Warren Granke

Pastors at Grace Lutheran Church

Senior Pastors

Rev. Erich Keller helped organize
the mission that became Grace
Lutheran Church in 1932
Rev. John Pingel 1932 - 1933.
Rev. Erich Keller, 1933-41,
Rev. Edwin P. Fahl, 1941-77
Rev. James Zehnder, 1977-78
Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, 1978-89
Rev. Warren Granke, 1989-present

Associate Pastors

Rev. James Zehnder, 1972-1977
Rev. Jerome Stecker, 1991-97
Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson, 1998-2007
Rev. Robert Goodwin, 2007-present

Assistant Pastors

Rev. Lyle Klemz, 1964-66
Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld, 1968-72
Rev. James C. Redmann, 1979
Rev. Tom Willadsen, 1982
Rev. Warren Granke, served as
Assisting Pastor with Pastor Dietz to
fulfill synod requirements

Vicars

Roy Peterson, 1997-98
Will Miller, 2006-07
Jacob Gilbert, 2007-08

Pulpit Assistants

Rev. Kenneth Potratz
Rev. Henry Corcoran

Rev. Gerald Reinke
Rev. Ron Berg
Rev. Wayne Rasmussen
Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz
Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry
Rev. Dr. Randall Ferguson

Ordained at Grace

Rev. Ardon Albrecht, 1962
Rev. Kenneth Potratz, 1967
Rev. James Juers, 1971
Rev. Wayne Rasmussen, 1991
Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson, 1998
Rev. Ryan Peterson, 2007
Rev. Greg Truwe, 2007
Rev. Robert Goodwin, 2007

*Grace started a Sunday school
at the first worship service September 4, 1932,
with six students enrolled . From that small start
the enrollment grew and classes were added,
including confirmation instruction.*



It was not an attractive place to go on a Sunday morning, but still the people came to hear the Gospel and to join in the worship of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Esther Rott's class: Three students that can be identified are top row, Hazel Jones; second row, Frances Evers and first row, Lorraine Butske.



*Harriet Gudelke's class: top row with teacher, Audrey Petzold, Dorothy Schneider, Beverly Virchow; second row, Chuck Wenzel, Bobby Schneider; front row, Lila Evers and Ethel Butske
Note: Ethel married Jim Mayer and has been a lifetime member of Grace Church.*



Ruth Petzold's class: top row with teacher, Bud Wenzel; second row, Ruth Emma Brushhaber, Doris Gudelke, and Arlene Pilgrim; front row, Elaine St. George and Ervin Mueller.

The Story of Grace Lutheran School

Celebrating 45 Years of God Blessed Christian Education

The Christian education of children has been an important priority for Grace Lutheran Church from the very start. Time was provided for Sunday school at the first worship service September 4, 1932. While those classes were very small, the teachers were already sowing the seeds of faith for the future of Grace Lutheran Church.

Sunday school and confirmation classes were the main focus of Christian education at Grace through the 1930s, 40s and 50s, but there had always been dreams of doing more, dreams of starting a Christian day school in Menomonee Falls.

The Rev. E. P. Fahl, who served as Senior Pastor of Grace from 1941 to 1977, provided the leadership to make those dreams of a school become a reality. The first official action in the efforts to start a day school came on June 13, 1949. That's when the voting members of Grace adopted a resolution to "establish and maintain our own Christian Day School in Menomonee Falls." But it would 14 years from that first resolution to the time when the building was completed and the first classes were held in Grace Lutheran School.

Lack of Funds Stalls Plan

That first resolution also acknowledged that the congregation would be unable to operate such a school without financial aid. So the resolution also called for making an application to the South Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod for a subsidy and loan to help Grace establish a school.

The plan was very modest and would require no new building project. There was room in the basement of the white church for a school room with seating for about 35 students. But even with that the plan would require an investment in desks, blackboards, books and other supplies. It also would require employing a teacher.

In total the cost was estimated at about \$6,000, not a very large sum by today's standards, but more than Grace could afford without getting a subsidy from the District. The District turned down the

request and the plan had to be put on hold. District funds had been depleted. In addition, the District policy was to subsidize churches and parsonages but not schools. Still, the congregation was on record with its desire for a school.

In 1950 the congregation employed an architect to prepare a plan for a new church and adjoining school building on land the church had purchased earlier. However, when the cost estimates came in at \$350,000 that plan had to be abandoned as well.

First the Church, Then the School

With the financial reality of the early 1950s, leaders of Grace realized that they would need to pursue a two or three phase strategy to accomplish their goals. The church and adjoining parsonage were their first priorities.

When the church was dedicated in June 1959 the school still seemed to be a distant future objective. The congregation had struggled to raise the necessary funds to build and furnish their new church and parsonage at a total cost of over \$270,000. To finish that project they had just added long-term debt with a \$140,000 mortgage.

Despite the new debt, Pastor Fahl and the leadership of Grace had not forgotten resolutions made 10 years earlier. Phase two of their long-range plan was to build a school. Pastor Fahl started working on it shortly after the new church was completed. In November 1960, Grace launched an Every Member Visitation fund drive under the theme "God's Challenge to Us!"

The materials published for the drive stressed the need to expand facilities for a growing Sunday school and Bible classes. Pastor Fahl called attention to the "tremendous influx of new families into our community. He pointed out that 200 new communicant members had joined Grace between January 1 and October 24, 1960.

The decision to start a school would be difficult, and was kept separate from the plan to build facilities. The building alone would require

additional debt. Construction costs were estimated at \$160,000. A school would also require covering the salaries of teachers and other operating costs. The congregation needed to consider all of these added financial responsibilities.

The decision to build came in January 1962. Ground was broken to start construction a year later in January 1963. After doing a survey of the congregation, the Board for Parish Education then recommended starting a Christian day school with kindergarten through fourth grade. The Voters' Assembly approved the recommendation at a special meeting February 17, 1963.

On September 8, 1963 the new education building was dedicated and Grace School was underway with its first year of classes. The staff that first year included Principal Aron Valleskey who also taught grades three and four, Shirley Leininger who taught grades one and two and Charlene Filmore who taught kindergarten. Total enrollment was 71, with 25 in kindergarten, 28 in first and second grade and 18 in third and fourth grade.

The Next 45 Years

Additional grades were added each year until Grace School filled its classrooms and provided Christian education for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. Today Grace School offers a Christ-centered education for three-year-old pre-kindergarten children through eighth grade. Grace also provides extended care before and after school and on days off. The Grace Staff has grown from three to over 20 professionals who teach and provide support. Grace school is accredited by The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and its teachers are licensed by the State of Wisconsin. Enrollment for the 2006-07 school year was 225.

Grace School was blessed by the Lord who moved the leaders and members of Grace to build and start a Christian day school. It was able to succeed and grow over these past 45 years because it was blessed by the Lord with members and parents who supported Grace School with their prayers and with the funds required to pay teachers' salaries and cover school operating costs. Funding alone, however, does not guarantee a successful school. Richard Maas, who served as principal for

22 years from 1970 to 1992 believes "the teacher" is the number one key to success in a Christian Day school. "I know some public schools feel they can make their schools successful by continually pouring money into it," Maas observes. "Well if that worked, you couldn't beat a public school because they have access to more funds, but they can't do what we can do in Christian education. Also, I think it's the teacher who is willing to work for the Lord and is not as concerned about earthly matters that makes a good Christian school."

The Teachers of Grace

In the 45 years from 1963 to 2007, the children of Grace School were blessed by the hard work of more than 60 dedicated teachers and principals who were called and moved by the Lord to serve at Grace. Sixteen of them served 10 years or more and seven served 20 years or more.

A Christian day school teacher is unique, with motives and characteristics that differ from many public school teachers. Maas lists several character traits he looked for to find good teachers: "Number one, a love for the Lord, wanting to do the Lord's work." In addition a good teacher must have a love for kids and a willingness to partner with the parents in Christian education, according to Maas.

Grace was blessed with many experienced teachers who remained at Grace for a good number of years. They stayed because Grace provided an atmosphere where teachers were satisfied with their positions, were secure and felt they had the backing of parents and the congregation.

Long-term teachers have been very helpful for Grace School, according to Maas. "You can get more continuity with long-term teachers," he explains. "On the other hand it is good to get some new teachers once in a while with new ideas."

Greatest Achievements

Grace School has been an important factor in the growth and success of Grace Church. It has helped to attract more young families to become members of Grace. But its greatest achievement, according to Maas is in "helping to develop children who have their Christian education and use it in whatever the Lord may move them to do as they

grow older,” he says. “We have many here at Grace who attended Grace School or other Lutheran schools and they are involved in so many facets of church work and the Lord’s work.”

Grace school has also been a great blessing for the parents who want their children to have a Christian education. Still, the school and the teachers can’t do the job alone. The school needs to work in a “partnership with parents in a child’s Christian education,” says Maas. “Parents are the most important factor in a child’s Christian education. On the other hand, there is only so much time that parents can spend with their children in going through Scripture. The school is a real backup to help parents in that respect.”

Looking Ahead

Grace School is an important part of the future plans and Mission Statement of Grace Lutheran Church, which is to: *“Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our members, to our community and to the ends of the earth.”* One of the five points under our

new Vision Statement is to glorify God through *“Discipleship that transforms lives.”* Two strategic objectives that support that vision include to:

-- *Continue to provide a high quality grade school education program, and*

-- *Develop Grace as a school with a reputation for high quality education.*

“I have always felt that the most important thing is to concentrate on ‘Christian Education,’ but you can’t neglect anything else,” observes Maas. The school needs to keep up with new types of educational materials, new careers and modern techniques. “Those, too, can help a child grow in Christian experience and training, and learn to use the talents that the Lord has given to him or her in whatever he or she is led to do,” he adds.

So, through the school that our beloved Pastor Fahl led the members of Grace to build and start 45 years ago, Grace Lutheran Church will be carrying out its mission by “making disciples” at Grace School, disciples who will do the work of the Lord in the church of the future.

Teachers: Years of Service at Grace School

(1963-64 through 2006-07)

32 Delores (Dee) Jobe	14 Bill Benson	9 John Macy
30 Joann Mueller	Larry Jobe	Debby Zaffke
26 Kathy Reinke	Fred Meier	7 Steve Anderson*
24 Shirley Piepenbrink	12 Gloria Strehlow	Kurt Gruber
23 Shirley Hermann	11 Brian Brauer	Glenn Mahnke
22 Richard Maas*	10 Al Piepenbrink	Aron Valleskey*
20 Sharon Laabs	Ron Schaefer	6 Frieda Rendahl
18 Sandy Heckler	9 Neal Hinze*	5 Dawn Karpinsky
16 Jane Fritsch	Judy Kosmatka	Laverne Meyer

Four Years: Scott Benjamin, Donna Berndt, Lorna Rueth. **Three Years:** Bruce Bessert, Joyanna Bull, Cheryl Eggold, Bruce Kosmatka, Peggy Kraase, Shirley Leininger, Marie Mahnke, Rev. Wayne Rasmussen*, Lou Valleskey. **Two Years:** Patricia Prah, Louis Vance, Debra Weier, Mary Widenhofer, Jenny Winkelmann, Maribeth Witkowski. **One year:** Beth Benson, Ruth Block, Mark Bremer, Beth Corcoran, Al Dede, Carolyn Duchow, Ardyce Fangmann, Judy Krauss, Kim (Laabs) Knuppenburg, Carolyn (Abbott) Mengels, Rosemary Miller, Mary Pinkepank, Dorothy Ruta, Kim Soyck, Sue Wentz. **In addition** to the teachers listed there were many others who contributed to the Christian education and well being of Grace School children, including part-time teachers, such as Art Krafft who came in to teach special topics, as well as music directors, athletic directors, teachers’ aides and volunteers.

* Principals: Aron Valleskey 1963-70; Richard Maas 1970-92; Rev. Wayne Rasmussen 1992-95; Steve Anderson 1995-02; Neal Hinze 2002-present.

The Rev. Erich Keller guided Grace Church through the difficult Depression years and the Rev. Edwin P. Fahl provided spiritual leadership as Grace faced the stress of the World War II era.



During the storefront years, Pastor Keller conducted confirmation classes and confirmed young people in the Christian faith. Formal studio pictures were taken of these early classes.



Pastor Keller and members of his small but determined mission congregation that gathered in the main Street storefront for weekly worship services.



The 1938 move to the white church was a major step. The building was moved from Capitol Drive where it had served as the Gospel Lutheran Chapel. The building still stands on the corner of Main and Hayes a block north of Grace Church.



The white church decorated for Christmas provided a warm atmosphere to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It was a sharp contrast from Christmas at the cramped storefront worship center.



During the years at the white church, the pews were often filled, and overflow seating would need to be provided.



Section II

The Times and Memories of the Rev. E.P. Fahl

Introduction

The Rev. Edwin P. Fahl served as Senior Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church for 36 years. Under his leadership, the membership of Grace grew tenfold. Land was purchased, new facilities were constructed and Christian day school was established. Yet, he was a very modest man who would be embarrassed to take any credit for the growth and success of Grace Lutheran Church. Instead, he saw all that has been accomplished as the “wonderful acts of our gracious God.”

As he reached retirement, Pastor Fahl looked back over those 36 years and gave thanks to God for the “privilege” of serving the Grace congregation those many years, and especially for the “privilege” of preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. In his parting words to Grace, Pastor Fahl

offered words of encouragement. More than looking back, he looked forward, advising the people of Grace how they can continue in the “work of the Lord.”

In this section you will find Pastor Fahl’s personal perspectives on the history of Grace, from the beginning through his years of service. These observations are from seven short articles he wrote for the Voice of Grace in 1986, nine years after he had retired. He titled his articles “The Reminiscences of a Pastoral Retiree of Grace – Forty Five Years of Grace, 1941-1986.” This section also includes reports on some events and developments that were not covered in the “Reminiscences” of Pastor Fahl. It includes a complete text of Pastor Fahl’s farewell sermon, which he preached at Grace Church June 5, 1977.

Reminiscences of a Pastoral Retiree of Grace
By Rev. E. P. Fahl, Pastor Emeritus
Series of articles published in the Voice of Grace, February-August, 1986

Forty Five Years of Grace, 1941-86

Forty-five years of Grace (1941-1986)... that's the measure of time granted by our Lord, presently, to the writer of this series of reminiscences. He was privileged in the year of our Lord, 1941, to become pastor of a small group of Lutheran Christians (seventeen families) in the little Village of Menomonee Falls (then numbering 1469 residents). Those 45 years were fraught with manifold trials and joys, but through it all, the Lord of the Church manifested Himself as the One who is in control. Under His divine governance, Grace congregation has become a beacon of light and purveyor of the truth of God's divinely inspired Word in Menomonee Falls.

The purpose of these personal reminiscences, suggested by one of the staff workers of the Voice of Grace, is to acquaint particularly the more recent members of Grace with the wonderful acts of our gracious God in the fifty-three years of Grace's history.

We begin at the beginning...in the year of our Lord, 1932. Misses Esther and Ruth Wilke, daughters of Walter and Lilly Wilke, lived on a farm on County Line Road, just east of Pilgrim Road (now the Mader farm...of Mader's restaurant). Having come of age, both Esther and Ruth were courted by two fine young men, Theophil Rott and William Petzold. They decided on a dual marriage ceremony and so made arrangements to be married in a single service at the parish of the Wilkes: Saron's Ev. Lutheran church of Milwaukee. After the marriage, both the Rotts and the Petzolds took up residence in the Menomonee Falls area. There was, however, no Lutheran church in Menomonee Falls at that time, which they could make their church home. Many of us will remember that those were the years of the Great Depression, with its limited

employment. Those who were fortunate to have a job were earning about 25 cents an hour. Travel by automobile was therefore also limited.

This prompted the Rotts and the Petzolds to contact the Rev. Frank Selle of Emmaus Lutheran church of Milwaukee, who was also a member of the Mission Board of the South-Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, about the possibility of starting a Lutheran church in Menomonee Falls.

The Board acted favorably upon their request. In the summer of 1932 it engaged the Rev. Erich

*“The purpose of these
 reminiscences is to acquaint
 the members of Grace with the
 wonderful acts of
 our gracious God.”*
 -- Pastor Fahl, 1986

Keller, Missionary-at-large of the South-Wisconsin District, to organize a mission in Menomonee Falls and also in Whitefish Bay. During the week of August 22, 1932, Rev. Keller introduced Mr. John Pingel graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and a C.R.M. (Candidate for the Reverend Ministry) to several families in the Falls area. Arrangements were made to conduct first service on September 4th. A paid advertisement was placed in the Menomonee Falls News and 400 programs were distributed house to house. Furnishings for the Mission were supplied by the Mission Board of the District: a small reed organ (pump-style), two dozen show-house seats, a small white altar, which we still use, and the

lectern, which still serves as a reading desk for our meetings. These items were all brought on one truck from Milwaukee and put in place in the rented store building, which is now the Heebie Jeebie tavern in the Oberman Building on Main Street. Reverend Selle's son came out from Milwaukee and painted the church schedule on the window with the words: "Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. We preach Christ Crucified. Welcome in Christ's Name."

That was the beginning of our Mission church in Menomonee Falls.

On May 19, 1933, Rev. Ed Schmidt, Chairman of the Board of Mission of the District, and Rev. Erich Keller submitted a Constitution. On June 14th, the formal organization of the congregation was effected. There were ten individuals who signed the Constitution and became charter members of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

The Charter Member of Grace

Mr. and Mrs. Theophil Rott

Mr. and Mrs. William Petzold

Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Schlageter

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kletsch

Mr. Herman Raether

Miss Anna Raether

Even with such an inauspicious beginning there was adversity and distraction encountered by these few worshipers. A petition was circulated in the community stating that there were already sufficient churches in Menomonee Falls (three) and therefore another was not warranted. Their place of worship was next door to a tavern, and on Sunday mornings there was the noise of the tavern-keeper next door sweeping up broken liquor bottles. There was also a stairway leading to the upstairs apartments. On Sunday mornings, during worship service, there was often the clanking of children, with roller skates on, making their ascent or descent on the stairway. Beginning on October 1, 1933, Rev. Pingel accepted a call to

Poy Sippi, WI. Grace church was then served by the Rev. Erich Keller. His tenure of service was from 1933 to 1941.

*NOTE: The writer of this series acknowledges Ester Rott, historian of Grace, as contributor of many of data of the early history of Grace.

The Early Years: 1933-41

As we concluded the first in this series of "Reminiscences" we stated that Pastor Erich Keller served Grace from 1933 to 1941. This was not a time of prosperity and productivity. The economy was at an all-time low. There was a severe drought throughout the farmlands of America, banks closed, people lost their entire savings, and there was mass unemployment. And that nucleus of Lutheran worshipers in Menomonee Falls did not have the most attractive worship facility. It was a rented storefront next to a tavern and actually had an ugly, uninviting appearance.

Today, we who worship in a modern and very attractive church edifice on Kenwood and Hayes Avenue, have to wonder how that small contingent of Christians fared under those difficult circumstances.

We note from early records that there was a strong will and determination, under God to "make a go of it" in spite of rather meager circumstances. Average Sunday attendance was between 20 to 25 worshipers with a total weekly offering that averaged about \$2.40 and an annual income of some \$140.00.

There was, however, a wholesome and faith-in-God persistence that motivated this small group of worshipers to start a choir consisting of Mrs. Dippmann, Mrs. C. Ische, Mrs. Esther Rott, Miss Sarah Stark, and Mrs. Gudelke. Choir practice was in their homes under the direction of Mrs. Schlageter. The good ladies chose to start a Ladies Aid in 1934.

The small congregation also voted to start a

building fund in 1936 and by June of 1938 the fund had reached \$400.00.

In the summer of 1938, the Mission Board of the District made arrangements to procure Gospel Lutheran chapel on N. 16th St. and W. Capitol in Milwaukee, to dismantle same and move it to Menomonee Falls where it was reassembled on the corner of Main Street and Hayes Avenue. Total indebtedness upon completion was \$7,000.00. This chapel still stands at that location and has served several other denominations.

The service of dedication of Grace church was held on the First Sunday in Advent, November 27, 1938. There was a morning service at 10:00 A.M. with the Rev. Keller preaching the sermon and conducting the rite of dedication. Anthems were rendered by the Sunday school children of Grace and the Immanuel Children's Chorus under the direction of principal and teacher A. Stellhorn, organist was Miss G. Reiser. There was also an afternoon service at 3:00 P.M. with the Rev. William Lochner of Nazareth Lutheran church, Milwaukee preaching. Anthems were rendered by Trinity Male Chorus, Karl Markworth, director.

During those eight years of early development of Grace (1933-41) a theological student by the name of Edwin Fahl was being prepared to succeed the Rev. Keller. After graduation from Concordia College, Milwaukee in 1933, he went on to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Student Edwin noted after completion of this first year at the seminary that only two graduates out of a class of 138 had a "divine call" at the time of graduation. Student Edwin then decided to go into medicine and enrolled in the pre-med. course at Marquette University.

He completed the course in two years: 1935 - 36. It was now a matter of choosing medicine vs. Ministry. Circumstances however, made it necessary to return to the seminary. The economy during the Depression and the high cost of enrolling in Medical School—the tuition, books, microscope, and additional equipment, made it prohibitive to continue with a medical career. Two additional years at the seminary plus one year of secular work and part-time assistance at Cross Lutheran church under Pastor E. Schueler culminated in graduation from the seminary in

June of 1939. Exactly two graduates out of 140 received a "call" at graduation. There were many candidates for the ministry who were standing idle in the marketplace.

In December, 1939, while Edwin was atop a ladder painting in his dad's bakery on 26th and Fond du Lac Avenue in Milwaukee, he was visited by the Rev. Frank Selle of Emmaus Lutheran church, Milwaukee, and the Rev. Fred Schwertfeger, who was President of the South-Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Inquiry was made whether CRM Edwin Fahl would consider serving as assistant to the Rev. Schwertfeger at St. Stephen's Lutheran church in Horicon, Wisconsin. They didn't have to wait long for an answer and so it was that on January 1, 1940, Edwin began his vicarage in Horicon. Services were in English and German each Sunday morning and Advent and Lenten services were also bilingual. Much valuable experience was gained in the 20 months we were privileged to serve in that community. It was there that we initially made the acquaintance of Mrs. Marcy Hanser who is now a member of Grace.

Starting Ministry in Time of War

It was on July 13, 1941, that the Rev. Erich Keller received a "call" to serve a parish in Sheboygan. He accepted, and now there was a vacancy at Grace in Menomonee Falls and Our Savior's, Whitefish Bay. The Mission Board of the District now extended the call to CRM Edwin Fahl to serve the dual parish of Grace and Our Savior's. The call was accepted by candidate Fahl and he was ordained at his home congregation (Cross, Milwaukee) by the Rev. Fred Schwertfeger in August of 1941. He preached his first sermon at Grace at 9:00 A.M. and at Our Savior's at 10:45 A.M. The distance between the two parishes was about 16 miles, so considerable mileage was put on his car since there were multiple services and meetings involved: elders, church council, Ladies Aid, Sunday School

teachers and catechetical instruction classes (both Jr. and Adult), etc.

Then there was another matter to be taken care of. Since St. Paul says that a pastor should be “the husband of one wife”, pastor Fahl now took unto himself a helpmate in the person of Elizabeth Looysen, who was a member of the same parish, Cross Ev. Lutheran of Milwaukee. The festive event took place at Cross church on October 15, 1941, and they took up residence in a rented home in Whitefish Bay (on Port Washington Road, north of Silver Spring). It was quite a challenge to serve two parishes simultaneously, but there were dedicated laymen and laywomen who gave unstintingly of themselves to promote the Kingdom of God in Whitefish Bay and in Menomonee Falls.

The first stirring event in Pastor Fahl’s young ministry dropped like a bomb on December 7, 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Grace responded to the “call to arms” and sent seven young men into the armed services of our country. Three gave their lives on foreign soil: Walter Miller in the South Pacific area, William Moede in the Battle of the Bulge in Luxemburg, and Donald Buuck in the West Pacific. Memorial services were conducted by Pastor Fahl at Grace for each of these young men.

Serving a dual parish did also have its humorous moments. You see, we did have a very tight schedule: Grace at 9:00 A.M. and Our Savior’s at 10:45 A.M. When there was Holy Communion in the 9 o’clock service at Grace, we had to hurry to get to Our Savior’s by 10:45. We recall that often the elders of Our Savior’s would be standing on the curb looking down Silver Spring Drive awaiting the arrival of their padre. One Sunday morning, en route from Menomonee Falls to Whitefish Bay, between services, the gas tank registered near empty and we had to stop on Fond du Lac and Silver Spring at a tavern, which also had several gas pumps. There were no “self-serve” gas stations in those days and so we had to honk to get the tavern proprietor to give us a fill. We paid our bill and were ready to drive on when we heard someone calling us. Looking into the rearview mirror we saw that the hose from the gas

pump was still in our gas tank. A quick stop averted a major catastrophe.

Ministerial acts began to multiply that first year at Grace: 15 baptisms, 5 confirmations (3 Jr. and 2 adult), 2 weddings and 2 burials.

In the summer of 1942, the Mission Board decided to divide the dual parish of Grace, Menomonee Falls and Our Savior’s of Whitefish Bay. Pastor Fahl was extended the call to serve Grace full-time and the Rev. Harold Schwertferger to serve Our Savior’s. This now also meant relocation for pastor and Mrs. Fahl from Whitefish Bay to a rented home on Fourth Street right under the Falls water tower.

It was shortly after locating in this rented parsonage that there was a terrific thunderstorm in the area and the electric current was off during the

*Grace sent seven young men
into the armed services.
Three gave their lives
for their country*

night for approximately one hour. This happened to be late Saturday night while we were in bed. The next morning, while I was at my desk rehearsing the sermon for the day, elder Theo. Rott appeared at our front door asking if there would be a church service that morning. “The people are already gathered for worship for the 10:00 service.” Our electric clock showed only 9:00 A.M. That was one of our most embarrassing experiences at Grace.

On August 21, 1942, a blessed event took place in the Fahl household, for there was added a little baby girl in the person of Ruth Ellen, who now resides in New Cannan, Connecticut.

Menomonee Falls also began to show some signs of growth; the population now was 2,469, just one thousand more than when Grace was founded in 1933. With the growth of the community, the congregation also began to grow. However, Grace was still subsidized by the South Wisconsin District. Members of Grace ought to realize that they received financial support from

other church members of the District for some 14 years! Members of Grace should now also pay their fair share to the Mission Fund of the District and Synod so that other Mission congregations can be started and supported.

A Period of Growth

The years 1945 to 1955 were a period of growth and planning for future expansion. In the last series we stated that Grace was subsidized financially for fourteen years (1933-1946) by the South Wisconsin District. A bold move, however, was taken by the congregation in 1946 when it was resolved that Grace congregation become self-sustaining—no longer dependent upon the district for financial support.

Another bold move was undertaken when the congregation resolved to purchase its own parsonage instead of renting. After inquiring about several available homes in Menomonee Falls, they chose to purchase a home for \$9,500 at W161 N8940 Hayes Avenue. This home is presently occupied by Mrs. Ann Madler, a member of Grace.

There was also growth in the Fahl household in those years. Son Victor was born on January 3, 1946, and presently is residing with his wife Karen and four children at Ogema, Wisconsin. Son William was added on April 13, 1950, and is presently living in Madison with his wife Nancy and son Bryan. Bill is engaged in the Oncology (cancer) Research Department at the University.

In 1949, when the congregation began to outgrow its facilities on Main and Hayes Ave., the congregation purchased six lots on Park Blvd. (presently serving as playground and athletic field for our school). In 1952, this adjoining property of 5 1/2 acres was bought from Mr. Wesley Goode, president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Menomonee Falls. Total cost of the six acres of land, which constitutes our present church property, was \$9,400. Truly Grace congregation was the recipient of an abundance of God's grace and gifts in those early years. In the May 1951 issue of the Menomonee Falls News this article appeared:

“At a special congregation meeting held on Friday, May 14th, the voting members of Grace church resolved to purchase a 5 1/2 acre tract of land. This is in addition to the six lots on Park Blvd. purchased in 1945. The new site is located at the proposed juncture of South East Ave. and Kenwood Blvd. It is bounded on the west and south by the Menomonee River parkway.

A rapidly increasing church membership and growing Sunday School enrollment have made the present church facilities inadequate. The congregation has also gone on record as favoring the establishment of a parochial school and also for a parsonage, parking space, and adequate playground facilities. It is the desire of the membership to convert this beautiful tract of land into spacious church grounds of which the community can be justly proud.”

Because of the phenomenal growth of the Sunday School it was agreed that we could no longer wait for our new church facilities and so it was resolved to build an annex onto our church on Main and Hayes. Under the capable expertise of John Klein, who was then a member of the Board of Trustees, and with the help of a number of volunteer laborers from the congregation, the annex became a reality and served the congregation for multiple purposes: Sunday School, social gatherings, Walther League, general meeting room, etc. Sunday School classes were also held in the church nave, church basement, kitchen and a rented room in the basement of the Farmers and Merchants Bank.

With the rapid growth also in church membership, the congregation now resolved to proceed with plans to build on our new church property.

Grace church has always been intent on keeping its members informed about church matters and to that end started publishing a weekly church Bulletin in 1942 which was mailed to all members who did not appear in church on Sunday morning. To keep the members of Grace informed re: Congregational and Synodical affairs, the pastor published a monthly church paper starting in 1945 entitled “From The Desk Of the Pastor”. In 1957 the format and title were changed to “Voice of Grace”. In the first issue of

the Voice of Grace in December 1957, the pastor wrote: *“This new monthly parish paper has been named the ‘Voice of Grace’. That not only identifies this publication with our congregation, but it also emphasizes the need for a voice to be heard which speaks to us of grace. In a time of lovelessness, when the voices of envy and prejudice, fear and frustration, make themselves heard from many quarters, how encouraging and assuring it is that a voice of grace should make itself heard in our congregation.*

“And is not this to be expected in a Christian congregation such as ours, which for the past twenty-four years has experienced the bountiful grace of God? It is alone by the grace of God that we have been drawn together into one large congregational family. It is by the grace of God that we are numbered among the elect of God. It is by the grace of God that we can look forward to an eternity in the presence of God and His saints. Must then now we, to whom God has spoken in His grace, also feel constrained to speak to one another with grace? May this publication always be for our congregation what its name implies ‘The Voice of Grace’.”

Mountain-Peak Experiences: 1955-58

With the mid-fifties (1955-1956) building plans for our new church edifice and parsonage began to take shape. A study-committee was appointed to concern itself with the finances and to formulate a program of fundraising. The committee was also to decide on type of architecture, facilities, layout, and architectural firm to be engaged. Finances, of course, were an important factor, and so in the spring of 1956 the congregation resolved to engage the Wells Fundraising Organization to help conduct a Building Fund campaign. The members of Grace, who then numbered 510 communicant members, responded to the call for building fund monies by pledging \$114,000.00.

In July of 1956, it was resolved to engage the architectural firm of Steffen and Kemp of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, to draw plans for a new

church and attached parsonage at a cost not to exceed \$260,000.00. A building committee consisting of William Wenthe, chairman, John Klein, Richard Tews, Emil Ramthun, Esther Rott, and Oscar Violand were appointed. They submitted architectural plans and specifications on March 29th. Bids were advertised and let on April 27th and the bid accepted was for \$259,000.00 by the A. Guenther general contractors. And now came the year 1958, a year of mountain-peak experiences:

** There was the big evangelism effort called the PREACHING-TEACHING-REACHING mission endeavor, which reached its climax during the week of February 2-6. Special services were held each evening with the Rev. Elmer Rimpler of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, as our guest missionary. The theme for the daily sermons was: “Live and Win.” A corps of volunteer lay-visitors from Grace called on the unchurched in the community and returned to the church for a reporting session and service which included an address, hymn singing, and question and answer period. A number of unchurched were gained through this effort.

** On a rainy Sunday morning on our 25th anniversary, June 14, 1958, a large assemblage of members gathered on our new church property at the juncture of Kenwood and Hayes for the groundbreaking rite in the name of the Holy Trinity. That initiated the start of construction on our new church edifice, which was enlarged in the architectural drawings to accommodate 500 worshipers. Original drawings were to accommodate 400. The new highway 41 was under construction and Menomonee Falls anticipated a large growth in population.

** The festival Silver Anniversary Banquet was held in the assembly hall of our Milwaukee Lutheran High School. Dr. Walter Stuenkel, president of Concordia College, Milwaukee, was the festival speaker. The Anniversary booklet had these printed words for its members:

“Members of Grace congregation must gratefully acknowledge what great things God had done in our midst those first 25 years. A look at our statistics will bear out the truth of His promises: ‘I am with you always,’ Matt.

28:20 and 'I will bless you,' Gen. 12:2.

Construction on the new church and parsonage proceeded without 'let or hindrance' through the summer of 1958. A favorable factor in the smooth construction proceedings was the daily supervision of our trustee, Mr. John Klein, whose work was in construction supervision. He saw to it that everything was done according to specifications."

** Reformation Day, 1958, took on added significance for it was on that day, with the blare of trumpets and the singing of "A Mighty fortress Is Our God," that the Building Committee conducted the cornerstone laying of our new church edifice. It was a day long-to-be-remembered by every member of Grace.

The Growth of Grace, 1933-58

	<i>June</i>	<i>June</i>
<i>Membership</i>	<i>1933</i>	<i>1958</i>
<i>Baptized souls</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>1,080</i>
<i>Communicant members</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>572</i>
<i>Voting members</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>130</i>
<i>Pupils in Sunday School</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Sunday School staff</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>31</i>

** In the June, 1958 issue of the Voice of Grace, our Stewardship chairman, Mr. Walter Luebke, wrote the following:

"During this month of June our Grace church reaches the quarter century mark. We have done well - church and parson age all paid for, land for expansion all paid and on the brink of a large building program. One cannot help but admire the good stewardship qualities of the charter and other early members of Grace church. These members gave freely of their time, talent, and treasure. With real courage and determination they obtained their goal—a house of worship, a pastor, and membership, much of which was came about by house-to-house canvassing and evangelism work. They also gave freely of their treasure to maintain this church. Certainly, a

tribute is due these people, who under God, made it possible for us to have this anniversary and forthcoming new house of worship. May the Lord bless them for their endeavors, and teach us to be good stewards such as they were and are."

Building and Dedicating the New Church: 1958-59

Following the cornerstone laying for our new church edifice in October 1958, the members of Grace would invariably drive down Hayes Avenue after the Sunday morning services in the old church to view the progress made on the new church. As construction progressed through the winter of 1958-1959 there was anxious anticipation regarding the time when they could worship in their new church sanctuary. That day finally came on Sunday, June 7, 1959—the day of dedication of our new church edifice and parsonage. It was a beautiful, sunny day when a large gathering of Grace's members and visitors assembled at the old church on Main and Hayes for a brief farewell service conducted by Pastor Fahl from the stairway on the outside of the church.

There followed a grand procession down Hayes Avenue to the new church, led by Pastor Fahl and the Rev. Victor Selle who was the dedicatory speaker. Leading the large procession of members were Carl Rapp bearing the pulpit Bible and Luther Kopplin and Kenneth Capelle bearing the Sacramental Vessels. When they arrived at the site of the new church on E. Kenwood and So. East Avenue (now Hayes), the key to the new church was handed by the General contractor A. Guentherm to William Wenthe, chairman of the building committee, who in turn handed it to John Klein of the Board of Trustees. As our worshipers entered the new sanctuary there were many audible "oohs" and "aahs." It was, indeed, "A day the Lord had made" and the members of Grace "were glad and rejoiced in it" for all the good the Lord had provided for them.

The Rev. Victor Selle, son of the Rev. Frank Selle, who together with the District Mission Board instigated the founding of Grace church, preached the sermon. Senior, Junior and Children's groups rendered dedication anthems.

A Service of Praise was conducted that same afternoon with the Rev. Professor Walter Stuenkel, President of Concordia College, Milwaukee the speaker.

Dedication Vespers were also held on the same day with the Rev. Herbert Baxmann of St. John's Ev. Lutheran church, Plymouth, Wisconsin, and President of the South Wisconsin District the speaker. Members of Grace who were privileged to be present at these services, will long remember that day. Doxologies of praise and thanksgiving to our Almighty God rang out "loud and clear" in all of the dedicatory services.

Not to long after the completion and dedication of the church and parsonage—with the rapid influx of new members—the congregation began serious discussion about starting a parochial school. It was on January 18, 1962 that the voting membership of Grace voted to go ahead with plans for construction of an 8 classroom Christian day school. A building committee was appointed "to engage professional services for preparing plans and specifications for the building. The congregation's Educational Research Committee estimated that the building would cost about \$160,000 and would be added onto the north end of the church tower to form an "L" shaped structure according to a master plan. The architectural firm of Steffen and Kemp was again engaged to draw up plans and specifications.

Members of the building committee were: John Fiene, Richard Tews, John Klein and Adolph Cooper. Groundbreaking for the new school took place on January 20, 1963, in six below zero weather. John Klein, our trustee, built a fire over the spot where the groundbreaking would take place so that the pastor could get his shovel into the ground for the ceremony.

The school was staffed by Principal Aron Valleskey (grades 3 and 4) and teachers Charlene Fillmore from St. Louis (kindergarten), and Shirley Leininger from Tipton, Indiana (grades 1 and 2).

Our initial enrollment was 25 kindergartners, 28 first and second graders, and 18 third and fourth graders. Total enrollment was 71. Today's (1986) enrollment is 205 with a staff of 12 teachers.

The year 1963 also marked the 30th anniversary of Grace church. In the June 1963 issue of the Voice of Grace, these words appear:

"This thirtieth year of our history is historic year. It marks the beginning of our expanded education program. The Lord of the Church is abundantly blessing this new undertaking of our congregation. He has given us a wonderful faculty of Mr. Aron Valleskey and Misses Charlene Fillmore and Shirley Leininger. For this fine faculty we are deeply grateful to God."

At the 30th Anniversary fellowship gathering, Mr. Robert Harthun gave an audio-visual presentation and concluded with these words:

"God has guided this congregation through 30 years—years fraught with depression, joys, fears, anxiety, doubts, and prosperity—and we have His divine promise for the future. By His grace, we will soon teach thousands in His way through the years that follow in our new school. May we always remain a congregation deserving of God's endless and bountiful goodness."

The Final Years, Time for Travel: 1960-77

With the new church (1959) and school (1963), membership of Grace multiplied so rapidly that our staff had to be increased and so we engaged our first secretary, Dorothea Peterson in 1961. Then followed Gunda Allister in 1962, Lorna Keeler in 1963, Joyce Starck in 1964 and Barbara Baas in 1985.

An assistant pastor, the Rev. Lyle Klemz was added in 1964 and served until 1966. The Rev. Kenneth Potratz served under contract as a pulpit assistant from 1967 into 1968. Then followed the Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld (1968-1972) and the Rev. James Zehnder (1972-1978).

During the years 1963 to 1977, the years preceding our retirement, there stands out in our memory certain mountain-peak experiences, including our first tour abroad to Russia, Egypt and the Holy Land in 1972.

**** RUSSIA** was a memorable experience, to reside in downtown Moscow (in a tourist hotel) for a week, taking in the sights and sounds of life in a Dictator State, to visit the large shopping center at GUMZ's on a cold (6 degrees below zero) evening in January in downtown Moscow, to traverse the Kremlin grounds with its five large cathedrals and note that the Cross of Christ dominates this capital of an atheistic country, to take a day's journey by air to Leningrad and a tour of Peter the Great's Hermitage (summer home) gave us opportunity to view some of the world's greatest sculptures and paintings gathered by Peter the Great on his travels throughout Europe.

**** EGYPT** gave us three days' residency in the Shepherd Hotel in Cairo on the River Nile, (where Moses was supposedly pulled out of the bulrushes by Pharaoh's daughter). It enabled us to visit some of the historic sites in this ancient land: the pyramids (on camel back yet), the huge museum in Cairo, sailing in an Egyptian felucca on the Nile, flying down to Luxor (about 500 miles south of Cairo) and visiting King Tut's tomb

**** THE HOLY LAND** was the most memorable of all our tours. To walk in the steps of our Lord in this land of the Bible was a real faith-strengthening experience. Something we shall never forget was the privilege granted us to conduct a devotion in the Garden of the Resurrection for our tour group. Standing before the open tomb in Joseph's Garden, just a stone's throw from the hill of Golgotha where our Lord gave His life on a cross, impressed upon all of us the verity of the Biblical records.

A repeat tour in 1976 to the Holy Land and to Greece with a large group, including James and Ethel Mayer and Elmer and Lorraine Mueller of our Grace church, was equally impressive. It was then that we were privileged to conduct a service of Holy Communion amid the ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum where Jesus often worshiped on the Sabbath Day during His days on

earth. It was on that tour in 1976 that we also included the cities of Athens and Corinth. Through archaeological diggings the city of Corinth has been completely uncovered. It is here at the foot of the Acro-Corinthus (a mountain 1800 feet high, on which was a pagan temple) that the apostle Paul arrived in the year A.D. 52. He labored for a year and a half lodging with Priscilla and Aquila, supporting himself by tent making and preaching Christ in the synagogue. It was truly a memorable experience. To walk down Main Street in downtown Corinth in the steps of great men of God instills in a person an awe and a reverence which cannot be associated with any other secular experience.

After our return from our first tour abroad, we had our first experience with personal hospital care. Desiring to emulate the skaters we saw on the Volga River in Moscow, we made arrangements for an ice-skating outing with our two grandsons in Palatine, Illinois. We had to use a pair of borrowed skates (hockey skates in place of Johnson speed skates with which we were accustomed). Racing across the ice at break-neck speed with our two grandsons, the serrated edge at the tip of the hockey skates dug into the ice, and I made a flying fall with a one-point landing on my right elbow, crushing the elbow bones. We managed to drive to our daughter Ruth's home for a good dinner and then make the long drive back to Menomonee Falls in a dense fog.

After a restless night and "passing out" in the morning, it was surgery at Community Memorial Hospital under the scalpel of Dr. John Riesch who screwed the elbow together with three screws and placed the arm in a plaster cast for three months. This meant conducting services, preaching and gesticulating in the pulpit with the left arm only. It was then that I became known as the "leftist" preacher of Menomonee Falls.

After release from the hospital, one of our elders, Harold Baum, appeared at our rear door at the parsonage and handed me a brown paper bag. What do you think was in the bag? It was a pair of boy's sled skates. He thought they would be safer than the hockey skates I had used.

In August 1941, the Rev. Edwin P. Fahl became Pastor of Grace, a congregation of about 100 communicant members and a church with pew space for 120 worshipers. Under his leadership Grace grew, built a new church and started a day school.



Young Pastor Fahl with the Ladies Aid at the 10th Anniversary celebration in 1943. The first Grace Ladies Aid was organized in May 1934.



Three pastors who served Grace Church in the early years took part in the 20th Anniversary celebration: the Reverends John Pingel; E. P. Fahl and Erich Keller



The first parsonage was purchased in August 1945 for \$9,500. The home is located on Hayes Avenue north of Main Street.



The little white church was expanded in 1952 by building an annex at the rear to provide space for Sunday school classes and other meetings.



After 20 years in the white church, worship services were often filled to capacity and members were anxious to move on to a bigger, more attractive place to worship.



Pastor Fahl breaks ground for the new church. He remembered it as a "rainy Sunday morning on our 25th Anniversary, June 14 1958" when the members of Grace gathered on their new property for the "groundbreaking rite in the name of the Holy Trinity."

June 7, 1959 stands out as one of the most memorable days in the history of Grace Lutheran Church: the day when the members of Grace marched down Hayes Avenue to dedicate their new church and parsonage.



Pastor Fahl remembered Reformation Day 1958 as a "mountain peak experience." It was a day with "the blare of trumpets and the singing of 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,' when the Building Committee conducted the cornerstone laying of our new church."



On June 7, 1959 the grand procession was led by Pastor Fahl and the Rev. Victor Selle who was the dedicatory speaker, followed by Carl Rapp bearing the pulpit Bible, while Luther Kopplin and Kenneth Capelle carried the Sacramental Vessels.



When they arrived at the new church, Pastor Fahl recalled that the key to the new church was handed by the general contractor A. Guentherm to William Wenthe, chairman of the building committee, who in turn handed it to John Klein of the Board of Trustees.

Worshipping in the new church for the first time, The members of Grace fix their eyes on the unique Grace Cross above the altar. This cross, designed by Pastor Fahl, has provided a meaningful focal point for the thousands who have worshipped here over the past 50 years



Section II
The Times and Memories of the Rev. E.P. Fahl

Leading Grace 36 Years, 1941-77

There was much that took place during the 36 years that Pastor Fahl served Grace that did not get adequate attention in the Reminiscences he wrote in 1986. Reading between the lines of membership records and financial reports tells the story of a continual struggle to survive and to move forward with what the “Lord of the church” had planned for Grace Lutheran Church. It also is the story of the strong leadership provided by Pastor Fahl, the man God had prepared and sent to lead His flock in Menomonee Falls.

The Lord blessed Grace with a growing number of members. Just two years before Pastor Fahl started his years at Grace, the congregation had moved from their storefront location into the little white church at Main and Hayes where it still stands today. That church had pew space to seat about 120 worshipers, about the right size for the congregation in 1941 when Pastor Fahl accepted the call to become the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church.

Two and a half years after Pastor Fahl arrived, in January 1944, communicant membership had already climbed to 122 and total membership had reached 225. After five and a half years, in January 1947, total membership had climbed to 320 with 187 communicant members.

Young pastor Fahl must have been very impressed with the growing responsibilities the Lord was placing in his hands. Soon he would come to realize that what he had seen was just the beginning of what was yet to come. World War II had just ended. The soldiers were coming home, getting married and starting new families. The post-war baby boom and an economic expansion were just getting started.

The population of Menomonee Falls started a rapid period of growth, as new families were formed and an increasing number of families began moving from Milwaukee to the live in larger homes on larger lots in the suburbs. Pastor Fahl saw these new homes as his mission field. He worked

tirelessly to visit and get acquainted with the new families moving into the area. He proved himself to be a skillful evangelist and Grace continued to grow. By the end of 1950, communicant membership reached 295.

Meanwhile, Grace was growing at a rate that would soon require building a new church. In 1949, Grace purchased six lots as part of its future expansion plans. Another 5 1/2 acres would be purchased in May 1951.

Pastor Fahl was well aware that the work of the Lord would require an increasingly larger church budget. Financial issues would require careful management as well as a strong focus on the stewardship performance of the membership. But how much could he expect from a congregation that still numbered fewer than 300 communicants by the end of 1950?

Grace started as a mission church and received financial aid from the South Wisconsin District. In 1946, the congregation became self-sustaining. Pastor Fahl describes this as a “bold move.” It meant that the membership would need to take full responsibility for the cost of doing the work of the Lord.

A financial statement from 1946 shows the receipts and disbursements for the “work of the Lord” divided into three general categories. The receipts were: Home purposes: \$3,573.10, Outside Purposes: \$1,304.41, and Debt Retirement: \$1,173.70. Total receipts were \$6,051.21.

While those numbers seem very small they need to be put into perspective. In 1946, a dollar was worth about 10 times as much as a dollar is worth today. A dollar would buy more back then, but was also much harder to earn. The retail price of gasoline, for example, was about 20 cents a gallon. Bread was 10 cents a loaf, postage stamps were 3 cents, and home prices averaged \$12,500. Average annual salaries were \$3,150 and minimum wage was 40 cents an hour.

Retail prices of new cars averaged \$1,400 but it might not have been easy to buy one without paying extra. The entire U.S. auto industry produced nothing but military equipment from 1942 through 1946. The first post-war cars were 1946 models and the supply was limited. Dealers had waiting lists and many of the new cars were sold at black market prices.

It was in these times that Pastor Fahl saw the need to stress stewardship for the work of the Lord. He frequently challenged members to do better and used the Scriptures to support his messages.

*“Upon the first day
of the week let every one
of you lay by him in store,
as God hath prospered him.”*
-- I Corinthians 16:2

For example, a 1946 financial report to members included a listing of amounts contributed by each family. While the names of the families were not listed, each family could compare their own contributions with those of fellow members.

“Some of our members are to be commended for their fine stewardship, while others ought to still make improvements,” Pastor Fahl said in the report. The annual contributions per family ranged from a high of \$459.08 and a midpoint of \$38.25.

Pastor Fahl was well aware that it would require significant amounts of money to carry out the work of the Lord in Menomonee Falls. He led the congregation in planning stewardship programs and building fund drives. He pushed evangelism efforts to bring in new members. He often reminded his growing flock of their obligation to support the Lord’s work with their contributions.

Pastor Fahl’s words were not taken lightly. The members of Grace respected their pastor as a servant of God, urging them on to do His work. In 1938 they had accepted responsibility for \$7,000 of debt in order to have their own church building. In 1945 they agreed to purchase a parsonage for Pastor Fahl for \$9,500 with the help of a loan from the district.

In early 1951 Pastor Fahl wrote, “A Word on

Finances” in his “From the Desk of the Pastor” report to members. His report included the financial report for 1950 and budget for 1951. Total 1950 receipts for budgeted purposes at \$8,289.27 were up 37 percent from four years earlier. At the same time, Grace members contributed \$2,388.06 to special offerings including Sunday school offerings and contributions to an organ fund. Total receipts for all purposes were \$10,667.33. Meanwhile, Pastor Fahl was urging them to do better. The budget for 1951 had climbed to \$8,992.65 and would require members to dig even deeper. Pastor Fahl asked members to study both the report and the new budget carefully to become well acquainted with the needs of Grace Church

“You are asked to contribute to the Lord’s work in the measure that He has blessed you,” Pastor Fahl wrote. He urged them to consider the Scriptural system of giving suggested in 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Stressing Christian Education

Throughout his years of service, Pastor Fahl was a dedicated supporter of Christian education. He encouraged Bible study and Sunday school. He helped Grace to start a Christian day school and encouraged the congregation to support a Lutheran High School.

Grace started its Sunday school after its first worship service September 4, 1932. Pastor Fahl continued to support a strong Sunday school program during his early years at Grace. By the early 1950s, the Sunday school had outgrown the space available at the little white church.

At the same time, Pastor Fahl also had a strong desire for Grace to start a Christian day school. His efforts on that date back to 1949 when the congregation was already faced with a growing need to build a larger church.

Under Pastor Fahl’s leadership, the congregation adopted a resolution to “establish and maintain our own Christian day school in Menomonee Falls.” The resolution, also acknowledged that the congregation would be unable to do that without financial aid from the South Wisconsin District.

The plan called for converting the basement of the little white church into a school room, with seating for about 35 children. This would require the purchase of desks, blackboards, books and other

supplies. It also would require employing a teacher. In total the cost was estimated at about \$6,000, at a time when total annual budgets were about \$8,000 to \$9,000.

At that time the District Extension Fund had been depleted. The request was refused because it was the policy of the District to subsidize churches and parsonages only. If the school would be started, it would require a significant commitment by the membership.

While the basement school did not become a reality, the seeds of interest had been planted. The early attention Pastor Fahl stimulated on this issue paved the way to incorporate plans for a school in the drive to build a church.

After the basement school plan had been put on the shelf, the congregation employed an architect from Milwaukee to prepare sketches for a new church and adjoining school building. When the cost estimates were completed and totaled \$350,000 the building plan was also put on hold, but not abandoned. Grace would eventually build a church.

Continuing the Work of the Lord

While building plans were put on hold in the early 1950s, Grace was still moving ahead with the work of the Lord. Several steps were taken by the congregation to grow and to serve with all the resources they could muster. At the same time they continued to look forward to the day they would build a church and a school.

In 1951, the congregation replaced the old reed organ that had served them well since the white church was dedicated in 1938. A new Baldwin electronic organ was purchased for \$3,130. At the same time, the congregation agreed to spend \$7,000 to purchase 5 1/2 acres for church expansion. In the same year, the congregation participated in a synod-wide "Conquest for Christ" fund drive and collected over \$4,000. Pastor Fahl's leadership of the stewardship efforts of Grace Church was indeed bearing fruit.

Meanwhile, the Grace Sunday school had grown well beyond the space available. In his *Reminiscences*, Pastor Fahl tells of how the congregation pulled together to provide space by building an annex to the little white church. A September 8, 1952 letter to members of Grace from

the Finance Committee provides more facts on how that building project achieved.

In July, 1952 the committee approved going ahead with an expansion of Sunday school space by building an annex. However, the resolution included a \$5,000 limit on the amount that could be spent on construction and improvement. By September, the letter noted, the new structure was nearly finished, thanks to the dedicated help of members and friends who provided much of the labor required. These people donated more than 600 hours of labor, making it possible to complete the project within the \$5,000 spending limit.

In the same letter, the Finance Committee announced that the first Sunday in October had been set as the date for a "member-to-member visitation" to give everyone an opportunity to "do our just share in the God-pleasing undertaking," the letter said. Every home of every member family was visited. "Everyone will be given the opportunity to give a special, generous offering for the Savior's Kingdom," the letter said.

In 1953, the congregation made another significant and long-lasting commitment to Christian Education. That was the year Grace became a member of the Lutheran High School Association, and pledged \$15,000 toward the \$2,500,000 fund drive to build new facilities.

Between 1950 and 1955, communicant membership and contributions were both climbing at a rapid pace. Total annual receipts for all purposes doubled, from \$10,667.33 in 1950 to \$20,788.05 in 1955. The communicant membership had grown from 295 in 1950 to 450 in 1955.

When reading through old records and reports, it becomes clear that Pastor Fahl's leadership was a key factor in this pattern of growth. This is very evident in a February 1954 "From the Desk of the Pastor" letter to the congregation with the heading, "Looking Back . . . and Forward."

Looking back, Pastor Fahl noted that after 20 years the congregation had reason "for genuine gratitude to Almighty God for all of His past benefits." The congregation had grown to 390 confirmed members and some 630 souls. It owned property valued at some \$45,000.

"Spiritually there is evidence of real Christian consecration," he continued. "Mark the successful

Lutheran High School drive. Our contributions have reached a new high; our societies are actively engaged in advancing the work of the Kingdom.”

When looking ahead, Pastor Fahl began with a strongly worded challenge:

“Our seemingly good record in the past still leaves much to be desired. We have not by any means reached the maximum of our capabilities.

“We ought to repent of our failures, our neglects, and our shortcomings.

“Having repented, let us then look ahead with the earnest resolve to utilize this new year of grace, 1954, to the utmost of our ability in order to advance the cause of our beloved Grace congregation and the Church-at-large.”

At the same time, Pastor Fahl acknowledged that Grace had gone on record to institute adult Bible study to “deepen the spirituality of our members.” In addition, the congregation organized a stewardship committee to “increase the stewardship consciousness of our people,” and resolved to hold two mission festivals in 1954 in accord with the command of our Lord: “Go ye into all the world .and preach the Gospel.”

When reading what he wrote, it seems at times that he could be very blunt, especially about contributions to the work of the Lord. Still, the people of Grace responded to his leadership. The membership continued to grow and total contributions continued to climb.

Planning and Building the New Church

By 1955, the need for more space was becoming urgent. The white church had pews for 120 and there were often times when as many as 200 showed up for a worship service. Sunday school classes were held wherever space could be found including the basement of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, currently the Associated Bank. Five years earlier, Grace started to make building plans. When the cost estimate came in the plan was quickly put on the shelf. Now, the financial picture had improved.

A finance committee was formed in July 1955 and spent six months planning for a fund drive needed to help finance a church building project. A

key question: Can Grace members conduct a fund drive on their own, or should they employ a professional fund-raising organization? After meeting with several organizations and contacting other congregations that had recently conducted fund drives, the committee recommended getting professional help. The congregation agreed. The Wells Fund-raising Organization was employed. The drive was conducted and the members responded by pledging \$114,000 toward the building of a new church.

Pastor Fahl often used the words of Scripture very effectively in urging the members of Grace forward in the work of the Lord. An example is found in a 1957 brochure stressing the need to move ahead with building plans. The brochure opens with the following most likely written by Pastor Fahl:

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts: “Go . . . and build the house. And I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified”

“ . . . so spake God to the children of Israel by the mouth of his prophet Haggai. There was an urgency to build the Lord’s House.

“Today the Lord also speaks to the members of Grace Church: ‘Go and build the house. And I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified.’ He speaks to us also with a sense of urgency. There is a great need.”

With the success of the fund drive, the wheels were set in motion to go ahead with the building of a new church and attached parsonage at an estimated cost of \$260,000. The plan for a school, however, was still on hold. A busy time followed. Plans were completed and in 1958, the 25th Anniversary year of Grace, ground was broken and construction was under way.

Pastor Fahl described the time as a year of “Mountain Peak” experiences, which also included an evangelism-mission outreach and the laying of the corner stone on Reformation Day.

In June, 1959 the new church was dedicated. Pastor Fahl describes the events vividly in his Reminiscences. It was an uplifting experience for Pastor Fahl and a fitting testimony to his leadership as well as to the dedication and sacrifices made by the members of Grace.

Yet both pastor and congregation acknowledged that what had been accomplished was possible only through the grace of God. The dedication program opened with a statement from the congregation, giving thanks and glory to the Lord:

Soli Deo Gloria

(Glory to God Alone)

With sincere hearts the members of Grace congregation herewith declare, "TO GOD ALONE BE ALL THE GLORY."

"We will not forget the goodness and mercy of our Heavenly Father. His Divine blessing has caused our congregation to grow and increase; by the guidance of His Holy Spirit the hearts of our members were encouraged and moved to undertake this building program.

"He has held His guiding and protecting hand over the building during construction, and has not permitted harm to come to anyone working on the building;

"He has also helped us to find the necessary funds wherewith to finance the undertaking; He has preserved the great blessing of harmony and peace among our members;

"He has graciously prospered the work of our hands, so that now we are privileged to offer unto Him this Offering of Gratitude, and Sacrifice of Joy: Our New Church as a temple unto the Most High, where His Honor shall dwell.

"May it at all times to come be the Portal of Heaven to thousands who enter here, and a true House of God where all who come to worship shall see no one save Jesus Only!"

This declaration from the members of Grace congregation was followed by a page with a letter from Pastor Fahl addressed to "Dear Members and Friends of Grace Church." In his letter, Pastor Fahl thanked all who assisted and contributed to the building of the new church, especially to the Lord who had blessed the building project:

"Our hearts are filled with great joy today as we dedicate our new house of worship and parsonage to the glory of God. This beautiful edifice is the result of several years of labor and sacrifice, and yet as we look back upon these years, we do so with

a feeling of gratitude to God for permitting us to do this glorious work for Him."

He concluded his letter as follows:

"May this building ever be a monument to the surpassing grace of our God who inspired us, directed us and blessed us. May this same God give us the courage and conviction to go forward in His name and for His glory!"

In his Reminiscences Pastor Fahl notes that there were audible "oohs" and "aahs" from members of Grace as they first entered and saw the interior of their new church. It was large and beautiful.

Pastor Fahl does not mention one of the features that they saw for the first time that day. It was the unique cross that adorned the altar. The Grace Cross is unlike any other. It was designed by Pastor Fahl, especially for the new church that was dedicated June 7, 1959. It brings back many memories to long-time members. See the inside back cover for a complete explanation of how the cross was made and the symbolic meaning built into the design.

A Challenge to Reach Out

Once the church building was complete, the members of Grace enjoyed a weekly reminder of what had been accomplished. The Lord had challenged them with growing numbers and a need to build a new church. Pastor Fahl had used the word of the Lord to encourage them to move forward. They had worked hard. They had contributed generously. God had blessed their efforts and they had reached their goal. Each Sunday they were now able to worship in their attractive, roomy new church.

Pastor Fahl recognized the risks that members of Grace could easily grow complacent. A major objective had been reached, but much remained to be done. The pews of the new church needed to be filled on Sunday mornings. The building of a day school was still among his top priorities.

In 1960, Pastor Fahl presented his concerns to the leadership and together they agreed to organize an Every Member Visitation (EMV) designed to set new goals for the congregation and encourage members to continue looking forward.

A campaign committee was appointed and Sunday November 13, 1960 was set as the date when a team of canvassers would go out to visit every member of the congregation. Their message was spiritual. The theme of the campaign was “God’s Challenge to Us!” A campaign brochure was prepared and published to carry the message to the members of Grace.

Pastor Fahl explained the “*tremendous challenge God has placed before us*” in the opening page of the brochure. He pointed out that in the first nine months of 1960, the Menomonee Falls building inspector had issued 855 new building permits, and 600 additional children had been enrolled in Menomonee Falls public schools. In the same nine months, the communicant membership of Grace had grown by nearly 200, from 612 to 810. While Grace had recently moved into a larger, new church the Sunday school classes had already become crowded. “God is placing before us a tremendous challenge,” Pastor Fahl wrote. “He dares us to do great things for Him and His Kingdom.” The brochure also included letters of encouragement from members of the campaign committee.

Campaign Chairman Arthur Frey pointed out that God challenges us to test our love and make our faith grow stronger. “Four years ago God challenged our congregation with a definite need for a new church and parsonage,” Frey explained. “The challenge was met and finished. Today God is challenging us again, to enlarge our facilities, especially for our beloved children in Sunday school and our adult Bible Classes on Sunday morning.

“All this can be accomplished only with God’s help and your help,” Frey added. “To accomplish this, we must first of all reduce our present indebtedness considerably and this can only be done through sacrificial giving of our treasures.”

The dollar goal of the campaign was \$83,800 for 1961. Of that, \$47,500 would be used for the general fund and missions, while \$36,300 would be used for debt reduction and interest. While reducing debt and building facilities were important objectives, they were not the only objective. Under the heading, “*The Supreme Purpose of Our Entire*

Campaign,” the brochure said, “Is to strengthen the spiritual lives of our members by bringing each family to a decision to sacrifice.”

This concept of stewardship is what had helped Grace to grow to the point it had reached by 1960. It is what continued to help Grace to grow and serve the Lord throughout its history. “Giving and Christianity are inseparably joined together,” the campaign committee explained. “*Our blessed Lord put it this way, ‘Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’* Hence, it is not only true that our dollars follow our interests, but also, our interests will follow our dollars.”

The brochure ended with a short letter from Robert Harthun, who was then president of the congregation. “Our attitude is the important key to success,” he said. “How do we feel about this cause? Is it something we must do out of an obligation, or is it *something we want to do* as an expression of appreciation for our many blessings?” The congregation responded to the call. During the next two years plans were made and Grace was ready to break ground to build additional facilities.

Building and Starting a School

It had been more than 10 years since 1949 when the congregation first adopted a resolution to establish and maintain a Christian day school in Menomonee Falls. Once the new church was completed, the school would be the next major objective in the long-range plan. The church building was designed and located on the property in such a way that a school could be added. The decision to go ahead with that plan, however, had not been made. While there was a good deal of support for the school, the congregation also needed to consider the added financial responsibility. The congregation had taken on new debt to be able to build the church. Going ahead with the school would require another \$160,000 of construction costs, plus covering the salaries of teachers and other operating costs.

Pastor Fahl notes that once the new church and parsonage had been dedicated he saw an influx of new members. His evangelism efforts continued to attract new members and helped to fill the pews of

the new church. Some of these new members were also interested in the prospects for a Christian day school for their children.

The decision to go ahead with plans to build an eight-room school was made at the annual voters' meeting on January 18, 1962. Following this decision, a building committee was appointed to complete the plans and award contracts for construction. Pastor Fahl was optimistic about how soon the project could be completed. He told a local newspaper reporter that the Board for Parish Education had plans ready to hire the necessary teachers and to purchase the equipment and supplies needed to open and operate a Christian day school by September 1962.

Often the process of planning and building a new facility cannot be completed as quickly as first expected. So was the case with construction of Grace Lutheran School. The year 1962 was consumed with planning and other considerations. However, by January 20, 1963, the final decisions had been made and Grace held a ground-breaking ceremony for its new educational building.

While the building was becoming a reality, that alone does not make a school. The Board for Parish Education noted as much in a letter to the congregation dated January 23, 1963.

"We fully realize that there are some limitations as to the type of school we can begin with." The letter included a questionnaire designed to help determine the grade levels to be offered when the school is first opened. However, the letter added that the final decision must be determined by the Voters' Assembly.

After seeing the results of the survey, the Board recommended starting with kindergarten through grade four. The members of Grace approved the recommendations at a special meeting of the Voters' Assembly February 17, 1963. A principal, Aron Valleskey, and two teachers, Shirley Leininger and Charlene Filmore were employed and Grace School opened in September 1963. Additional grades were added each year until Grace School filled its classrooms and provided Christian education for kindergarten through eighth grade.

Once again, with his strong, God-given leadership ability, Pastor Fahl had succeeded in

achieving a major milestone in the history of Grace Lutheran Church.

Managing a Growing Church

During the 1960s, the new church and the new school continued to attract new members. Until 1964, Pastor Fahl served Grace as its only pastor. It was a huge task. It included much more than preparing and preaching a sermon each week. It required taking responsibility for the management and leadership of the organization. A pastor also teaches Bible classes and advises and trains Sunday school teachers. In addition, a pastor often must minister to the needs of individual members. He provides comfort when there is a death in a family and helps them to arrange a funeral and burial. He needs to visit the sick. He often counsels those who are troubled. Pastors advise young couples as they prepare for marriage.

As Grace continued to grow, Pastor Fahl found it increasingly difficult to keep up with all that was being required of him. In 1964, the congregation agreed to call an assistant pastor to help Pastor Fahl. In July 1964, the Rev. Lyle Klemz accepted the call.

Pastor Fahl was effective in recruiting volunteers to teach Sunday school and to lead various volunteer groups that carried out the work of the Lord. In July 1965, the Menomonee Falls News published a two-and-a-half page feature about Grace Lutheran Church. The article noted the following statistics: Grace was now made up of 580 families. It had a growing Christian day school. In addition, it provided Sunday school for primary students with an enrollment of 600 and high school Bible classes with 135 enrolled. In addition, 90 adults were also in Bible study programs.

Pastor Fahl depended on 60 volunteers to teach Sunday school and Bible Classes. All teachers met regularly with Pastor Fahl or Pastor Klemz to prepare their lessons. Pastor Fahl also got strong support from members serving in elected offices and on various boards and committees. Grace was organized under a constitution typical of those that had long been used in most Missouri Synod congregations. The pattern worked well for smaller and medium sized churches. But as Grace grew larger it became increasingly difficult to control.

Grace was organized with a Board of Elders who assisted the pastor in worship services and in making contacts with members. There was a Board of Trustees to look after the physical property as well as a financial secretary and treasurer to look after the management of financial matters.

Grace also had a Board for Parish Education and a School Board to work on Christian education programs and the operation of the day school. It also had various societies and volunteer groups, such as the Ladies Aid, later known as the Women's Guild. There were special committees to work on stewardship and evangelism. As Grace grew, it became increasingly difficult to keep all of these groups working together toward common goals.

The main decision-making groups were the council and the Voters' Assembly. The council included the church officers and the chairmen of the Elders, Trustees and other boards. The council could formulate recommendations, but many of those recommendations required approval by the voters. This often made it very difficult to move important business forward. Voters' meetings often proved to be a frustrating experience for the pastors and church leaders.

The congregation was well aware of the pressures faced by their Senior Pastor. That's why they had called Pastor Klemz in 1964 to assist him. Young pastors, however, often receive calls from churches that can give them more responsibility and a greater challenge. Such was the case with Pastor Klemz who left Grace in 1966. The congregation then employed Kenneth Potratz to serve as a pulpit assistant while he also taught at Milwaukee Lutheran High School. Potratz, a member of Grace, was ordained into the ministry at Grace on July 16, 1967. Meanwhile, the major responsibility for managing the growing congregation remained with Pastor Fahl. By late 1967, Pastor Fahl was growing increasingly concerned that the congregation was growing stagnant. It had become increasingly difficult for him to generate enthusiasm. There was no longer the strong spirit he had seen in the mid-1950s when everyone was focused on building a church and starting a school. Meanwhile, the congregation was left with significant debt and

rising costs associated with operating a school.

Time for a Wake-Up Call!

In early 1968 the Lord provided Pastor Fahl with an opportunity to reconsider how he might "do the work of the Lord" for remaining years of his ministry. He received a "Divine Call" from Pilgrim Lutheran Church in West Bend, Wisconsin. Pilgrim is a much smaller congregation and was in desperate need of an experienced pastor.

Pastor Fahl prayerfully considered the call, taking into account the needs of both congregations. In addition, he also used the call as an opportunity to provide a "wake-up call" to the members of Grace. At a special voters' meeting, March 27, 1968, he presented a statement listing the reasons why he felt he should accept the call.

Pastor Fahl's Statement -- March 27, 1968

"The undersigned feels constrained to accept the call to Pilgrim for the following reasons:

*"1. **Advancing age** makes it increasingly difficult to cope with the increasing demands and pressures of a large parish. To step down to a smaller parish with less administrative responsibilities would enable him to devote more time to the shepherding of souls, counseling the troubled and distressed, giving more time to sermon preparation, and keeping current on present religious trends.*

*"2. **The financial problems of Grace Church** have made it exceedingly difficult to work with the proper rapport and cheerfulness among its people and committees. Such financial problems seemingly reflect adversely on the present ministry and prompt the pastor to seriously consider the advisability of a change of pastorates which may help infuse and instill a new and fresh approach to the problems of the parish. After 27 years in one parish, one is apt to become a bit stale and sour.*

*"3. **The lack of mission consciousness and concern** on the part of the congregation makes this also a matter of conscience with the pastor. A pastor who recognizes the primary function and purpose of the church, who hears ringing in his ears*

the mandate of the Master: "Make disciples of all nations!" cannot work freely and happily nor sleep easily when he realizes that the members of his flock are not too much concerned about the primary mission of the church and, instead of giving this most important matter first place on its responsibility list, rather than relegate it to last.

"4. There seemingly are no further challenges at Grace Church. It has indeed been a rich and rewarding experience during these 27 years at Grace Church. We have been privileged to be a witness to the mysterious and blessed workings of God in the lives of people through no other means than the foolishness of the Gospel.

"From a small mission parish of some 17 families, Grace has grown mightily in numbers and physical facilities. God has graciously blessed this congregation with a large and commodious church structure and added to it also a Christian day school with a full staff of dedicated teachers. All of this has been marvelous in our eyes . . . yea, what great things God has wrought in our midst.

"Now, however that all this has been attained under God's gracious benediction, there seemingly is not much more that can be attained except to maintain the status quo.

"5. A change in pastorates can be a stimulating and challenging experience. Almost three decades in one place can tend to make one complacent and dull. A fresh start in a new environment can be an exhilarating experience which will result in new zeal, vigor and dynamic. The calling congregation presents a new challenge. It is located in a newly developed and growing area of West Bend which seemingly has potential for continued growth.

"6. The calling congregation is in desperate need of a pastor. A vacancy has existing there since October 1, 1967. A prolonged vacancy in a parish can be injurious and harmful to the welfare of a congregation. The calling congregation has experienced some measure of division in the last few years and is in need of being drawn together."
-- E. P. Fahl, Pastor

Grace Members Respond

Grace members did not want pastor Fahl to leave. The congregation responded by unanimously

adopting a resolution requesting Pastor Fahl to return the call and remain as their pastor.

Resolution unanimously adopted by special voters' meeting on March 27, 1968:

"Grace Lutheran Church has had God's grace and manifold blessings richly outpoured upon it during the ministry of our beloved Pastor Edwin P. Fahl. We, the members of Grace congregation, readily and gratefully acknowledge the vital and impressive role Pastor Fahl has had in the growth in numbers and in grace on our church.

"Because of the call Pastor Fahl has received and our strong conviction that Pastor Fahl needs Grace and Grace congregation needs Pastor Fahl we submit the following:

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has diligently and steadfastly preached the Word of God in all its truth and purity for a period in excess of 25 years in our midst, and

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has taken a strong and active role in all the educational activities of our church and is desperately needed in those areas today, and

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has displayed unflagging interest in and untiring effort for the development of a total stewardship program in our church, and

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has regularly demonstrated an unusual and desirable talent for comforting the bereaved, counseling the troubled, admonishing the erring and being a tower of strength in periods of stress, and

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has set before all an exemplary life as a devoted husband and father, as a consecrated Christian and a faithful shepherd of our congregation, and

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has steadfastly inspired us by his wonderful example to aspire to a more complete Christian concern for our fellow man, and

"WHEREAS: Pastor Fahl has contributed substantial guidance and leadership in many existing programs and his participation is absolutely essential in the newly formed Youth Group, the revitalized Deacon Program and the expanded Stewardship program, and

“WHEREAS: Grace congregation recognizes that although much has been achieved in the glorious past that with God’s continued blessing and Pastor Fahl’s inspired leadership that the future at Grace will provide the greatest area of service opportunity, growth and need, and

“WHEREAS: Grace congregation and each of its members needs Pastor Fahl, wants him and prays for his continued service here with us. To this end we would like him to consider his ministry as ‘A LIFETIME OF GRACE AT GRACE.’

“BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That Pastor Fahl recognize the special place of honor and endearment Grace congregation has for him. That he be aware of the appreciation and recognition of his outstanding ministry Grace has for him and that on the basis of the forgoing we request that he return this Divine Call and remain with us as our beloved pastor.”

Making the Decision

Both the statement from Pastor Fahl and the resolution are remarkable documents.

Pastor Fahl’s statement is a pastor’s frank assessment of a congregation he felt was growing complacent and stagnant. He hints that perhaps a new pastor could provide the fresh leadership needed for Grace to again begin looking forward and rededicate itself to doing the work of the Lord.

The resolution, in turn, reflects great affection and respect by the congregation for their beloved Pastor Fahl. It acknowledges all that he has achieved at Grace and recognizes him as God’s servant working in their midst. It clearly states that Grace congregation wanted Pastor Fahl’s “inspired leadership” for future growth and service.

Pastor Fahl was now faced with a final decision. He actually had two Divine Calls to consider: one from Pilgrim, a small congregation in desperate need of a pastor; and another from Grace, a much larger, growing congregation that he felt needed a wake-up call and perhaps a change in leadership.

Anyone who knew Pastor Fahl would have no doubt that he must have said many prayers for God to guide him as he wrestled with his decision. In the end, he decided to stay at Grace. Perhaps he realized that while Pilgrim was in desperate need of

a pastor, it would have been much harder for Grace to fill his shoes should he have decided to leave. As we look back on it, we can only conclude it was God’s will that he would continue to serve at Grace Church.

The Final Nine Years

Pastor Fahl chose to write nothing in his reminiscence articles about the history of Grace through the final years he served as Senior Pastor of Grace. Instead, he chose to devote his final chapter of his reminiscences to stories about two foreign trips that stood out in his memory of those years. One of them was a tour of Russia, Egypt and the Holy Land in 1972 and a second trip to the Holy Land in 1976.

Pastor Fahl has made it known that as he grew older he felt pressured by his responsibilities. In addition, Pastor Fahl was increasingly aware during this time that he might be called on to groom a younger pastor who could step in as his replacement when he was ready to retire.

After Pastor Fahl returned his call to Pilgrim Lutheran Church in 1968, the congregation again began a search to find a young pastor to assist Pastor Fahl, and perhaps gain the experience needed to take more responsibility when Pastor Fahl decided to retire. Later in the year a call was sent to the Rev. Paul Ihlenfeld who accepted the call and was installed as Assistant Pastor of Grace on October 14, 1968.

In November of 1969, the congregation began construction of a second parsonage on land the congregation owned across the street on the corner of Kenwood and Hayes.

Pastor Fahl continued to live in the parsonage at the east end of the church building. This parsonage was later converted into church offices. The purpose of the second parsonage was to provide a home for Pastor Ihlenfeld and provide an incentive home for a pastor to remain at Grace. Pastor Ihlenfeld served with Pastor Fahl for four years, until he received a call to another congregation. In 1972, Grace called the Rev. James Zehnder, a pastor with more experience and the potential for taking on the responsibility of a senior pastor at some time in the future. Pastor Zehnder accepted the call to serve as associate pastor of Grace Church. He and his family

lived in the parsonage across the street from the church. Pastor Zehnder served at Grace until August 1978, after Pastor Fahl retired and Pastor Dietz had accepted a call to Grace.

One of the highlights of the early 1970s was Grace Lutheran Church's 40th Anniversary celebration in 1973.

Pastor Fahl reflected on the remarkable growth of Grace in a letter to the congregation in the opening pages of a new church directory published for the 40th Anniversary year. As he often did, he referred to Scripture to give glory to God:

*“Not unto us,
but unto Thy Name give glory,
for Thy mercy,
and for Thy truth's sake.”*
- - Psalm 115:1

Pastor Fahl noted that Grace started in the depths of the Depression and survived through exceedingly hard times, “and yet, under God, our Grace congregation took root in this place and in due time flourished into a sizable congregation. This fact bears out the truth of the words: *‘My word shall prosper in the thing where to I sent it.’* Isaiah 55:11

“Today, 40 years later, it is almost unbelievable what God has accomplished in this place. As in the first century Christian church (as is recorded in the Book of Acts) God has added daily to our membership so that today our congregational family numbers almost 2,000 baptized souls, and over 1,300 confirmed members.”

As he often did, Pastor Fahl also used his church directory letter as an opportunity to encourage members to show their gratitude for 40 years of His love, mercy and grace.

“This divine favor must invoke in us, His people, in an expression of deep gratitude. This gratitude must be something more than just a passing emotion. It must manifest itself in a tangible form, in our doing and in our giving. May our anniversary observance and our anniversary undertakings be a monument to the future generations of our *love for* and *devotion to* our great God and Lord.”

The celebration was held on Pentecost Sunday, June 10, 1973 with three services held at 8:00, 9:15, and 10:30 a.m. The Rev. Karl Barth, President of the South Wisconsin District preached the sermon. The Rev. Erich Keller returned to take part in the celebration. Pastor Keller was the Missionary-at-large for the South Wisconsin District in 1932 who helped to organize the mission in Menomonee Falls that became Grace Lutheran Church. Pastor Keller also served as Pastor of Grace from October 1933 until 1941.

Another high point for Pastor Fahl during the 1970s was in 1976 when he served as a leader in organizing a community July 4th Religious Convocation celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the United States.

Ten Menomonee Falls congregations, including Grace, took part in the outdoor event held at Schumann Field on the Menomonee Falls High School campus. Pastor Fahl addressed the convocation. His message that day was: “*Americans, Don't Forget God.*”

Preparing for Retirement

As Pastor Fahl took part in the 200th Anniversary convocation he had already given prayerful consideration to the time at which he would retire. When he reached his decision, he prepared a letter to be presented to members at a congregational meeting held June 28, 1976. The letter said that he wished to retire on May 31, 1977 after he had reached 65 years of age and would become eligible for Social Security as well as Synod pension benefits. In his letter, he made clear that he had considered the needs of Grace Church as well as his personal desires.

“Though still, by God's grace, endowed with good health, it is firmly felt by your pastor that retirement will be mutually beneficial to the congregation as well as to himself,” Pastor Fahl explained. He listed two reasons why he felt the congregation would benefit by his retirement:

“1. A pastor who has extended and expended himself in one parish for 36 years cannot very well provide the kind of dynamic leadership which the parish ministry requires in this day and age. A pastor, who is only human, is expendable.

“2. Pastor Zehnder, with whom your pastor has been privileged to work these past four years, has proven himself to be a dedicated servant of God, who has always worked in close harmony with the undersigned. He possesses the necessary leadership qualities to administer the complex affairs of a large congregation such as Grace. He would receive my whole-hearted endorsement as my successor as senior administrative pastor of Grace.”

Pastor Fahl also explained that retiring from the ministry would provide time for other types of service. “The sunset years of life can still, under God, be productive,” he explained and added that, “as God provides opportunity” he would, “utilize his God-given abilities in other channels of service to God and fellowman.”

In the fall of 1976, Grace honored Pastor Fahl in a triple celebration. It was Pastor Fahl’s 35th year in the ministry; it was his 35th year service as pastor of Grace Lutheran and it was also his 35th wedding anniversary. The congregation honored Pastor and Mrs. Fahl with gifts and special worship services on Sunday, October 10, 1976.

Grace honored Pastor and Mrs. Fahl again at the time of his retirement, Sunday June 5, 1977. Pastor Fahl preached his retirement, farewell sermon in three services that morning. You’ll find a complete text of that sermon in the next chapter. Pastor Fahl greeted members between services and the congregation honored Pastor and Mrs. Fahl at a retirement dinner that Sunday afternoon.

A Tribute to a Strong Leader

The Grace Board of Elders wrote a letter of response to Pastor Fahl after he had announced his decision to retire. The letter reflected the strong affection the members of Grace had for their beloved Pastor Fahl. It provided a fitting tribute to the leadership he had provided.

“We are deeply saddened to learn that the time must come so soon,” the letter said. “Nonetheless, we respect your wishes. Much as we would like to have you continue to serve as our senior pastor, we know that you have given this much prayerful

consideration; and we recognize that, as a result, your decision is in accordance with God’s will.

“Through your decision, God has brought Grace to a time of soul searching-- a time that *makes us want to look back*, and is *forcing us to look ahead*.

“As we look back, it is with thoughts of joy, thankfulness and praise for the many blessings God has showered upon us through you, His loyal and dedicated servant. The *greatest blessing* of all has been *your firm determination to teach and preach nothing less than the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its truth and purity*.

“You have brought us so many other blessings. We couldn’t list them all. There is your loving concern for each member. *You know each and every one of us by name!* We have been thankful for your ability as an administrator and a leader; and many of us must praise the Lord for the words of comfort and strengthening of faith you were able to provide in times of need.”

After his retirement, Pastor Fahl continued to maintain a relationship with Grace as a member and Pastor Emeritus. Pastor Zehnder was the logical choice to take over for Pastor Fahl. He had served with Pastor Fahl since 1972 and had proven himself to be an innovative, forward-looking clergyman who was already well known by the members of Grace. In addition, Pastor Fahl had given him a strong endorsement and the congregation agreed. Pastor Zehnder became Senior Pastor in June 1977 after Fahl retired.

In early 1978 Grace sent a call to the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, a professor at Concordia University. Grace members knew Pastor Dietz well, as he had preached many sermons at Grace as a part-time pulpit assistant. In April 1978, Pastor Dietz accepted the call and became a co-pastor with Pastor Zehnder. A month later Pastor Zehnder announced that he had decided to leave the ministry to work for a business owned by his family in Ohio. Pastor Dietz then became senior pastor. A complete review of the times and memories of Pastor Dietz can be found in Section III of this book.

Once the church was built, Pastor Fahl's next objective was to add an education wing to the facilities and then start a Christian day school



Grace Church the way it looked in 1959 to 1963 before the school and the CAC were added.



Pastor Fahl breaks ground for Grace Lutheran School, January 20, 1963



Pastor Fahl conducts cornerstone laying ceremonies for Grace Lutheran School with a large gathering of members on May 5, 1963.



The first Grace School staff, Principal Aron Valleskey (grades 3 and 4), teachers Charlene Filmore (Kindergarten), and Shirley Leininger (grades 1 and 2). The initial enrollment was 71.



November 1964, the first meeting of Grace Senior Citizens, a group that represents generations of Grace members who have done the work of the Lord and made it possible for Grace Lutheran Church and School to prosper and grow.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

-- 1 Corinthians 15:58

The text for Pastor Fahl’s retirement sermon June 5, 1977



Members who worshiped at the store front that were still members of Grace in 1973 and took part in the 40th Anniversary celebration.



Richard Maas, Principal of Grace School in 1970; served 22 years with three Senior Pastors, Fahl, Dietz and Granke



The Grace Glory Singers, organized by Bruce Fisher, performed at Grace Church in the 1970s, during the later years of Pastor Fahl’s ministry



Ruth Cooper, Grace Guild Mission-Evangelism Circle, helped to start the first “Grace Manna” program on Manna Sunday February 29, 1976.



Pastor Fahl helped organize and encourage the Senior Citizen group in 1964. At this March 1973 meeting, the group helped make plaques for the Grace 40th Anniversary celebration



Pastor and Elizabeth Fahl June 5, 1977, the day Pastor Fahl preached his farewell sermon encouraging the members of Grace, “For as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Section II
The Times and Memories of the Rev. E.P. Fahl

Words of Encouragement for Grace Church

Pastor Fahl's Retirement Sermon, Sunday June 5, 1977

Grace be multiplied unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, amen. The word of God which we have selected for this occasion is St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians the 15th chapter the 58th verse.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." So far the text.

In the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, my dear friends and beloved fellow Christians. Today my active ministry in your midst comes to a close. This morning I am occupying this pulpit for the last time as your pastor. After a pastor has worked in a congregation for 36 years as I have done here in your midst, it is really difficult to find the words to express the thoughts that are in my heart as I take leave of you this morning. I have worked with you. I have been with you in sickness and in trouble. I have shared your joys and your sorrows. I have counseled and taught you. I've baptized, I confirmed and I married many of you present.

Yes, there has been a very strong bond of fellowship that has been established between us during these past 36 years. Now it is, in a sense farewell. There is a note of farewell in the text which I have chosen for today. It reads,

"Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord . . . knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

These are the words of the Apostle Paul addressed to the congregation in Corinth, to his former congregation. St. Paul no doubt remembers the happy days that he spent in their midst in the city of Corinth, where your pastor and several members of this parish visited a year ago in

January. One can detect in these words of the Apostle Paul a bit of wistfulness when reading between the lines of this letter. Perhaps many a time Paul wished he could be back with them, working hand in hand with them, building the Kingdom of God together. But as we read this text, we see that Paul did not give way here to vain regrets or to some kind of mushy sentimentalism. No, the whole tone of this chapter is one of encouragement. His primary concern was that Jesus Christ be preached, and that work of the Church of Christ continues to go forward! And so, although it gave him inward pain to part from his beloved people, Paul's great love for them constrained him to urge them onward, to encourage them in the work that they were doing to the glory of God and for the building of His wonderful kingdom.

Members of Grace, those are precisely the thoughts that are in my heart today, too, as I occupy this pulpit for the last time as your Senior Administrative Pastor. As Paul addressed the members of the congregation in Corinth, I address you also on this occasion. You are my beloved brethren. Even as Paul loved his Congregation in Corinth, so I have loved Grace in Menomonee Falls. Perhaps even more so, because I have been with you a far longer time than Paul was with the Congregation in Corinth. Grace congregation has been home to me. This has been my first and only parish in my entire ministry. My entire ministry has been spent in your midst. Whatever I have learned as a pastor, whatever I have gained in the way of ministerial experience, has been gained here in your midst.

What is more it was during my tenure of office here that I took unto myself my beloved wife Elizabeth. It was here that all of my children were born. It is here that I have many wonderful friends whom I shall always remember and I shall continue to love them until my dying day. It is here that the strongest of all ties have been knitted, the tie that

bound us together as pastor and as a flock, through our mutual love for our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And it is because you are my beloved brethren, because I love this church and the people of this congregation that I want my last message to you as your pastor to be one of encouragement. Even as St. Paul's message to the congregation at Corinth was one of encouragement. So I say to you, as Paul said to the congregation at Corinth,

"Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

The work which you called me to do 36 years ago is the same work which Grace congregation has been doing for the last 44 years since its founding, 44 years ago on this very Sunday in 1933. The work which we pray God will continue to do for many years to come is *"the Work of the Lord"* as the Apostle Paul speaks of it in the text before us. And that, my dear members of Grace congregation, is the first and most important thing to keep in mind on this day when we bid farewell to each other as pastor and people.

Any feeling of discouragement you might have regarding your work as a congregation must be immediately dispelled when you remember that it is the *"work of the Lord"* in which you are engaged as a Christian congregation and in which you, too, are to remain *"steadfast and unmovable, and always to abound."* It is the work of the Lord who is always the same, yesterday, today and forever. It is the work of the Lord who made heaven and earth, and holds all things in heaven and earth in the hollow of His hand. It is the Lord who has sent you, and commissioned you as members of this congregation to do his work and his will. It is the Lord who privileges you to be His laborers in the glorious work of building His kingdom here on earth.

I ask you, can you think of anything grander or more noble than that, that God should have selected just you out of the millions and billions of people on the face of the earth to do His work and His will in just such a time as this?

What is this work of the Lord? Well it involves many things, my dear friends. My work among you, as your pastor, consisted of a multiplicity of duties, such as visiting the sick, admonishing the

delinquents, counseling the young and old, advising the married, as well as those who were about to be married, working with various societies, instructing the young and old, general parish administration and the like, but the most important part of my ministry here in your midst my dear friends and my beloved brethren was *the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. That above everything else is *"the work of the Lord."* And that is the work, members of Grace congregation, which you as a congregation must continue also to perform in the future.

The work of the Lord involves going out into all the world and preaching the Gospel. Your confines are not just here in the boundaries of Menomonee Falls. You are commissioned to bring the Gospel to the utter most ends of the earth.

Please always keep that in mind!

It means declaring unto men, women and children, the only way of salvation, which is by faith in Jesus Christ whose blood cleanses us from all sin. It involves building the church of Christ, helping men to lead lives that will be a credit to Christ. It involves personal mission work among your friends and neighbors and your relatives and the members of your own immediate family in many instances. It is this work, which I as your pastor speaking to you for the last time, would encourage you to continue carrying on with your whole heart and soul and spirit. *"Be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."*

Yes, says the Apostle Paul in the text before us. *"Be steadfast and unmovable."* Ah yes, there are always some voices in the congregations such as ours insisting on changes in this or that policy of the congregation. Mind you, such voices usually become louder and more numerous during a change in pastorates.

For instance there are always those who feel that our insistence on the purity of doctrine is no longer necessary today in this time of change, that it is time to become more liberal theologically, to let the bars down and to become like other churches which dilute and distort the Word of God. And then there are other voices which feel it is no longer necessary to put so much emphasis on Christian Education in our midst. *"It costs a heap of money to run a school."* Others try to shirk their responsibility to

the stewardship program of the church, and feel that others out there in the church ought to be carrying the responsibility of supporting synodical missions. "We have our own missions here at Grace. Let others do it on a worldwide basis."

My beloved brethren, when such voices are heard, "*Be ye unmovable.*" Remain steadfast and faithful to the principles upon which Grace Congregation was founded 44 years ago today. Resist every change that would mean compromise with the truth of God's Word. Insist upon it that your pastors continue to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. In short, be steadfast and unmovable.

But the advice of our text goes even further. Paul the Apostle says, "*Always abound in the work of the Lord.*" In the work of the Lord there can be no standing still, dear members of Grace church. Certainly there can be no retreating. It must always be a matter of going forward and going upward. And so the Apostle says in the text before us, "*Abound in the work of the Lord.*"

Grace congregation has established some very fine records. But don't by any means be satisfied with past performance. Don't by any means rest on your laurels. Abound in that work of the Lord. Improve the records. Attend divine services and the Blessed Sacrament more faithfully in the future than you have in the past. Whoever your new assistant pastor may be; be sure to give to him, and to your faithful Senior Administrative Pastor Zehnder, your whole hearted support and cooperation.

There is nothing that encourages your pastors more than to see the pews of the church filled on Sunday morning. Your contributions to the work of the Lord have certainly been above average on a comparative basis. Abound, too, in that work dear members of Grace. Strive always toward improvement in your financial record. Yes, work toward the goal of "tithing," as I have oftentimes encouraged you to do. Then you can do even greater things for the upbuilding of God's Kingdom in this place.

What is more, you have, too, established an excellent system of Christian education here at Grace. Abound, too, in that work. Continue to support your school and its excellent teachers with your prayers, your contributions and your personal

service, and above all by sending your own children to our Christian Day school here at Grace. Abound in that work.

Abounding in the work of the Lord at Grace Church also includes your long-range plans for the future. Certainly God wants you to make use of every possible opportunity to expand the borders of His kingdom right here in Menomonee Falls and beyond.

Then there is one final word of encouragement in our text. St. Paul says, "*For as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" I presume the members of the congregation in Corinth had, most likely, expressed a regret that Paul the Apostle could no longer be with them. They, perhaps, had even expressed fears that the work of the church would suffer now that he no longer was with them. So now the Apostle Paul wrote to them to remind them that it was the will of God that he should work elsewhere. He encourages them by reminding them that it is God's work that they were doing, and such labor would never be in vain, or be lacking in success. And that is exactly the way things worked out in the congregation at Corinth. Another pastor came to the church in Corinth. The congregation continued to grow and to prosper under the blessing of Almighty God.

Members of Grace, I'm sure you can see the parallel between situation at Corinth and the one at Grace at the present time. Yes, I have heard some rather pessimistic comments to the effect that the work of Grace Church will suffer because of a change in pastorates. Do you think for one moment that the Lord is going to let Grace congregation down just because one of its workers is leaving? Hasn't He blessed you richly during the past 44 years of your history? Grace congregation, as we recall very well, has gone through countless trials in the past. But never alone, God was always with you. He always has been with you and He always blessed you.

When there was a financial crisis and your backs were to the wall, the Lord saw you safely through it all. When you were experiencing growing pains and your facilities were bursting at the seams, you will recall, in that little chapel on Main and Hayes Avenue, the Lord provided a solution to your problem by providing this ample sanctuary for

worship. When the Lord called pastors and teachers away from your midst, He always provided you with faithful servants to replace them.

Beloved members of Grace congregation, the work of God is greater than any one man, or any group of men. It is the work of the Lord! And it is just because of that fact that your labor in the Lord has never been in vain. It is not in vain in the present and it will not be in vain in the future, if you continue in the work of the Lord. It is done at His command and with the servants and the instruments that He provides. It is done with the blessed assurance and promise that His work will not return unto Him void. Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

In closing, I hope that you will bear with me while I make just a few personal observations. As I look back over my 36 years of service here at Grace I cannot really escape a feeling of penitence and remorse, however. I realize better than any of you sitting in these pews this morning how many failures and how many follies have marked the course of my ministry in your midst. There have been many opportunities during these years that I have, as a pastor, neglected to improve. There have been many inexcusable blunders which I have personally been guilty of. There have been errors in judgment, which in retrospect really fills me with a sense of sorrow and with shame. I have been impetuous when I should have been cautious. I have been stubborn when I should rather have been submissive. I have been angry when I should rather have been patient. And I say this to you the members of this parish not just simply to appear modest but rather to be honest about the whole situation, and to ask pardon of you even as I have asked it of God. And if there are any among you who because of my words or my actions or attitudes have been offended I ask you to forgive me as Christ also has forgiven you.

The second personal remark I want to make is one of thanksgiving. As I look back over these past 36 years, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude. This morning, in this very pulpit, I want to thank God for the privilege of serving you these many years, the members of Grace congregation.

And I want to thank Him, too, for the kindness and the love that you have shown me as your pastor and to my family. And I want to particularly thank God for the many individuals who worked with me thought these 36 years in the upbuilding of the kingdom of God. Those men and those women who as leaders and workers in the cause of Christ have really been a source of encouragement to me in my ministry here in this place. Yes, there have been times during these past years when I too as a mere mortal human being have oft times become weary and discouraged in my work. And it was especially at such times that I found inspiration and renewal in the fine example of Christian faith and courage and service and consecration to Christ that you the members of this congregation have shown to me.

For all of this, I am thankful to you and I am thankful to Almighty God.

But above all else, I am grateful for having had the privilege of preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, of lifting up your eyes to the cross, to our blessed Savior, and proclaim unto you that one and only way of salvation, He who is the way, the truth and the life, without whom no one can come unto the Father.

So as I conclude my ministry among you, I can really think of nothing more fitting than to point you again to the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, your sins and also mine; and to encourage you continue faithfully in the work of building his church in this place and unto the uttermost ends of the earth; and to commend you into His gracious care and keeping

And thus, though, from henceforth our pathways will part to some extent, and our work will be carried on separately, we shall still be serving, mind you, the same great master, and we will still be going forward to that same glorious goal, our home in heaven, where God grant one day we will all meet together, never to part again.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Yes, may the Lord always watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another. God be with you til we meet again.

Amen.

Section III

The Times and Memories of the Rev. Dr. Paul Dietz

Introduction



In this section you'll find the story of how God prepared and guided a strong spiritual leader to serve at Grace Lutheran Church at a time when the congregation needed to regroup and refortify itself. It is a story told by Pastor Dietz in 2002, thirteen years after he had retired as Senior Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church.

Pastor Dietz was installed a co-pastor of Grace 10 months after Pastor Fahl retired and only one month before the Senior Administrative Pastor James Zehnder announced his resignation. At the same time, the congregation had decided by a very narrow margin to go ahead with plans to build the CAC addition, without first addressing a significant debt problem. That decision had caused a great deal of conflict and hurt feelings within the congregation. Grace needed a strong, mature leader to guide the members through a time of multiple challenges. Once again, our Lord

provided just the right person for Grace Church. Pastor Dietz was a learned student of the Scripture, who reflected a strong faith in his Lord and Savior. He was a skilled teacher and an inspiring preacher. In addition, Pastor Dietz came to Grace with a lifetime of experience; he was well prepared to address the problems faced by Grace Lutheran Church in the 1980s.

As you read about the times and memories of Pastor Dietz, remember that this is the man who God chose to speak for Him at Grace Church in the decade of the 1980s. As Pastor Dietz began his ministry here, Grace Church was nearing the end of a 50 year period of growth and outreach. Pastor Dietz focused more on looking inward rather than outward. Many of his Voice of Grace columns were about *discipleship* and *stewardship*. He was concerned about church attendance. He encouraged Bible study. In one of his columns he reminded us that Christ said, "*Go and make disciples*," he did not say "*Go and sign up members*." There is a difference. A member has his or her name on a membership list. "A disciple is involved in the process, is working toward goals and takes responsibility."

As you read this section, you will see how God sent a messenger to Grace at a time when the congregation needed to be lifted up spiritually. He provided them with a teacher, a preacher and a wise leader who could strengthen them.

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz Pastor Emeritus*

I

Born and Raised Into Ministry

*“I prayed for this child,
and the Lord has granted me
what I asked of him.
So now I give him to the Lord.
For his whole life he
will be given over to the Lord.”*
--1 Samuel 1:27-28

Our Lord decided that I should be born and bred in Milwaukee into a family with a long tradition of service in His church. We have lived most of our lives in the Milwaukee area. All of my working life was spent as a called servant of our Lord.

My father, who died when I was a freshman in high school, served on the board of control of Concordia University, Milwaukee, which was then Concordia College. He was the treasurer before his death. My uncle and my grandfather were pastors at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. At that time, in the 1920s, Immanuel was the largest church in the Missouri Synod.

I was brought up in a big school and a big church. All through my childhood and early youth the Lord provided experiences for me that would help me in later life to carry out the duties he had laid out for me to do. Immanuel Lutheran Church was an important part of that experience.

Immanuel was a very interesting experience for me. That congregation and church goes way back in the history of Milwaukee, into the 1860s. It was one of the first churches here. Among the first churches here in Milwaukee were Trinity, Milwaukee and Trinity, Freistadt. In those days, one pastor served both congregations. He had to travel between the

two congregations by horse and buggy, a very long 15 to 20 mile ride.

From that start, the Milwaukee area churches expanded in concentric circles, from the center out. There was St. Stephen's on the south side and Trinity on the north. Immanuel started as an offspring of Trinity, Milwaukee. It was sort of an assistant church, not a separate entity to serve the Immanuel area around 12th and North Avenue.

My grandfather, Carl Dietz, Sr. was called to Immanuel in the early 1900s. He had been a pastor in Chicago, and then he was called here to Immanuel, a church that was then located at 12th and Garfield, a block south of North Avenue. At that time there was a school on the corner of 12th and North Avenue. A part of that school was being used by Lutheran High School at its beginning for its classes.

Later my grandfather's son Carl Dietz, Jr. was called to Immanuel as the associate pastor, so for a time both my grandfather and Uncle Carl were pastors at my home church. I didn't know my grandfather very well. He died in 1928 when I was about six years old. After my grandfather died, Immanuel called my uncle, Carl F. Dietz, Jr. as senior pastor and Walter C. Meyer to be his assistant as associate pastor. Those two were the pastors during my youth at Immanuel. I grew up there, going to the Lutheran School. I lived just three blocks from the school.

Decisions Made For Me

When it was time for me to go High School, there was no question of where I would go. It would not be Lutheran High School, but Concordia College. That's the way it was. There were no questions, and I was amenable to the idea.

My dad, who died in 1937, was a bond salesman.

He had been on the board of control and was the treasurer of Concordia College. We lived about three miles away from Concordia and we walked. Art Meyer, the son of the associate pastor at Immanuel and a number of other people who lived in that area walked to Concordia every morning and back home every night.

As a young person of high school age, I had little or no idea of what life would hold for me or of what kind of career I might follow. It was clear, though, from my background and the schooling I was receiving that I was on a track that would carry me toward serving my Lord in one capacity or another.

My family, my friends and the environment in which I grew up all had a strong influence over me. I had strong role models in my grandfather and uncle who were both pastors at the church where I attended, as well as my father who had served on the Concordia board. So it is not surprising that I would eventually end up in the ministry.

The decision was never really discussed. When I reached high school age it was just a forgone conclusion that I would go to Concordia. I was there for six years, four years of high school and two years of college.

After Concordia Milwaukee, it was on to St. Louis to enter the seminary. The seminary was never a discussed item either. My grandfather was a pastor, my uncle was a pastor and my cousin had gone to Concordia. "So you are going into the ministry." "Okay, okay, I'm going into the ministry." So I went to the seminary.

My Own Decision

Things began to change when I was at the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. I began to see how God had worked in wondrous and mysterious ways. I could begin to appreciate that the experiences I'd had and where I found myself was all a part of God's plan for me.

My years at the seminary were turbulent times in the world. It was during World War II. Teachers were being drafted. There were fewer teachers left in the classrooms, so the synod made a proposal to seminarians who had completed their bachelor's degree after four years. Normally at that point a graduate would face one more year in the seminary

and go on for a year as a vicar with an experienced pastor. Instead, the seminary made this offer: We will send you to Concordia River Forest for a summer and then if you teach for a year, we will consider that to be your vicarage. So a number of us agreed to take a teaching assignment.

I still remember the trip. It was on D-Day, the day the Allied forces invaded the European Continent, June 6, 1944. We left St. Louis on the Green Diamond, which was a classy, fast train to Chicago. From there we traveled to River Forest, just north of Chicago. When we appeared at Concordia River Forest before the president and said, "Here we are," we were each given our own places. There were no regulations or stipulations under which we were to live; we were just to go to class there. They had special classes to teach us and then we were to be ready to go out and teach.

When that summer ended, I found my way to Granton, a small town in central Wisconsin, to teach in a one-room country school. Granton is very small with 350 to 400 residents located just north of U.S. 10, about 12 to 15 miles east of Niellsville. Many of the pupils at the school lived on farms.

First Teaching Experience

So here I was, a city born and raised individual sent to teach in a one-room country school. What a contrast to the large schools I had attended and the city life I had experienced. It was a school where I had to teach all eight grades, two or three in each grade. One of the things that stand out in my mind was the eighth graders, who were all 4-H members. They had raised dairy calves, did baking and canning and other farming projects that they entered into competition at the county fair. Many of them had won blue ribbons for their farming and homemaking achievements.

One of the challenges I faced was that Clark County required that we teach at least six weeks of agriculture in our classrooms. With my background, what could I know about agriculture? So I told the kids, "I don't know anything about farming. I know a cow has four legs and it gives milk. But you'll need to bear with me, because I'm going to have to learn so many things that you've known from young

on so we can get through this required course of study.”

After teaching for one year in a one-room school, I came back to Milwaukee that summer of 1945 and was getting ready to go back to the seminary. My mother and I were the only ones living in our home at the time. My father had died when I was a freshman in high school and I was an only child. She depended on me and I depended on her.

That summer I talked to one of my professors at Concordia Milwaukee. He said that they needed a vicar, because their vicar did not show up. “Would you be interested?” I said I would. So they wrote to the seminary in St. Louis and got permission for me to vicar there for another year. I agreed.

During that year I had only one free class period a week off. I was teaching 29 out of 30 periods. There were six periods a day for five days a week, so I was teaching during all but one of the class periods. As the young vicar I was the low man on the totem pole at Concordia, but I was still called a professor. After the first year they asked me to stay for another year and I agreed. I was a vicar for three years, 1944-45 in Granton plus 1945-46, and 1946-47 at Concordia Milwaukee.

In the fall of 1947 I went back to the seminary, finished the two years and graduated in 1949. I did not enter the ministry then, but came back to Concordia Milwaukee for another year to finish my master’s degree work at Marquette University. After that, in 1950, I accepted a call into the ministry, but the administrators at Concordia said they would call me back in a couple of years.

First Call, First Church

My first call was to serve three congregations in central Wisconsin, in the township of Green Grove, near Curtiss, Wisconsin. That town is west of Abbotsford and south of highway 29. It was strictly out in the country.

The churches I was to serve in Green Grove were St. Paul’s, plus two churches named St. Luke’s. One St. Luke’s was in south Green Grove and the other was at Curtiss. They all were within two or three miles of one another, but they just had a falling out and they didn’t get along with one

another. They each had different services at different times. I was pastor of all three of them. We had just three services every Sunday, one at each of the three churches. The Green Grove churches had very small congregations. The previous pastor had been there about 25 years or more.

When we were there, the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) had just come in the past few years to bring electricity to the area. There were still farms within walking distance of our church that did not have electricity.

Preparing for Marriage

When I came there, the Northern District officers of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod had put the screws on the congregation to remodel. As a result, we had indoor plumbing, electricity had been put in, and the parsonage had been somewhat renovated.

My work in Green Grove started after I was ordained and installed on August 20th, 1950. At the same time, Corinne and I had set December 27, 1950 to be our wedding date. So, in the interim they got the parsonage ready for us. I lived for a while with a local farm family. Then, in November, when the house was nearly ready I moved in and lived there while they were still working to finish the renovation.

I can still remember working in my study and hearing those noises. “What was that?” It seemed to be coming from the basement. I’d go to the basement stairs to check it out, and as I was going down, the mice were all coming up.

We had stored a number of items given us by people in Milwaukee for when we would be married. That included food items and gifts that had been given to Corinne at showers. I didn’t know where she wanted them stored, so they were piled up in the middle of the kitchen. The food items included noodles and other dried foods, and the mice made a feast of that.

We also had a rural cooperative party line telephone with the local phone company owned by those who had and used phones. As was typical of those rural phone systems, each phone was just an extension of a single line.

When one phone rang, they all rang. Each party on the line had a different set of rings, such as a

“long-and-a-short,” a “short-and-a-long,” or “two-long-and-a-short,” etc. When one person got a call, everyone else would know and it wasn’t unusual for more than one person to pick up and listen to what was going on. Nothing was private. The phone system was interesting, but made it difficult for a pastor, because when the pastor’s phone rang, every one would know about it. So when you answered the pastor’s phone you felt the power go down, as other phones were picked up to listen to get the latest news.

An Interesting Experience

As we had planned, we were married in Milwaukee on December 27, 1950. After a stay in Chicago, we took the train and went up to Wausau and then took our car over to Green Grove on New Year’s Day, 1951. That evening we had a New Year’s Eve service at the Church and they had a reception for my bride and me and then we went

home. At 12 midnight New Year’s Eve, my phone rang in the parsonage. It was my friends and my cousins in Milwaukee calling to wish us a happy New Year. Soon after we picked up the phone, we could feel the power go down. Every one was wondering, “Who would be calling the preacher at 12 o’clock at night?” “Who died?”

It was an interesting experience working in this rural setting. We lived strictly out in the country. There was the church, the cemetery and parsonage, and that was it. One of the sextons was a local farmer. I’d greet him as he came over with his oilcan. “What are you going to do Albert?” “Well, I guess I’ll shave the dead.” he said, meaning he was going to cut the grass in the cemetery.

It was quite an experience for two young people, who were just married, who had lived all of their lives in central Milwaukee. We spent two years in Green Grove and then I received the call to come back to Concordia Milwaukee.

*“It was he who gave some to be apostles,
some to be prophets, some to be evangelists
and some to be pastors and teachers.”*

-- Ephesians 4:11

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus*

II

The Call Back to Concordia

*“I give you this charge:
Preach the word, be prepared
in season and out of season,
correct, rebuke and encourage
-- with great patience
and careful instruction.”
-- 2 Timothy 4:1b-2*

Corrine and I were married in December of 1950 and we spent two years in Green Grove. Then in 1952 I received the call to come back to Concordia. The call was to be an assistant professor and to be the librarian.

As I reflect back on that time, I can't help but ponder how all that was happening to me was just a part of God's master plan. At Concordia I played a role in preparing young men for the ministry, men who would be going out to serve the Lord in churches around the country as well as in mission fields around the world.

While I was helping to prepare others for the ministry, the Lord was also preparing me for other work that I would do for Him. That would include my ministry at Grace as well as preaching and assisting pastors at other churches in this area. The Lord was preparing me with knowledge and skills. I also learned a great deal from the examples of many dedicated people of God I would learn to know.

My work with the library was a part of that learning process. Concordia had not given much credence to the area of the library. They had a library, but it would be necessary for me to build it up. I came to them without any library background or experience. Concordia knew that, but said they would send me to the University of Wisconsin in

Madison to get a master's degree in Library Science.

During the five summers I was working on that degree I was also teaching at Concordia, teaching all of the American History courses on the high school level. That, as well as my work in the library proved to be an asset to me in the future. Many of the pastors who went through Concordia had me as a professor or had worked with me at the library. I got to know them well and could draw on their experiences in the ministry.

Along with my work at the library, I also began to associate myself with other librarians of the same type, particularly college and university librarians in the Milwaukee area. I joined the Wisconsin Library Association and I became active in that group. There were several of us among the association members who worked at college and university libraries, so we got together and formed a college and university section of the Wisconsin Library Association. That group has grown to become a separate organization.

My experience in library work and library activities helped me to work in other organizations with other people. Working in these library organizations has helped me to understand how individuals can come together and work toward common goals. That proved especially valuable to me later when I needed to work with the many committees and boards at Grace.

My work with the library associations included serving as chairman of the college library section of the Wisconsin Library Association. Later on I was elected president of the Wisconsin Library Association, concerned with all librarians in the state of Wisconsin.

At the same time, Governor Knowles appointed me to serve on the Council of Library Development, which is the top library organization in Wisconsin

state government. This appointment came out of the blue. I didn't know that I had been nominated. The purpose of this council is to advise the governor on state library policies and programs. I served on that board for nine years, three terms. The last term I was Chairman of the Council on Library Development, but was not re-appointed because there was a change in governors from Republican to Democrat. A Republican had appointed me.

After I left teaching and came to Grace I was no longer a member of the Wisconsin Library Association, but have been able to maintain some contact with the group. They have a past president's breakfast every year at their conference and I am always invited, because I am a past president.

Making the Move

When we were in Green Grove, we lived in a parsonage. When I received the call from Concordia and we moved to Milwaukee, a home was again provided. It was very easy for us, compared with what other young people face finding a home or apartment when they are first married or when their work requires a move.

Back then most congregations had a parsonage. Concordia also provided housing for the faculty. They owned a number of homes and a duplex into which we moved. As I reflect on that policy I can see that while it may have given a pastor or faculty member more time to concentrate on his work it also had disadvantages.

Grace does not now provide a parsonage for its pastors. My philosophy is that a church should give its pastors adequate allowance to pay for housing. Then they can go out and buy a home. I've seen what happens all too often when a parsonage is provided. Those fellows didn't know what to do when something isn't working. A faucet doesn't work or the sewer backs up and they are helpless. They just call someone at the church to fix it.

While this is a wonderful convenience for a pastor, it isn't realistic. How can you relate to people if you don't know how to handle situations they often face? There's another problem for the pastor who lives in a parsonage all of his life and then retires. He has had no opportunity to build up equity to provide a home for his retirement. That's

why I have been so adamant on providing a housing allowance rather than a parsonage.

Finding a Church

When we returned to Milwaukee, Corrine and I did have an experience that often challenges young people these days. For the first time in our lives we had to decide where to go to church. Which of the many Lutheran churches in the Milwaukee area should we join? Before that we both had been members at our home churches where our parents had belonged and where we grew up. Then, in Green Grove our membership was at the church where I was the pastor. But now, we could choose.

One factor stood out in what we decided. We wanted our children to go to Immanuel School, so we joined Immanuel. Immanuel Milwaukee had a school from the very start. At one time it had about 400 students. We didn't need a school immediately, but we wanted to be established with a church where a school was available.

Our first child, Christine, was born while we were moving from Green Grove back to Milwaukee. Corinne moved down here to stay with her parents and my mother came to Green Grove to do the cooking and housekeeping for me. Our other two children, Mary and David, were born in Milwaukee.

We remained members of Immanuel from 1962 until 1973 when we moved out to Menomonee Falls. Then we again faced the decision on which church to join. Would it be Grace Menomonee Falls or Immanuel Brookfield? We visited both churches and knew both pastors very well, but we decided on Immanuel because the Grace School was just starting and still did not have all of the grades we would need for our children. We didn't want our children to go to two different schools. On the other hand, Immanuel Brookfield had all the grades in an established school.

Thus, up until the time I became a pastor at Grace we gravitated to the south and to the east, to Butler, Brookfield and Milwaukee. We did our shopping there. We very rarely came into the Falls.

Again the school for our children was a factor. Over the years, I've seen many young families decide where to go to church in the same way that Corrine and I did. They want their children to go to

a parochial school, so they look for a church that has a good school. That's where they become members. It's where their children will go to school, and that's where they support the work of the Lord.

For our children, as it had been for me when I was a child, there was no question, they would go to a parochial school and then to Milwaukee Lutheran. When I was still a professor that was fairly routine for them, but once I became a pastor their life at school would change. David, especially, felt the impact. He was still in school at Milwaukee Lutheran when I started at Grace. A question would come up in class. "You should know this," the teacher would tell him. "Your dad is a pastor." That didn't sit well with David.

Facing a New Challenge

Becoming a pastor was quite a change for me, too. Life as a professor was more on an even keel. I didn't have voters' meetings, I didn't have elders meetings, and I didn't have counseling. Sometimes being a professor did require an evening meeting, but nothing like the pastoral ministry. We weren't called out at all hours of the night to a hospital. A pastor is on call 24 hours per day.

When I first decided to accept the call to Grace, I had no idea of what was ahead for me. I knew there would be some adjustments, but I expected a much less demanding role—as an associate pastor—for a time when I could ease into full-time retirement.

Then everything tumbled down on me. Pastor Zehnder decided to resign and I was left to be senior pastor. At the same time, Grace was in the middle of building the Christian Activity Center, which had been controversial from the start. It was difficult, but Corinne helped quite a bit. I needed a sounding board and she listened patiently.

Difficult challenges often come into our lives that are not of our choosing. They are challenges the Lord has laid out for us to do. I had to believe that if the Lord had placed this new responsibility in my hands that He had also prepared me to handle it.

The years I spent as a professor at Concordia were an important part of that preparation. When I was still a young person on the staff, I could observe the more experienced professors and administrators. I learned much from them. One I

remember especially was the Rev. Dr. Walter Stuenkel who was President of Concordia.

The many pastors I learned to know while working at Concordia proved to be a valuable resource for my work at Grace. I got to know them because the district conventions would be held at Concordia. The registration and exhibits would be in the Library. Since I was the Librarian, I would be on the organization committee. So when I was faced with my new challenges at Grace, I could rely on these other pastors such as Elmer Neitze, a pastor at Mt. Calvary, for valuable advice.

My membership at Immanuel also helped me to understand the dynamics and business operation of a large congregation. While my family and I were members there I also served as president of the congregation for a couple of years. That gave me some experience with administrative responsibilities in a large congregation.

*“Well done,
good and faithful servant!
You have been faithful
in a few things;
I will put you in charge
of many things.”
-- Matthew 25: 21*

So the Lord was preparing me. He had things in mind. And those things would include preaching at Grace, but I needed preaching experience. I also got lots of that while working as a professor. I preached nearly every Sunday, helping out at various churches as a pulpit assistant.

That's how I first became acquainted with people at Grace church, helping out as a pulpit assistant in the late 1970s. Pastor Fahl retired in April 1978 and that left Pastor Zehnder here alone. There were no assistant pastors. Calls had been sent out, but all were returned. Grace needed help with the Sunday services and that's what I did. During that time, I also helped out at St John's in Glendale, dividing my time with teaching at Concordia and being pulpit assistant at two churches.

Section III

Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
 By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus

III

The Call to Grace

*“Who hath saved us and called us
 with an holy calling,
 not according to our works
 but according to his own purpose
 and grace, which was given us
 in Christ Jesus
 before the world began.”*
 -- II Timothy 1:9

Pastor Fahl preached his final sermon at Grace Church on June 5, 1977. For the next 10 months, until the spring of 1978, we continued on with Pastor Zehnder as the senior pastor while I served as a pulpit assistant. It soon became clear that Pastor Zehnder would need more help. My time was divided up among Grace, St John's in Glendale, and teaching at Concordia. All the previous attempts to call an associate pastor had been returned, so a few people got the idea, “Why don't we call Dietz?” Others said, “No, he's wedded to Concordia. He's been a professor all of his life. He won't even consider it.”

Those who wanted to try to call me won out and the process began. I can remember Reinie Fleming visiting me on a Saturday afternoon asking me if I would accept a call to Grace. I had to tell him, “You send me a call and I'll let you know.”

That following Monday they had a voters' meeting and my name was put forward as a candidate to be an associate pastor at Grace. When the meeting ended, the voters had decided that they would send the call to me.

After I received the call, I debated with myself. I prayed over it. Corrine and I talked it over. Most of my working life had been at Concordia. It had

been 26 years since I started at Concordia in 1952 as a regular called professor. Maybe it was time for a change.

I accepted the call, and was installed as co-pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church on April 23, 1978. We could stay in our house in Menomonee Falls. I would not need to move, only change the direction of my car when going to work.

My work at Grace would be in the area of youth, although I had limitations there. I had other things, such as evangelism and I was not great at that, so there were limitations on what I could do, but Grace was willing to accept that, so we started working here.

As I accepted the call I firmly believed that God had great things in store for Grace, and still does. I believe this because He has richly blessed the membership of Grace both materially and spiritually. I believe that God had moved me to accept this call because I had been prepared to help carry out His plans for this congregation.

A Letter to Grace

I shared some of these thoughts in my letter of acceptance written to the members of Grace on April 22, 1978. I wanted them to know that God did indeed “have great things in store for Grace,” but I also wanted to warn them that these “great things” don't happen on their own. Great things require great effort and great dedication.

To that end, I wanted the members of Grace to know that, “As I take up my work among you, I want to assure you of my prayers to God on your behalf, of my willingness to serve and minister to you as your co-pastor.”

In the same letter, I called on the members of Grace to do their part. “As you have the right to the best of my energies and labor on your behalf; in return I ask that all of you give willing service to

our Lord by actively participating in the work of the Lord here at Grace.” That was more than 24 years ago in the spring of 1978. Now, in the late fall of 2002, I have already spent more than 13 years as a retired pastor emeritus of Grace. But I am still a member here and have a great interest in the future the Lord’s work in this community.

As I ponder the future of Grace, I have many of the same thoughts I did 24 years ago. God has done “great things” here during the past 24 years, and I still firmly believe that He has “many more great things” in store for this congregation in the future.

My feelings about the future of Grace today are much the same as they were 24 years ago. My appeal to the members is also the same as then:

“We can hinder and slow down those great things by our slowness to respond and participate. But we can make all these great things happen at Grace if we joyfully and cheerfully respond to His constant call to show forth the power and might of His Spirit in our hearts and lives.”

The members of Grace did respond, and we saw great things happen, but not exactly as I expected when I was pondering my role as a co-pastor with Pastor Zehnder. The Lord had bigger plans in store for me than I could have dreamed.

Big Surprise, a New Challenge

On May 11, 1978, just 18 days after I had been installed as a co-pastor at Grace, Pastor Zehnder resigned to become Vice-President in charge of Public Relations, Branch Supervision and Expansion of a family business in Cleveland, Ohio. Suddenly Grace was without a senior pastor; and there I was, the co-pastor and obvious choice to take over Pastor Zehnder’s responsibilities.

The decision was made that I would be appointed senior pastor of Grace. I had already been called to Grace so another call was not necessary. I was still free to turn down the appointment and Grace would have had to call another pastor to serve as senior pastor and I would continue as a co-pastor. The Lord had been preparing me for this. He was calling me to a much greater challenge than I had expected and I accepted it. The next question

was “who can we call to be your associate?” There was no doubt that I would need help. The ministry in a congregation of this size is simply too much for any one man to handle. At the same time, I don’t agree with the idea of “associate” pastors. To me you are either a pastor or an assistant pastor.

An “associate” pastor should have some voice on things. I don’t believe that works very well. I believe there should be one pastor and those who help should be assistant pastors. Not everyone agrees with me, but I am of the opinion that the idea of an associate pastor is not the right thing to do, and I know that I’m in the minority with that point of view.

It seems to me that an “associate” pastor is on the same level as the pastor, but if you say he is a little bit lower, well then he is an assistant. Somebody needs to be in control and call the shots, and the rest of them need to focus around that. And that’s what I felt about having an assistant pastor. He was to be an assistant and not an associate and that he was to be given directives. That’s the way I wanted to function.

So we didn’t make any effort to call an associate pastor. Instead, our plan would be to put together a team of part-time pulpit assistants. The congregation still felt we needed another full-time pastor so we did send some calls for assistant pastors that were accepted. There were two assistants serving with me during the time I was at Grace, each of them for a relatively short time.

The first assistant pastor was the Rev. James C. Redmann who was installed in November of 1979, the second was the Rev. Tom Paul Willadsen installed in February of 1982. In addition we had the Rev. Warren Granke who assisted me for one year just before my retirement. He was then called to be the senior pastor at Grace.

Now we also needed to consider the role of an assistant. He could be either an assistant “to” the pastor or an assistant pastor. In my estimation there was a difference between the two. As long as the pastor was there, an “assistant to the pastor” could function as a pastor. When the pastor left, there was no longer a pastor there. Meanwhile, an “assistant pastor” could function no matter whether there was another pastor there or not. The men we called were

assistant pastors, not assistants to the pastor. They were given certain responsibilities. And those responsibilities were things that I felt were in areas where I had weaknesses and they had strengths.

Youth work was one area where I could use help. Even though I had taught at Concordia, I was not a Walther Leaguer. Another was the area of evangelism. I was uncomfortable going out and pushing doorbells. I could meet with people, I could talk to them, I could discuss theology and religion with them, but that was a different thing. Both Pastors Redmann and Willadsen (who was a student of mine) worked in these areas when they were here, but that was just a short period of time for each of them. Another was the Rev. Jerry Stecker, who was called to be an associate pastor with Pastor Granke after I had retired. He decided to accept another call in 1997. Then in 1998, the Rev. Roy Peterson was called to serve as an associate pastor with Pastor Granke.

Forming a Team for Ministry

The full-time assistant pastors were very helpful, but they were not a substitute for our team ministry approach. Using assistant pastors alone would not have provided all that would be needed here at Grace. There was much the Lord had laid out for us to do. These young assistants were each here for a relatively short time. When one of them would leave, I would again be left alone. With the exception of Warren Granke, they did not have the experience and talent that we found in some others we brought into our team ministry.

The team ministry approach was not very widely used back then, in the early-to-mid 1980s. We envisioned this team ministry to be made up of professionals in a part-time capacity. It was an approach that could be used at Grace because the people we needed were available in the area.

One of those pastors that many at Grace may still remember was the Rev. Prof. Ron Berg. He had been a colleague of mine at Concordia. We had worked together for a number of years. He fit in wonderfully with our ministry here at Grace. He was very capable and he was an excellent speaker.

Then there was the Rev. Henry Corcoran, who

was a member of Grace and was a teacher on the religion staff and Milwaukee Lutheran High School. He was ideal to handle our youth program. Then there was Gerald Reinke, a 40-year-old potato farmer from Idaho who had decided to make a career change and study for full-time church work. Reinke was enrolled in Concordia University, but needed some part-time work to help support his wife and family. In addition, he already had a good deal of training in evangelism. So we tapped him to head up our evangelism program.

Two other professionals were already on the staff of Grace rounded out our team. They were Richard Maas, who was the Principal of our school and Fred Meier, our Minister of Music.

Team ministry has some unique advantages. It provides a variety of ministry. Each team member can be given responsibilities in areas for which his talents were best suited. It provides more time for the Senior Pastor to expedite his specific duties more efficiently and effectively. The congregation soon learned to appreciate team ministry because it gave them a variety of styles in preaching and teaching.

A team ministry also has disadvantages, but they are few and can be overcome. One is that it still left only one pastor on call 24 hours a day. It also left me with the responsibility of coordinating the work of team. But the Lord had provided me with many lifetime experiences to help me do what was needed to lead our team. An example was my experience as president of the Wisconsin Library Association. Also, I had served as president of Immanuel Lutheran Church, a very large congregation.

Observing the examples of other strong leaders had also helped me. One of the best teachers was the Rev. Dr. Walter Stuenkel, president of Concordia University. He came from a large congregation in Michigan. He came to Concordia in 1953, right after I did. He was excellent, and he was a good model for me to follow.

I was able to observe Dr. Stuenkel in faculty meetings and on committees as well as just sitting and talking with him. I was at Concordia during his entire period of time, from the time he accepted his

call until his retirement. He was an excellent role model for me. The skills I had gained over the years taught me one important lesson. I would need to get advice from leaders of the congregation to know how we could move Grace ahead.

A “Kitchen Cabinet” to Advise Me

The President of the United States has a cabinet to advise him and to manage the various departments of his administration. In addition, many presidents have a close circle of people from inside and outside of his administration that he often calls on for advice. The media often refer to these people as the president’s “kitchen cabinet,” because it advises the president with informal, behind closed doors discussions, but has no real authority.

I needed that sort of advice when I accepted the responsibility as senior pastor of Grace. Until then I had not been a member here and was not well acquainted with the membership, nor was I fully aware of the all the traditions and ways that had become important to the people of Grace. As we began to discuss things with the board and the various chairmen of the boards, we came up with this idea. I suggested that we have a group of these men meet informally with me just to talk things over. So we began to meet at 6:00 a.m. on Thursday mornings and we would discuss the problems of Grace. We passed no resolutions, we had no decision-making authority, but we would hash things over and arrive at possible solutions. Then when the council met it just became a matter of passing the resolutions.

The men who attended these Thursday morning meetings were generally the chairmen of the boards. An exception was the board of elders, because the chairman, Reinie Fleming, had an early morning work schedule and another elder took his place. Each board was represented. I would set the agenda and would bring forth various ideas we could talk about for each of these cabinet meetings. We kept no minutes. It was my cabinet, but it had no decision-making power. Its only job was to advise me on the most acceptable way to solve the many problems faced by Grace church.

Those meetings with my “cabinet” proved very valuable to me in getting things done at Grace. We started meeting shortly after I began as senior pastor of Grace, in the early fall of 1978. I didn’t know Grace very well. I didn’t know its thinking, and all of the sudden I was in charge. It’s never wise to lord it over others. That’s not my idea of how to get things done. It had to be a team, a consensus. To have a strong ministry, a pastor needs to build a consensus before going ahead with anything.

This is how it worked. I would start talking with people, “What do you think about this?” “What do you think about that?” and if enough of them said, “Hey, that’s a good idea,” then I knew we could move ahead. But if instead they started talking about the Packers or the Brewers, then I knew it wouldn’t go— so why try to fight it?

*“The ways of a fool
seem right to him, but a wise man
listens to advice.”*
--Proverbs 12:15

One of the things I learned quickly was to ask around before trying anything new. One of the first lessons was with the acolytes. Right after I came, we thought we could dress up our services a little bit, so I announced in the Voice of Grace that we were now introducing acolytes. Soon I was getting unsigned letters asking “Since when are we becoming Catholic?” I understood what they were saying, so we didn’t call them acolytes, we called them “candle lighters.” That solved the problem. Everyone was happy with “candle lighters.”

Having that cabinet made it possible to discuss and get reactions to important changes. No one could come to us and say, “You’re trying to run things.” We discussed ideas and talked over the pros and cons. There were no resolutions. Instead, a “consensus” would come out and that would be refined into a resolution for when the council met or the voters met to make the final decisions.

Section III

Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus

IV

Changing the Constitution

One of the first big decisions that came out of those “kitchen cabinet” meetings was to look at the constitution and reconsider how Grace was organized. The constitution of our church must be a document that governs our activities in a way that draws our members together and offers each one the opportunity to use his or her God-given talents to move forward and carry out the will of our Lord in this place.

I believed strongly that the congregation should not necessarily be hung up in day-to-day operations, and that’s what I saw in the older constitution. The congregation made the decisions. They voted on so many things. “Should we get this type of carpeting or that?” “Should we do this or that?” In my view those were problems for the boards to decide.

Those discussions at our weekly cabinet meetings began a process that has resulted in the type of organization that Grace has now. We revised the constitution and developed a format similar to what we have today. Pastor Granke continued with that process.

Now the Voters’ Assembly meets only once a year, unless a special meeting is needed for decisions such as calling a pastor or purchasing land. Meanwhile, the board of directors is empowered to make many of the decisions that had been in the hands of the voters. We now follow the concept of having one small group make the decisions. We made a number of other changes in the constitution; many of them were from model constitutions we had looked at to learn how other Lutheran churches are organized. Many changes had been taking place in organizational practices at other synod churches, but much of what was being done under the old constitution here at Grace was still like the older way of doing things years ago.

Church practices had come a long way since the first churches were organized in the Milwaukee

area. Before my time, I’ve been told that the elders of the church always sat in the first pew every Sunday. Their job was to listen carefully to all that the pastor had to say to be certain that he was preaching the Word of God according to the Lutheran traditions. We’ve gotten away from all of that. Today our elders are still responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. That, of course does require that the pure word of God is preached in our services. In addition, they supervise all matters pertaining to congregational worship.

*“The elders who direct
the affairs of the church
are worthy of double honor,
especially those whose work
is preaching and teaching.”*

-- I Timothy 5: 17

Much of what they do, however, is behind the scenes and in board meetings, not from the front pew of the church.

Still, one of the biggest problems we faced as we worked on our constitution was the blending of the old with the new without creating too many problems. It is not unusual for people to resist making changes from the way things were. “We’ve always done it this way, so why change?” However, there is always another new group of members coming up, as is the case today. They don’t necessarily see things in the same light.

Another thing that came up in the constitution discussions is how to handle the membership of children in school or Sunday school whose parents are not members. There were people who had moved to Menomonee Falls from Milwaukee but wanted to retain their membership in an inner city

congregation, but they didn't want to make that trip several times a week to take their children to confirmation instruction. They came to Grace to see if their children could come to our confirmation class, but be confirmed at their home church under the rubrics of their confirmation program.

The Board of Elders wrestled with that and set up guidelines under which we could function. The guides were that we would train and teach them, but the ultimate determination of whether they would be confirmed or not rested with the pastor of their own congregation. Their confirmation then took place at their home churches.

Just the thought of confirmation classes reminds me of a lesson I learned about the "powers behind the scenes." It came early in my ministry at Grace. As a professor I didn't know the machinations of congregations and how things work.

The size of our confirmation classes had been declining. I came up with a brilliant idea that I thought could eliminate one of two Sunday afternoon confirmation services. Up to that time confirmation always took place on the Sunday before Mothers' Day, and on Mothers' Day they went to their first communion. As the congregation grew, we had reached the point where two services would be needed. Children with last names starting with A to K were confirmed at a 1:00 pm service and those starting with L to Z in a 3:00 p.m. service. The next year we'd flip the schedule starting with the L to Z.

When I started at Grace our confirmation classes were getting smaller, so I suggested we combine them into one service at 1:00 p.m. That created a storm I had not expected. I had mothers in their wrath coming to me saying that they had planned to have their child confirmed on this date at this time and "that's what I want." That had all been determined when the child was born, they already knew when he or she would be confirmed, what hour and what day and don't you dare change it.

As a result, I backed off. I had learned to never upset the mothers, just as it is not very wise to upset the Ladies Aid. The Board of Trustees had to learn that lesson, too, when they started looking at ways to make improvements in our Fellowship Hall and kitchen area. This happened when Grace School

began looking at starting a school lunch program. That would mean making some adjustments to meet all the requirements under the laws that govern school lunches.

They came up with their grandiose idea and they presented it to the ladies. They had never seen such opposition in their lives. It was interesting to see how the trustees reacted. They withdrew their concept and never talked about it again. The ladies were up in arms. "Don't you dare touch our kitchen!"

Voting Rights for Women

One of the biggest issues that came up in our discussions of the Grace constitution in the early 1980s was to give voting membership to women. The old constitution defined voting members as, "*All male members of the congregation who have attained their 18th year shall have voting privileges in the congregation.*"

After some long discussions on the issue, a new definition was proposed and approved. It stated simply that: "*Voting members are all communicant members who have attained eighteen years of age.*"

In addition, women could then hold any office except elder or pastor. Grace has always been a conservative congregation compared to others in the synod. That reflected the pastor's point of view. Pastor Fahl was a conservative; not an archconservative, but he held a conservative view on the role of women in the church.

The discussions which led up to that change proved interesting. One of the most outstanding individuals who opposed the change was Reinie Fleming, and he was Chairman of the Board of Elders. My approach was to talk with him, and convince him. Once Reinie was convinced, I knew we were well on our way. I sat down with him and we decided to go through it in great detail in our Board of Elders meetings. The issue was not a new one in the Missouri Synod. It first came up at the 1938 convention in St. Louis. Theologians and church leaders studied this issue for more than thirty years before arriving at an agreement at the 1969 synod convention in Denver. At that meeting a resolution was approved to grant women the right to vote and hold membership on synodical and

congregational boards and committees. Here it was 1980, and Grace still followed the old practice. But now the Board of Elders was ready to review what the synod had done and to study the Bible references synod leaders had considered. They reached same conclusion, that there is nothing in Scripture that prohibits women from exercising the franchise in voters' assemblies.

Reinie agreed and so did the other board members. Once Reinie was on board it was easy. In his own way, Reinie believed in democracy, but he didn't always practice it.

Once he was ready to move ahead in a meeting he'd point at a board member and say, "You make the motion," and at another he would say, "You second it." Then he'd call for the vote, "All those in favor aye, okay, that's it."

Then, of course it had to be approved by the congregation, but with the Board of Elders in favor of it, along with spokespeople like Reinie there was no big problem to get the change approved. Women would be given the right to vote at Grace.

Involving Women in Church Business

Grace had much to gain by giving women a voice and an increased opportunity to serve their Lord. Soon after the change was made, more women became interested in holding offices. Now we had a much larger pool of potential volunteers for offices that needed to be filled.

The average individual male wasn't that interested in being on the Stewardship Board or on the School Board. You had to twist arms.

Among the women of Grace you had a group of people who were more interested and were willing to work. You could assign them a responsibility and they would run with it. It wasn't such a big problem that they would lord it over the congregation, that wasn't it at all.

We were able to make the change on the status of women because we first built a consensus. Through the events of my life the Lord had shown me many examples of that and of how well it had worked to move people on toward important goals. It was one of the things that guided me in my ministry. I never wanted confrontation, because it never did any good. If I had an idea or wanted

something, I started talking to individuals. If I found a number of them who agreed with me I would go ahead and push it.

The CAC and Healing Wounds

Another important issue that came out of our cabinet meetings was how to handle the CAC issue, and how to take care of our debt to the Lutheran High School Association. We didn't want to prolong that debt and didn't want to get any deeper into debt.

While Grace had been blessed in many ways, it was also facing a number of difficult problems and controversial issues. An immediate problem we faced was how to "heal Grace," because Grace had just decided to build the Christian Activity Center, and not everyone agreed with that. The decision to build the CAC was made at a very contentious voters' meeting and the approval won by a very slim margin.

The decision to go ahead with the CAC before retiring a debt of \$158,000 left a deep wound on Grace. Pastor Zehnder referred to this wound in his letter of resignation dated May 11, just 10 days after the vote was taken to move ahead. In his letter, he made clear that the decision to build had nothing to do with his decision to resign, but that he did have doubts about the ability of Grace to support this expansion. He explained that by not being able to first pay off this debt the people of Grace were not yet willing to "back up their desires for expansion with hard-earned tangible cash!"

Pastor Zehnder was wrong. He had underestimated the people of Grace, and perhaps he underestimated how the Lord works with His people to get things done. But before it all could happen, we had many discussions in our cabinet meetings about how we could heal that situation.

What could we do? We were very careful not to refer to it as a "gym." We emphasized that in the congregation. We wanted to be clear that it was not just for the school or that the school people were guiding it. The school was represented by only a small part of the congregation. A large part of the congregation did not necessarily nor completely support the school. One of my major jobs was to emphasize the relationship of the school to the over-

all mission of Grace. I had to emphasize how blessed Grace is and had been because it had a Christian day school.

Still, there were those who were opposed to it because their children were no longer in school. Why should they pay for something from which they knew they wouldn't reap any benefits? While that's a natural human point of view, it's why I never allowed the name "gymnasium" to be used, but rather emphasized it as the *Christian Activity Center*. When we presented it that way plus wiping out the Lutheran High School Association debt, we didn't have much of a problem with it.

While there still may be die-hards, increasingly the congregation has come to see the value of having a CAC. Now if you were to poll the congregation asking, "Do you think the CAC was a good idea?" You'd likely get strong approval.

Today the CAC is also looked upon as a great value to our congregation. Ask anyone about it now and they'll say, "How could we have gotten along with out it for such a long time?" It gets much use and has worked out nicely.

Now the school also seems to be getting more support than it did in those early years. A larger part of the congregation has had children in the school. Some members have grown up going to our school and know how important it is to our ministry. I can understand those feelings from my own background. I was brought up in a large congregation with a school and my work as pulpit assistant had been at churches with a large school. That included old Immanuel after we came back to Concordia from Green Grove.

Coming Out of the Pulpit

There is one thing I started here at Grace that I'm proud of and I'm happy to see that Pastor Peterson is carrying on with the practice. I told the congregation at the outset that I can't stay in the pulpit when preaching a sermon. I'm not used to it, because as a professor at Concordia I walked around with a piece of chalk in my hand to write notes on the board as I talked with students, so you are going to have to bear with me. That's how it got started. One day I walked out of the pulpit to preach my sermon and never went back again. Some of

our members did correct me on some things that I had to learn about coming out of the pulpit. They said, "stay in the chancel." Don't walk the aisles because when you do, those sitting in the back of the church can't see you.

Also, I noticed that some people would refuse to sit on the aisle seat. They didn't want to be the one that I might pat on the head. They didn't want me to call attention to them.

Some of the visiting pastors will ask if moving out of the pulpit is allowed. It's not something they were used to seeing. It was one of the new things that I brought with me to Grace and now we see it quite often here.

Other things that evolved

When I came here Pastor Zehnder had developed a "hunter's" service on Thursday nights, for the hunting season. We carried that over into the summer, so we had a Thursday night service and two services on Sunday morning. Gradually the Thursday night became a year around service. Later on we added the Saturday night service.

There also was a movement afoot back then to have three services on Sunday mornings. I was a

*"Has not the Lord anointed you
leader over his inheritance?"*

-- I Samuel 10:1

little bit opposed to that because I did not want to sell the Bible classes short. During my time as senior pastor I remained adamant that this is what I want. One hour on Sunday morning was set aside for Sunday school and Bible classes.

The other area that developed during the 1980s was a movement to use the new hymnbook. There was a sturdy group here at Grace that wanted it. I was not in favor of it. I wanted the old hymnal. While I didn't press it, we had a vote and the vote was to keep the old one. Of course, they got around it later on, and I think what was done is fine. They put the hymns in the bulletin and used a variety of orders of service so for the most part there was no need to use the hymnal during worship services.

*“God has great things in store for Grace. . .
We can hinder these great things with our slowness. . .
or we can make these great things happen at Grace if we
joyfully and cheerfully respond to His constant call
to show forth the power and might of His Spirit
in our hearts and lives.”*

-- Pastor Dietz in a letter to the congregation April 22, 1978



Pastor and Corrine Dietz at the reception following his installation as co-pastor of Grace on April 23, 1978.



Pastor Dietz delivers sermon at the Grace Picnic worship service at Firemen's Park in Germantown, August 23, 1981.



Pastor Dietz and "Sheriff" Reinie Fleming, Chairman of the Board of Elders, enjoy the fellowship and fun at the 1981 Grace annual picnic.



Pastor Dietz enjoyed outdoor gatherings and started the tradition of outdoor worship services at Grace Church. Outdoor worship on church grounds and picnics at parks have continued to be a cherished tradition at Grace church.

The Senior Choir with director Fred Meier in December 1982. Fred served for 14 years from 1976 to 1990 as organist, choir director and as a teacher at Grace School. He returned in September 1994 to serve another three years as organist and choir director.



*“Though you have not seen Him, you love him;
and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him
and are filled with inexpressible and glorious joy,
for you are receiving the goal of your faith,
the salvation of your souls.”*

1 Peter 1: 8-9

Text for 50th Anniversary sermon, June 5, 1983



Pastor Dietz and Lutheran Hour Speaker Oswald C. J. Hoffmann lead the processional at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Grace Lutheran Church.



The pews of Grace Church were filled June 5, 1983 as Lutheran Hour Speaker Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffmann delivers his sermon “Jumping For Joy” based on 1 Peter 1: 8-9 at the Grace 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration service.



The 1983 Bell Choir with director Fred Meier. The Bell Choir was started in 1979 when the Kangas family donated the first bells in memory of Susan Kangas, the young daughter of Walter and Karen Kangas



Jane Fritsch, Ethel Mayer and Sheila Beyer, members of the 1983 Altar Guild who maintain the communion-ware and prepare the altar for worship.

On May 21, 2000, Pastor Dietz was honored for his 50 years in the ministry and over 12 years as senior pastor of Grace Church



Section III

Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus

V

Remembering the Seasons, Advent, Christmas

Of all the things that took place at Grace during my years here, it is the people and their faith that is most important. Looking through the pages of the Voice of Grace from that time, one can be reminded of those concerns in the columns I wrote.

Columns in the early issues were called “Smoke Signals and Pipe Dreams,” but after I gave up smoking the pipe it was changed to “Thru the Back Window.” Looking back at them now is a reminder of what was on my mind. Much of it had to do with the seasons of the church year and with our members and their relationship with our great God Almighty.

When the writing was complete, the Voice of Grace was delivered and became a part of the history of our congregation. Once it was in the hands of our members, my prayers were that what was written would be taken to heart. In many cases, those prayers have been answered. The evidence is clear to see in how Grace has thrived and grown.

As I’ve watched Grace prosper in my retirement years I am reminded of the words our dear departed Pastor E. P. Fahl wrote in his “*Reminiscences*” in 1986. He saw the successes of Grace Church as “*The wonderful acts of our gracious God.*” These “wonderful acts” have continued well beyond the first 53 years of Grace history that he wrote about. They have continued during my years as your pastor and as a member at Grace. I continue to see the hand of our “Gracious God” at work as the Pastors Granke and Peterson continued to lead Grace.

Seasons and Concerns

Our Gracious God created this earth and gave us our seasons. He also gave us His Word that often speaks of the seasons. We have our calendars to mark the days, weeks and months of the year.

We also have our church calendar, established by early Christians. The observance of seasons was often a topic of the “Pipe Dream,” or “Thru the Back Window” columns. One of those columns addresses the topic of seasons specifically. It was written during the winter of 1987 for the February 1987 issue: The following words have been selected from what was written in the winter of 1987 on the topic of our seasons and our God.

“Looking out the window towards the back it is white, bleak and cold. The trees stand there naked. Just six months ago all was green and lush. Rains kept everything green. It was warm, now it is cold.

*“To everything there is a season,
 and a time to every purpose
 under the heaven.”*

-- Ecclesiastes 3:1

“It reminds me of the promise given to Noah. The flood had devastated the earth. Only Noah, his family and some animals survived. Finally their ark became grounded. The waters receded, the ground dried. Noah and his family and the animals stepped forth on dry ground. Then God promised:

“ ‘As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease,’ Genesis 8:22. Many years later the psalmist wrote: ‘It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you who made both summer and winter,’ Psalm 74:17.

“God made the seasons—God has caused them to follow one another in sequence from that time forward. And so it will happen. For God is a

God of promise. This makes our God unique. He promises and He fulfills. Pagan gods are dead, they cannot promise, they cannot fulfill.

“We are in the Epiphany season until March 1 this year. This season is climaxed by the celebration of the Transfiguration. In these Sundays we see and hear God making His Son known to us. It is His Son who is true God and man. As man He walked among men; as God He showed forth His divinity in His miracles. He called people to Himself with the single invitation, ‘Come.’ He changed water into wine with a single act. He is indeed our God. But He is also our substitute. He took our place. He has turned the winter of our lives into summer. He has changed us. He made us to be His own.

“Our God is a God of promise as to seasons. Our God is a God of promise as to our salvation. Before us in the changing seasons we see His promise fulfilled. Before us in His Word we see His promise for our lives fulfilled.”

As I ponder the history of that time, I again must think of the seasons, of what I was thinking and what concerned me the most. These are reflected in what I wrote then.

The Year Starts with Advent

Our calendar of Christian festivals starts with Advent, shortly after Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November when we are already thinking ahead to Advent, Christmas and the next church year. Our new year begins with Advent Sunday, the Sunday nearest to St. Andrew’s Day, November 30.

Thanksgiving is a secular holiday in the sense that it is proclaimed by the President as a day of National Thanksgiving. As Christians we gladly and willingly subscribe to this and gather to give thanks. Yet for many, even some within Grace, it is only a time for turkey and eating, of satisfying self. Rather it should be a day of giving thanks.

For what do we give thanks? We should and must give thanks for all we have, food, light, warmth, friends, clothing, pets, air, sun, rain, etc. There are a host of items we need and enjoy, and above all, people for whom to give thanks.

As the senior pastor I was also thankful. Our Thanksgiving services had been well attended. We

have long had two of them. There is the “hunter’s” service on Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. and the Thanksgiving Day service on Thursday at 9:30 a.m.

Once our celebration of a day of National Thanksgiving is over, we look forward to Advent and Christmas. In our planning and preparation, we dare not lose sight of the true meaning of Advent. My thoughts on our preparations for Christmas during the Advent season were addressed in my December columns:

“Advent is a time of preparation. The economy has prepared. Many months ago plans were on the drawing board, advertising was decided upon, teddy bears were ordered and suddenly it is the year of the bear, mistletoe and jingle bells. Or do we go to Burger King or McDonalds and stock up on another stuffed toy? Where there is a profit to be gained there is intense preparation for this season by the retailers across our nation.”

Preparing for Christmas

“While the world prepares for Christmas shopping, we also we need to prepare spiritually for the celebration of the birth of Christ. Too often we fail to realize the awesomeness of this great event. *God became man.* God did not masquerade as man. He did not become a hybrid. The eternal and everlasting God became man.

“What a humiliation for Him! He did it all for us. God who made man became one of the creatures fully and completely. He was born. How embarrassing for God. Yet all His humiliation, all this embarrassment took place because He wanted it to take our place.

“There’s a sign that says, ‘*Christ is the reason for the season.*’ We celebrate God’s great embarrassment and humiliation because it was for us. Here is the greatest love. He gave up His home; He gave up being God alone because He loved us. The good news of this event is that God became man for us to be our substitute, to take our place. As God gave this gift to us, so we remember by giving gifts to others.

“Advent then is the preparation time. We need to hear the ancient prophets speak the Messianic prophecies. We need to remember that as He came once, so shall He come again, so we need to

prepare, we need to prepare our hearts and selves to receive Him.”

Christmas Eve and Family Worship

Christmas Eve has always brought large numbers of worshipers to Grace church. The number of services has had to be increased to provide space for them all.

I still remember them, and I cherish the memories of those services. There were the candle light services, the Family Services where I would sit in the rocking chair in the chancel and we conducted “from my house to your house.”

From my rocking chair I would talk to the congregation with a message, and we would have a children’s message. We also had families come to the front to share their faith by reading the Christmas message from the Scripture.

The Church was always crowded. That’s wonderful, but it also can cause problems. I remember one, and by the grace of God we were saved from a catastrophe. As usual, the church was packed on Christmas Eve for the Family Service. It was time for the children’s message. We had all of the children around me in my rocking chair and one of the candelabras, with the Advent candles, was up there right next to the pulpit.

I was sitting in the rocking chair with kids all around, and I had to be careful not to rock because I didn’t want to rock over some toes, a leg or any fingers. All of the sudden, as the children were pushing and moving around, the candelabra started tilting with all of its candles burning. Who would be sitting on one of the folding chairs in front of the pews, but Al Lippert and his family? Al was on the Board of Trustees at that time. He is a tall fellow, and he got up, grabbed and caught the candelabra and held it until we could get it all straightened up.

At first we had the Family Service format for just one Christmas Eve service. Then it got so big we had to have it for two. The church would be packed. For me the highlight was to stand up in the altar and see all the men ringing the outside aisles of the church and lighting their candles. All the other lights had to be out. I was adamant about that. I told the elders, “You get those lights out! I don’t want any lights except the candles.” Then to hear the

congregation sing “Silent Night,” it still brings goose bumps to me. That’s what the ministry is about! That’s what I cherish, that’s the glory! Christmas was wonderful, but the highlight was the Family Service. We had also had a midnight service, but I never attended. That’s what an assistant pastor is for; he had to stay up late, I went to bed.

As Christmas and the time for our Family Services approached each year, I had so many thoughts I wanted to share with our dear members. Many of these thoughts were shared from my rocking chair on Christmas Eve. Others were also written in the Voice of Grace for all members to read and ponder as they made preparation for their Christmas with their families:

“Christmas is truly a religious festival. Unfortunately we often have encrusted our festivities with so many things that too often the little Christ-Child in the manger gets lost.

“Too many in our world today and perhaps some of our members fail to see it for what it is— God’s fulfillment of a beautiful promise made centuries before. In the Babe of Bethlehem are all the hopes and fears of mankind.”

Simple Stable, Powerful Message

In my Voice of Grace columns, I also offered members of Grace “watchwords” we all can use to guard our attitudes and guide our activities:.

“ 1) *The stable stands for simplicity* in the midst of sophistication. For that day it was a sophisticated world, with highways networking the Roman world for fast communication, power wielded by armies in far flung areas and a bureaucracy to conduct a census and collect a tax to support a hedonistic society.

And in its midst, a sleepy town, filled to capacity, all united by a common kinship. There a simple maid, accompanied by her husband, gave birth to a baby in a stable. *Such simplicity!*

“So today, we have advertising that wishes us a Merry Christmas and asks us to buy; and television extravaganzas that celebrate Christmas and miss the Christ. Yet the focal point is the Christ-child before whom we bow and whom we praise in our lives.

“ 2) *The stable stands for serenity* in the midst of

activity. The small town, crammed to capacity, bustled with activity. Kinship to David brought people here. Here were relatives and friends. Where you have people you have activity. The inns were full, there was no room. In the town there probably was celebration. But, out back, in the quiet of the stable there was serenity. *The Prince of Peace was born.* To the shepherds, the lonely night people, the message was brought in an extraordinary way.

“So too today, the world parties. Christmas is a time to celebrate. Activity takes place all over. Traditions are followed. Yet for all, especially for us, there should be a time for serenity, for real peace. It is that peace that alone is for the person who has been made *one* with God. Such a person sees there in the manger Jesus Christ, the savior, the Lord comes for *all* men.”

A Special Day, A Special Birth

Then Christmas morning brought us another opportunity to worship our Lord and the many members of Grace were back to worship. It was a day of celebration, to celebrate a birth. This is a special birth. No birth has ever been like it before or after. Yet when it occurred it was as natural as any other birth. Joseph alone was there to help, no midwife, no doctor or nurses, no hospital. Amid the dirt and grime, it was a perfect birth. That birth we

celebrate—*God became man!* That is still the key, *God became man.* But each year it is so cluttered with other things that the main reason to celebrate becomes obscured. The year 1983 was the year of the Cabbage Patch doll. Do you remember the Cabbage Patch doll? Some children were heartbroken because they did not get one. Some parents would brag to what extent they had to go to get this doll.

So that year Christ loses out to the Cabbage Patch doll! If amid the debris of Christmas the manger is lost and the Christ Child in it is obscured, then really there is no Christmas. Then Christmas is just a rehash of the old pagan winter solstice celebration called Saturnalia. In that celebration gifts were exchanged, the execution of criminals was delayed, slaves were given a few hours of freedom and people gave themselves up to revelry and debauchery.

Gifts are fine, decorations are wonderful to put up, partying and family gatherings do us all good—as long as the focal point of Christmas is the Babe of Bethlehem. Christmas is an event for celebration. To celebrate requires of us that we rejoice and are glad, that we give praise and thanks to our God.

Then, as now, we need to rejoice at the great gift God has given to us. *The Christ born in Bethlehem is our Lord and Savior. His is God's Gift to us.*

*“Ah dearest Jesus holy child
make thee a bed, soft and undefiled
Within my heart, that it may be
a quiet chamber kept for thee.”*

-- **Martin Luther**, a verse from the hymn
“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”

Section III

Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus

VI

Epiphany, Preparing for Lent

The Christmas season comes to an end all too quickly. There is New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and then it's back to work. Each year as that time arrived we would begin looking ahead. The Christmas season sets the stage for the seasons that follow. There is a reminder of that in the Voice of Grace column I wrote for the January 1984 issue.

"Christmas is over, but is it? Oh, our celebration of it may be over and the trappings of it may be put away, but Christmas over? Never! Christmas is because Christ is. Christ was born. He became our substitute, but for us Christ is!"

The season after Advent and Christmas is Epiphany. "Epiphany means revelation, manifestation, Christ making Himself known to us. We rejoice that He is made known to us. He is revealed to us—to the Gentiles in the visit of the Magi, to us as God's own Son in His baptism, to us as the Lord God in the miracles He performed."

Epiphany at Grace

My first Epiphany season as senior pastor at Grace was 1979. That year would be one for healing and recovery after the sudden departure of Pastor Zehnder and the continuing concern over the decision to build the Christian Activity Center (CAC).

That first Christmas had been excellent with so many helping to make it that way. I expressed my thanks and hopes for the Epiphany and other seasons we would celebrate in the year ahead in my January 1979 "Smoke Signals" column: "Now we look forward to the dedication of the CAC on January 14, to Lent and walking with our Savior on Calvary, and to Easter and the joyous message *He is arisen!*"

There were still reminders of the year of turmoil at Grace, including a final report from the committee that planned a farewell for Pastor

Zehnder. There also was my hope and prayer that with the CAC complete and available, it would help to heal the hurt and help to bring members closer together. My first Epiphany "Smoke Signals" column expressed that hope. "As athletic activities in the CAC begin to develop, we hope that many in the congregation will take advantage of this fine facility.

"I also hope and pray that as the members knelt at the manger and worshiped the Christ-child, so they will continue to worship Him in our regular Sunday services."

In the years and Epiphany seasons that followed many more sermons were preached and

*"Therefore I urge you brothers,
 in view of God's mercy,
 to offer your bodies as
 living sacrifices, holy and
 pleasing to God—this is your
 spiritual act of worship."*

-- Romans 12:1

words written in Voice of Grace columns encouraging our members to extend the joy they felt at Christmas into the Epiphany season and through the rest of the year.

Epiphany Concerns

In the Epiphany, Christ reveals Himself, but how do we receive Him? Do we own Him? Do we make Him our own? Do we accept Him? Do we dedicate our lives to Him? On Sunday mornings I preached to those who continued to respond and worship. But where are all the rest of those members who filled our services at Christmas? Where were they

on those cold Sunday mornings in January and February when too many of the pews at Grace Church remained empty?

I was compelled to express these concerns in a number of my columns during the Epiphany seasons during my years as senior pastor of Grace. “For some in Grace I get the feeling they simply want to belong to a church, but belonging and participation appear to be two different things to them. Some belong without participating. It is as if they believe membership in the church assures salvation.

“Salvation is based on faith in what Christ has done for us as sinners. Faith calls for discipleship. Discipleship means following. Christ says in John 8:31: ‘If ye continue in My Word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’

“Discipleship requires that we continue in the Word. That is an ongoing thing. Study and use of the Word is the mark of discipleship, not just membership in the Church. It is, however, through our membership in the church, the Body of Christ, that we have opportunity to study and work with the Word in worship and Bible classes.

“All of us need to take every opportunity to hear and study God’s Word. If everyone who claims membership at Grace took this word of Christ to heart, our church would be filled to overflowing.

“Unfortunately, the devil is very much at work among the people of Grace Church. As some grow weaker and weaker, as some allow the world to intrude more and more, the devil grows stronger and more successful.

“When we pray as we do in the Lord’s prayer, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ in the words of Martin Luther, we need to pray that ‘God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, and world and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair and other great shame and vice.’

“The devil is at work. Do we let him continue or do we fight back? *‘If ye continue in My Word’*—there is the answer. In this Epiphany season God reveals His Son to us. We in turn need to continue in the Word to know and receive Him.”

As the Epiphany seasons came and went, we were counting the years our Lord has given us on

the earth. It is one of His blessings. Those thoughts were on my mind as my second Epiphany season as senior pastor of Grace was about to begin and I wrote my January Voice of Grace message.

The Blessing of Time

“We need to get used to writing 1980 instead of 1979. That year is gone; 1980 is a new year. It is a new year for us as God’s people. We can use these days for our own selfish ends; or we can use them for what they are—gifts of God that He gives. The proper use of time is a responsibility of ours, just as the use of our talent and treasure. God wants us to use our time wisely:

“-- Time to worship: Some of this time He wants exclusively for His own. He wants us to give time for worship, corporate and private. Corporate worship is that time when the Body of Christ gathers together to publicly worship Him. Ample opportunity is given for that at Grace. Are you using this? Many of you do that faithfully. There are others who are not as faithful—to them we say: Consider God’s gift of time.

“-- Time for service: As the body has need for time to work, relax and sleep, so the corporate body also has needs for our time, time to serve on committees, time to help clean the complex. Just as your house and grounds need to be cleaned and kept up, so does our church. There are people who regularly come to clean the church proper, the annex, and the fellowship hall. But if more people would volunteer their time, more could be done and the same people would not have to bear the burden. Look at the time you have, then call the church office and volunteer to help.

“-- Time for fun: There also is ample opportunity for individuals and families to use our gym facilities. In these winter months when some people do not care to be out-of-doors, there are various groups getting together for basketball, volleyball, or physical exercise. Here is a fine facility for all members of Grace to use.

“-- Time for fellowship: Fellowship with one

another is a beautiful way for us to use some of our time. We invite you to join us in the fellowship of worship, of Bible study, of work, of service and sports activities here at Grace.”

Looking Ahead to Lent

During Epiphany there are plans and preparations to be made for the coming of Lent. Often there were questions on my mind. How will our members respond? Will our attendance improve from the Epiphany season?

Those thoughts were on my mind as I wrote for our 1983 January-February Voice of Grace. That year was special. It was the 50th year in the history of Grace and there would be celebrations! But first there were thoughts of Lent and church attendance.

From the immovable Christmas on December 25, we look forward to the movable Easter. The date of Easter is always the first Sunday after the full moon which happens upon or next after the 21st day of March. In 1983, Epiphany was short. Easter was on April 3, and Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, was on February 16. Thus we were thinking ahead to Lent, and our sermon series was “The Shadows of Lent” that are found in the Old Testament. My column that year said:

“Lent is a solemn time of preparation. Shadows fell in the Old Testament that reveal the reality that was to come. We invite you to examine with us the ‘Shadows of Lent’ found in the Old Testament during the weeks of Lent.

“I hope all of you will attend our Lenten services as you should our regular weekend services. Unfortunately, we know some have work commitments, but we also know that there are those who for one reason or another do not feel that necessity to worship regularly

“I fear some of our members are in for a very rude awakening when they stand before the Lord. Our salvation rests on faith. That faith must be active and vibrant with good works. It is not *the* good work that saves, but going to worship services does help us grow in faith.”

People hurting

Another concern was on my mind during the Epiphany of 1983. It was a concern over the

relationship of our members to the church and to each other. That concern was raised in that same Voice of Grace column:

“The church is made up of people, *people who need to care about one another*. We are to be concerned about the hurt that we have and others have. Often the pastors want to address the hurting that comes to a family with marital problems that are leading to divorce. Sometimes we hear of a divorce having taken place without our knowledge. Pastors are not detectives or a police force. But pastors need to know in order to try to alleviate the hurt that comes.

“Some say it is none of the pastors’ business. It is their business and that of the church when a

“Again Jesus said,
 ‘Simon Son of John,
 do you truly love me?’
 He answered,
 ‘Yes Lord you know
 that I love you. Jesus said,’
 Take care of my sheep.’”
 -- John 21:16

family is hurting. In a smaller group this hurting can be more easily addressed. In a large congregation such as ours, this becomes more difficult. The pastors need to rely on individuals to come forth and talk it over.

“We are grateful that our local hospital has a method of letting us know who is in the hospital. This helps us address this hurting of our members. If you are moved, please let us know.

“We also remind our members to call us when a birth takes place. God’s people pray for one another, not only in their sorrow, but also in their joys. We hope you will be remembering your fellow Christians here at Grace in our prayers as you thank God for one another and as you give thanks for fifty years of blessings.”

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus*

VII

The Meaning of Lent

*“Even now,” declares the Lord,
 “return to me
 with all your heart, with
 fasting, weeping and mourning”
 -- Joel 2:12*

After Epiphany comes Ash Wednesday and Lent. We go from celebrating the birth of our Savior to His death on the cross. It all goes quickly.

As I sat down to write my Voice of Grace column for the March 1979 issue many thoughts were on my mind. This would be my first Lenten season as senior pastor of Grace. One of those thoughts was that *we need to be a praying church*.

“As we contemplate our prayer life and meditate on the Lord’s Prayer, we should remember to pray for one another. In general prayer on Sundays we remember those who have anniversaries, births, weddings and those who are ill and in the hospital. This is good and as it should be. But we should also remember these people in our private prayers.”

The approach of spring was always a busy time during my years as senior pastor of Grace. It was a time when I wanted to share my thoughts with our members about the meaning of Lent and our response to the sacrifice our Lord had made for us.

Lent and Stewardship

Starting in 1980 we included a stewardship emphasis at this time of year. Why bring up the touchy subject of money in such a solemn season?

I tried to answer that question specifically for our members in the March 1981 Voice of Grace when our focus during the weeks of Lent would be

on the theme, “Forward in Remembrance at Grace and Beyond Grace.”

“Lent emphasizes once again what our God has done for us in Christ. As true man and true God, Christ suffered and died for our sins. The cross affirms our salvation. We are saved in time for eternity.

“It is all free. Christ did it willingly and lovingly. Salvation is given to all. We do not participate in this at all. God has done it all for us. Our response is our commitment to our Savior. This dare not be a partial commitment but a total commitment. This is the emphasis of Forward in Remembrance.”

Each year the theme was somewhat different. The first spring stewardship focus was a long process that extended well beyond Easter, through the month of May. This would be an ambitious undertaking, especially for the pastors, as I explained in my March 1980 Voice of Grace column.

“During March through May you will be hearing more of ‘*Personal Interview Stewardship*.’ In this program every family of Grace will meet with the pastors. *This is not a plea for money*. This is a reminder of our stewardship responsibility. Stewardship involves our total commitment to our Savior.

“Stewardship of our time, talent and treasure is the avenue and means wherein and whereby we give our full service to the Lord. The energy of our time, talent and treasure needs to be harnessed so that God’s kingdom comes to full fruition in our midst.

“Granted that one of the T’s is treasure, and that spells ‘money.’ What is our money? It is the congealed blood and sweat of the individual molded into a form that is readily negotiable and interchangeable. So when we talk money we are

really talking about ourselves in a different form. When we give of ourselves to the Lord, we are giving our money. Thus remember, the church doesn't ask for your dues. *God asks*. The church simply offers a way for you to do what He asks."

The Message of Lent

Looking through March Voice of Grace issues during the early 1980s one will find the messages of Lent and of our response in stewardship knitted together into one. That close relationship between the two was again on my mind in early 1982.

Our Lord suffered great pain and death for us. Are we now willing to sacrifice our mite for Him? That was the point I felt needed to be made as I sat down with pen and paper to write my column for the March 1982 Voice of Grace:

"We are in the Lenten season. Lent passes by unnoticed in the world. But Lent for the Christian should be a period of reflection. In the early church, fasting and the giving up of things played an important role. This fasting brought home in a physical way the tremendous sacrifice of our Lord. Just because we do not follow these practices does not mean the sacrifice of Christ has been diminished.

"As children of God we need to pause and reflect on this sacrifice. He humbled and demeaned Himself by becoming man. God became man, the creature God had created. In becoming true man He became limited, as man is limited. He became, so to speak, an embarrassment to God. Yet Christ at the same time remained true God. We can't understand it, but we can believe it.

"He did this to serve as our substitute. He bore the full brunt of God's wrath and anger to suffer and die for us. Without that great sacrifice there is no salvation. Christ suffered and died for ME! That is the single but tremendous message of Lent.

"Dare we stay away from hearing this message? We need to hear it again and again. The world pounds away at advertising sin, lust and materialism. We are not immune from it.

"Can we say of the message of salvation: '*I don't need to hear it so often.*'? More than ever we need to hear this beautiful message of the sacred head now wounded, the body wracked with pain, the

Christ shouting, '*It is finished.*' Our salvation is full and complete!"

Our Stewardship Response

Our 1982 stewardship was all about what Christ has done for us, and how we can respond. That response was also a part of my March 1982 column:

"This is not fund raising. Rather this is an effort to give God's people an opportunity to reassess their *giving of themselves* to the Lord. The theme this year is "*Renew my Life in Thee.*" Each of us needs to be renewed. In the Old Testament church, God commanded that a tenth, or a 'tithe' of everything be given to Him. For us the tithe is an example, a goal, not a demand.

"Renewal calls for a willingness on our part. Too many of us have such a tight hold on the material that only death releases us from it. We need to hear God speak. We need to let the Spirit dwell and work in us to get us to relax our hold on the material. God has given it to us in the first place. It is His. Dare we miserly clutch it to ourselves and say: 'You can't have any?'

"The world is in a tense period and yet people are not coming to God's house to hear how to live in a tense world. Not all of our people are taking advantage of the comfort of the Sacrament, as they should. Our people are not all involved in giving of themselves to the Lord, as they should be. You can be involved, renew your life in the Lord."

First Give Yourself

There were many ways I tried to make the point during those early years of the 1980s. It is not just about money, it is about a total commitment of yourself to your Lord. It was not an easy point to make. When it comes to stewardship, people create roadblocks for themselves. Too often we heard of those roadblocks from members:

-- "*The church is always asking for money.*"

-- "*Inflation is eating away my income.*"

-- "*I can't give; why do they always need money?*"

"These are all roadblocks that we create because we don't want to make the initial commitment. If we give of ourselves the other things will follow because they are a part of us. You can't separate yourself from your income. First of all give

yourself, then your income. Why offer my income? It is that part of you that is common to all; it is interchangeable and negotiable. How much of my income should I give? Give as the Lord has blessed you. The giving habits of some are such that it appears that the Lord hasn't blessed them at all.

"It is best to give a percentage of your income. When you give one percent, you keep 99 percent. The ideal giving is 10 percent. This is in keeping with the Old Testament command. It is not binding on us, but we are told to give out of love as much as we can. People are afraid to give a percentage. Try it. Trust the Lord. In the manner in which we give, so will we be blessed.

"So you decide on giving 10 percent of your income. Is that *total* commitment? No it is not. While your income is a part of you, it is not all of you. Total stewardship commitment is really the total life of the Christian. Stewardship includes our worship of our God, our service to others, everything that we do to the glory of God. Daily we need to concentrate on His grace and respond with our gratitude. We sing, 'Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee.' Our stewardship is the offering of ourselves to Him."

How Time Flies!

As the years came and went my thoughts were frequently on the passage of time as another season was about to come. Such was the case in 1984 as another Lenten season was about to begin in early March and I observed the view and the change of the seasons "Thru the Back Window" and wrote:

"The daylight lasts a little longer. The sun appears to be a little higher. And so time passes. Day and night, seeding time and harvest, summer and winter. In the cycle of time, days turn into weeks, weeks into months, months into years and years into decades.

"But all around, 'change and decay we see.' Time is 'like an ever rolling stream.' Yet in the uncertainty and changeability of time there is also stability.

"The monuments of the church year appear with regularity. They are annual reminders of important events that need constantly to be embedded in our minds. We are in such a garden of monuments as

the Wednesdays of Lent pass in review. Each one calls up a memory of the Via Dolorosa, *not the shadow, but the grim reality of the tremendous price paid for the souls of sinful mankind.*

"The events up to and including Good Friday stamp our souls with '*PAID IN FULL.*'

"*Our Savior paid the full price. For us it is done!*

"Comparatively speaking, few in our world take note of Lent. But we as God's children need to. Our Wednesday church services should become oases where we can quietly refresh ourselves. He gave His all. Our faith calls us to give also.

"We can either give, keep or receive. We receive all, *the air we breathe, the life that we have, the food, the drink, money, etc.,* all are received, given to us. Do we keep it all or do we give? To keep means selfishness.

"To give is the compelling response to our faith. *We invite you to our Lenten meditations, to our Holy Week services and to our Easter services.*"

The passage of time continued to be on my mind during the Lenten season through those later years of the 1980s. Now I find myself almost 20 years later in 2003, watching Grace grow and thrive. During those years I wrote a number of other "Thru The Back Window" columns for the Voice of Grace with thoughts I wanted to share about Lent.

How Lent Got Started

In March 1985, the view from the back window was somber—snow, stark leafless trees, and in the distance a frozen river. But the sky was clear and the warmth of the sun beamed in. As the sun gets higher in the sky, the days are lengthened.

It was a time of year called "Lechten" by the Anglo Saxons, a word meaning "getting longer." From this comes our "Lent." In early church times the "Lechten," or "Lent," was the celebration of spring, the lengthening of the days.

Easter would be early that year on April 7, and Ash Wednesday on February 20. My thoughts were on the history of this time in our Christian tradition.

"How did Lent get started? What does it mean to members of Grace now? I wanted to share these thoughts with them. I did so in my March Voice of Grace columns in 1985 and again in 1986. Here are some of the key points from those two columns:

"In the very early church, Lent was a period of 40 hours denoting the 40 hours Jesus was in the grave, from Friday afternoon to about 3:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. This was in the first century. By the third century these forty hours were expanded to six days. Later these days were known as Holy Week. Much later these six days were expanded to 36 days as a tithe of the 365 days of the year.

"The dates of Lent depend on the date of Easter. In A.D. 325 at the Council of Nicea, the church officially determined that Easter would fall on the first Sunday after the full moon, which occurs on or after March 21.

"By A.D. 731, four more days were added to the 36 to make 40 days. Forty is a well-known Scripture number. Moses fasted for 40 days on Sinai; Elijah fasted 40 days on the way to the mountain of Gad; and Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness.

"Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and concludes with Holy Saturday. Obviously if we take the time to count these days between February 12 and March 29, they come to more than 40 days, 46 to be exact. Well, Sundays are never counted as a part of Lent. They are separate. Thus we speak of the Sundays *in* Lent, not *of* Lent."

The time of Lent 1987 again reminded me of the rapid passage of time, our own mortality and the end of time to come. Those thoughts were on my mind as I sat down to write my comments for the March 1987 Voice of Grace. We were again entering Lent. The days passed rapidly, too rapidly for many of us. The time is being counted until the final day of our Lord. This again is brought home to us as we study the Book of Revelation.

"The time between the first coming and the second coming is the time of the opening of seals, or the sounding of trumpets, or the emptying of the bowls. All of these are the signs of God's wrath upon a horde of people who refuse to listen and are

hell-bent for destruction. Yet in the midst is the faithful band of believers, the saints of God holding fast to the crown. So we pray: *'That we may glorify Your holy name and finally by Your mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'*

"Jesus writes to the Church at Philadelphia, *'I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown,'* Rev 3:11. That's hard to do today. The devil, the world, and our own flesh all seek to destroy us. We are the prime targets. The devil looks for our Achilles' heel to find where we are the most vulnerable. We need to be on our guard.

"All around us there are dangers. Our moral values are being questioned by the world that has seemingly lost them. Suddenly we are being confronted by a dreaded disease AIDS. Now we are being told that we should take precautions if we engage in homosexual activities or heterosexual promiscuity. Yet nowhere do we hear a leader in our government or in medicine say that to do these things is a violation of God's law and brings down upon us God's retribution.

"Our desire for sexual freedom and our actions to attain this freedom has brought about AIDS, and AIDS, I believe, is a punishment of God. Man who will not listen must feel the brunt of God's wrath. He has in the past, and will in the future.

"Yet for the child of God there is hope. Our Lord, the Lord of His church, reminds us that in the end the little flock, His Believers, will survive and inherit eternal life.

"As the psalmist of old states and Martin Luther wrote, we can be assured that, *'A Mighty fortress is our God'* and as the hymn concludes, *'Take thee our lives, goods, fame, child and wife, they yet have nothing won, the kingdom ours remaineth.'*

"With this assurance, we shall overcome the devil, the world and our flesh."

*"Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the word of his servant?*

*Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light,
trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."*

-- Isaiah 50:10

Section III
Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
 By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus

VIII

Holy Week and Easter

*“Your attitude should be
 the same as that of Christ Jesus:
 Who being in very nature
 with God . . . made himself
 nothing, taking the very nature
 of a servant.”*
-- Philippians 2:6, 7

Holy Week and Easter follow the Sundays of Lent. They are, of course, a busy and important season in the life of any Christian congregation. And so it has been at Grace. Often my thoughts of Holy Week and Easter were expressed in the columns I wrote for the April Voice of Grace. .

Palm Sunday and Holy week also bring back memories for many of our members. This thought was in my mind as I sat down to write my “Smoke Rings and Pipe Dreams” column for the April 1982 Voice of Grace:

Remembering Our Confirmation

“Lent is over. The Christian contemplation of the suffering and death of Christ culminates in Holy Week. It is ushered in on Palm Sunday. For many of us it was the traditional day of confirmation. Do we recall that moment and the vow we made? Have we by God’s grace kept this vow?

“The days of Holy Week recount for us Christ’s final week here on earth. Christ was in the temple and among the people. Winningly He warned them. But they failed to heed. Then, late on Thursday afternoon came the celebration of the Passover. This annual festival of the Jews recalled the saving power of God as they were slaves in Egypt. Celebration was in the form of a meal. A lamb was

the main course. It was at that meal that the Lord instituted His own meal—the Sacrament of the Altar—His Body and Blood shed for us. In great rapidity came the events of Thursday evening and into Friday morning, culminating with the cry ‘*It is finished!*’ followed by His death and burial.

“How will you be commemorating Maundy Thursday and Good Friday? Will you remember His sacrifice for you?

“On Easter eve the early Christians welcomed new members into their midst as they began the Easter vigil. Finally as the dawn broke they welcomed that great day *Easter* and *the resurrection of the Lord!* Here is the major festival of Christendom. ‘*For if Christ is not risen . . . we are yet in our sins*’ (I Corinthians 15:43).

“How will you celebrate? Will you pass this day by? He died for you. But He rose that you might live forever. *Praise God.*”

So it was, Easter after Easter, the same message, but an exciting message that often filled our pews to overflowing on Easter mornings. While there were many times when one could be discouraged about the response of our members during my years at Grace, it was on Easter Sunday as well as Christmas that one could be uplifted by seeing so many of our members in Church to worship our Lord.

Every Sunday a Little Easter

While Easter Sunday brings a high percentage of our members to worship, it is always a concern of a pastor that so many who celebrate on that day are not there on the Sundays that follow through spring and summer. Do those who do not return truly understand the full meaning of our Easter celebration? That was on my mind as I wrote more about the full meaning of Easter in my April 1984 “Thru the Back Window” column:

“April and May are celebration times for God’s

people here at Grace. The somberness of the Lenten season, of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday gives way to the joyous celebration of Easter. Christianity pivots on the Resurrection.

“Easter is not just a reawakening: it is not the starting of life again. If that is all Easter is to us, then really there can be no Easter.

“Easter is a miracle. It is the greatest miracle ever. Christ arose from the dead. He conquered death. Death comes as a result of sin. It is not just physical death, though that comes too; but spiritual death is the result of sin. Death separates us from God. Christ destroyed that separation:

“*‘Oh death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory? The victory is given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ’* (I Corinthians 15: 55, 57).

“That is the tremendous celebration of Easter. That is why we celebrate Easter Sunday, for every Sunday is a little Easter. Here in Easter is our assurance. *Because He rose, we who believe in Him will also rise.*”

What it Means to Believe

Yes, we must believe on our Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. He paid the full price, but is an *acknowledgement* of the facts all that goes into a saving faith? By what measure can we know that our faith is true?

The question of measuring our faith is addressed in the book of James. “*What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him?*” (James 2:14).

Later in that chapter James provides an answer. It is our deeds that provide a measure of the depth of our faith.

“*Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*” (James 2:18:19).

The question of just believing vs. a trusting faith often causes confusion among Christians. That came out clearly in the results of an opinion poll reported in the Milwaukee Journal in April of 1994.

The Journal reported that 96 percent of the respondents said they believe in God. This is not surprising. Many people believe in God. This does not make them Christian. Of those who believed, 90 percent also believed in heaven and hell. That left one final question. “*Based on your life today, where do you think you will go, heaven or hell?*” For that question, 83 percent said ‘heaven,’ but do all of them have a saving faith?

How many believe that the works they do will save them? “*Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.*” (Acts 16:31).

Faith saves. But a faith without works is a dead faith. Too many mistakenly place their hope on the feeling that, “*If I lead a good life I will go to heaven.*” Their faith is based on a philosophy of life that considers man to be inherently good. People feel it is that goodness that saves. That’s not what God tells us in His Word.

Yes, there is a heaven and a hell:

“*Enter by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it*” (Matt 7:13-14).

Considering Special Gifts

The thought of how our faith is reflected in our deeds was again the topic of my column for the April 1985 issue of the Voice of Grace. I decided to remind readers of an interesting event that took place just before that first Holy Week.

“Once again as we move toward Holy Week and Easter we are struck by the various events that took place. One of these events presumably happened on the eve of what we call Palm Sunday. Jesus was dining at the home of Simon the leper. Why He was there we do not know. Mary and Martha were there.

“As Jesus was reclining at the meal, Mary took a bottle of perfume valued at some \$60 and poured it over the head and feet of Jesus. Suddenly the aroma of this perfume filled the room.

“Here was a single act of devotion by a loving person. She had the means to afford such a gift. She was not afraid to use it to honor Jesus. The disciples, especially Judas, were upset. That was

such a waste! Rather the perfume should have been converted to cash and the money given to the poor. Jesus didn't think so.

"What she did was a fine and loving gesture. In fact, Jesus memorialized it. *'This act of hers shall be recalled wherever the Gospel is preached.'*

"What a tremendous memorial to a faithful woman who showed her love to her Savior in a special way. Just think of the many languages into which God's Word has been translated. Wherever it is published, this story is there as a memorial to her. Her bones are lost in the Middle East. We don't know her last name. The house where it happened is gone. Yet the deed is remembered. It was a special act of affection. It was an uncommon act, but it was special and it was done out of love.

"*What about us?* As we again think of His great love for us, His giving of His life, His resurrection from the dead, the tremendous victory that is ours because of His love for us, *is there some special gift that we can give him?* The perfume was special. It was a special gesture. *What about us? Is there some special gesture we can make?* God rewarded her and her gift in a special way. God will do the same for us."

A Measure of our Mission Effort

As Easter 1986 drew near I was concerned about our support of synod and missions. It would be a good time for the members of Grace to take a measure of our support vs. the tremendous sacrifice our Lord made for us. This became the subject of my April Voice of Grace "Thru the Back Window" column:

"Lent flows into Holy Week and Good Friday continues on into Easter. Good Friday and Easter are totally yoked together. There is no Easter without Good Friday and there can be no Good Friday without Easter.

"Luke tells us about the women at the empty tomb that first Easter morning. The angels told them to remember what He had said:

"*'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again'* (Luke 24:6-7).

"The Cross and the Tomb are together. Because

of the Cross and the Tomb and that which occurred then, we are alive in Christ. It is great to be 'Alive.' It is great to be 'in Christ.' This is the theme of our year here at Grace. Often we have a tendency to forget our theme and what it means."

Those same words, "Alive in Christ" were also the theme of a synod campaign that our members would be hearing about between Easter and Mothers' Day in early 1986. It was a time when I could again remind members of our obligations to the synod.

"During this period, from Easter to Mothers' Day, some of our young people will be moving from baptized status to communicant status. This is growth, but it is an internal growth. Our church needs to grow in other areas. As one of over 6,000 congregations we carry responsibilities and obligations with other sister congregations.

"Grace has been fortunate. In the past the workers that were needed have been supplied. But unless we prepare and make more funds available to help, there will be fewer workers available in the future. Our colleges and seminaries need our support; so do our mission fields."

But just how well was Grace supporting this effort? In that same column I provided a table of statistics for 1985 synod and mission contributions. Grace was the second largest congregation of the nine, but ranked number five in our district in total contributions to synod and we were number eight, second from the bottom, in contributions per member.

Besides our contributions, there are other things we can consider doing for our Lord, especially our young people. The job market in 1986 was shifting to a more service oriented society, and it has continued to do so into the new century.

"Thus the child of God takes note of these things," I wrote in my column. "Parents do well to guide and direct their children in the area of job and career selections. There will be needs in the preaching and teaching of the Word in these coming years also. We do well to consider this as we counsel our children..

"Remember the parable of the talents. *To those workers to whom a greater amount of money was given by the Lord, from them a greater return was*

expected. So, in the blessings of intellect and ability, a greater return is expected.”

Christian Citizenship

There were times during those years when I felt it was necessary to remind the members of Grace about their responsibilities as citizens of the state and nation. One of those times was in April of 1987 when I took up that question in my April Voice of Grace column.

“April 7th is our spring election. We hope many people will avail themselves of the opportunity to make their wishes known. Here in the village of Menomonee Falls there is opportunity to vote for Trustees and School Board members.

“Statewide, the electorate is faced with an important decision regarding gambling. It is not proper for me as your pastor to take sides and propose one candidate over another. On issues, however, moral values often play a part. There are times when we, as Christian citizens, need to stand up and be counted.”

Two vital questions were voted on in that April spring election, to legalize a state operated lottery and pari-mutuel betting. The Wisconsin Constitution written in 1848 contained a prohibition against lotteries, thus a constitutional change would be required.

Many other pastors and members in our South Wisconsin district were also concerned about the potential spread of gambling in our state. Bingo had been authorized in 1973 and raffles were added in 1977. Both of these had required a constitutional amendment.

Opponents were concerned that the lottery would be just the beginning and would lead to casinos with roulette, slot machines and various other forms of gambling. They were correct in their concerns. We now have casinos and our governor has made additional deals with Native American tribes to continue the expansion of gambling in Wisconsin.

Why should Christians be concerned? The answer to that was well expressed in a letter written by a member of a south side congregation. While it did not represent an official position, I felt it was worthy of reading and consideration by the members of Grace, so I included it in my April

1987 “Thru the Back Window” column. Following are several significant points from that letter:

“As Christians, we recognize the 1987 proposals to be in violation of the Commandments against stealing, coveting and indirection against others, according to Luther’s explanations. They also disregard biblical admonitions on responsible stewardship, honest work ethics and practices, love and care for our neighbor and his property.

“The Christian trusts God, rather than lady luck, fate, or chance. The talents and money earned or inherited, entrusted to us by God should satisfy us. Contented, we should guard against the ‘love of money.’ Surely gambling participation demonstrates poor stewardship of our possessions, which are God’s gifts to us. It also disregards the responsibility of fellow citizens to their stewardship.”

It was ironic that Christian citizens of Wisconsin would be considering this issue just 10 days before Good Friday of 1987. On Good Friday we would again remember the ugly scene at the foot of our Lord’s cross as the soldiers ‘cast lots,’ and threw dice for His robe as He died for their sins and ours.

The Message of Easter

Often as I considered what words to share in my monthly columns I had thoughts of how the world views our Christian seasons. Too often it is that world view that tugs at the hearts of Christians, especially our children who see the world as an exciting and interesting place. Thoughts such as these must have been on my mind as I wrote my April 1988 “Thru the Back Window” column with a message about Easter for the members of Grace.

“April 3 we will celebrate another Easter, the high festival of the Christian church. For the world, Christmas is the big high festival, for it is easier to gather around a new born baby in a cradle surrounded by animals on a crisp December eve. This the world can take to. But to believe and accept that a man who died on Friday afternoon, rose to life again on Easter morn stretches the imagination and is more difficult.

“For the Christian neither is difficult, a babe born of a virgin in keeping with God’s promise or a 30-year-old man rising from the dead. Both are

miracles of God. Both proclaim the power and majesty of God. For because He came as a baby and rose as a man, our salvation is assured. Because He lives I shall live also. So we, as the Body of Christ, celebrate these 50 days from Easter until Pentecost. They are days of joy and happiness. Once again in our services there rings the 'Hallelujah.'

"For at Pentecost the Spirit came down and entered the disciples. Now was the time to go out and proclaim. The 50 days were days of celebration; after that, as now, the days are of proclamation.

"We need to proclaim to the world the Good News. *Believe and be baptized.* That is the message

that started out in Jerusalem and has spread ever since. It is a glorious message—it is a joyous message of hope and salvation!

"As then, the world with its paganism and humanism needed that message of salvation.

"*'Believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved.'* The need is still there in our world today. *'Believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved.'*

"So we need to reach out with ourselves, our voices, and our mission offerings to spread the Word. But we also need to energize ourselves so that we grow. Through our spiritual growth we become better equipped to do the job our Lord gave to His disciples then and gives to us today."

*"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, teaching them to obey
everything I have commanded you."*

-- Matthew 28:19-20

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus*

IX

Ascension Day and Pentecost

The time right after Easter brings in a season of change and transition. First there are the five Sundays after Easter, followed by Ascension Day and Pentecost. Then there is the long Trinity season that varies in length from 22 to 27 weeks, depending upon the date of Easter. After Trinity, we are back to Advent, to start another Church year.

The days after Easter are a time when our weather and our lifestyle take a turn. So do the activities at Grace. Grace school and our Sunday school are preparing to end another academic year. And too often, participation in our weekly services will begin to decline toward its summer lows.

This is a time when a pastor will want to remind his flock to remember our risen Lord, what He has

*“I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from
your commands.”*

-- Psalm 119:10

done for us and especially *His presence with us now!* Those thoughts were with me in 1981 as I wrote the following for my Voice of Grace “Thru the Back Window” column:

“In this post-Easter season we rejoice in our Risen Savior. During this time the Pascal candle is lighted in our services as a sign of His resurrection and His being on earth until the Ascension. It remains lighted until the reading of the Gospel on Ascension Day. As we see this lighted candle it reminds us of the presence of our Resurrected Lord among us.”

Through those springs and summers of the 1980s, I came to appreciate the tremendous seasonal force that greatly alters the activities of our members. There are many who take weekend trips up north. Fishing begins and the best catches are

early in the season. Some of our members have cottages for summer weekends. Spring is time for cleaning, fixing and preparing the cottage for the summer. Weekly church attendance declines.

Also, I came to realize that this change of season is a creation of our Lord. He gave us the seasons, the beautiful springs and the warm summers. He wants His children to enjoy His creation and to understand that it is His gift to His people. Those thoughts were again on my mind in 1985 as I wrote the following:

“Spring is a beautiful time. The weather becomes milder. We can return to the out-of-doors without tons of clothing weighing us down. The tractor and lawn mower can be tuned up for use. It is also good to see the farmers out on the land.

“All of these remind us of the promises of God. ‘Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease’ (Genesis 8:22). This beautiful promise was given by God to that handful that had survived the flood on the ark built by Noah. From them we have descended. To them this assurance was given.

“To us it is also given. This is but one of the many promises God has given to us. Every spring that promise is kept. As you cut your grass and you plant your vegetables or flower garden, think of the promise of God. Then enjoy the other promises God has given to His children. *Truly our God is wonderful, good and gracious.* Indeed in Him we can be glad and rejoice.”

Remembering Confirmation Vows

In the time right after Easter each year we would be preparing for Confirmation. That was an especially busy time for the families of young people in the Confirmation class. It also is a time when all of our members should be remembering their own confirmation and thinking about the vows

they made on that day. Remembering Confirmation was one of many things on my mind in the spring of 1980 as I prepared to write another “Smoke Signals and Pipe Dreams” column. It had now been nearly two years since I first came to Grace Menomonee Falls. During those two years I had learned even more to appreciate the people of Grace and the great potential they have to serve their Lord here in Menomonee Falls and in mission fields around the world. But first we must all remember our vows if we are to achieve our potential.

Questions for Confirmands

“At this writing we are preparing for Confirmation 1980. Forty-three young people will become communicant members of Grace. It is indeed a happy and joyful occasion. Yet there is a solemnity about this day and time.

“Nine questions are asked these confirmands. The final question is: Do you intend to faithfully conform all your life to the rule of the Divine Word, to be diligent in the use of the Means of Grace, to walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, and in faith, word and deed to remain true to the Triune God, even unto death?

“This is an important question. It is one that dare not be taken lightly by any communicant member. Each of us has made that vow. It is one that we freely and readily make. There are action words in this vow. These words are: to conform to the rule of God’s Word; to be diligent in the use of the Means of Grace; to walk as a Christian; and to remain true to God, even if death comes as a result. Each of us needs to ask this question: How have I done thus far? Some have not honored their vows. We do not see them in church. Some have wandered away. A vow is not something we break easily or readily. Yet some have conveniently forgotten what they solemnly promised.

“We pray that not only these confirmands but all members of Grace may remember this vow and be faithful to it. If that were the case, our church services would be full to overflowing. It would mean that great things would be done here at Grace.

“This does not mean that great things are not being done. A goodly number of our members are faithfully carrying out this vow in their lives and

actions. The Mission Fest was an example. Many hours of work went into it. All of the booths that emphasized various ways in which the Gospel is being preached were excellent. The church has a multi-faceted responsibility to reach out to bring the Gospel message to all mankind.”

As I wrote the words above, I was thinking specifically about two responsibilities our members would be facing in early 1980. One of them was our responsibility to spread God’s Word through our synod. The other was a responsibility to carry out the activities of our congregation in an orderly and businesslike manner with a revised constitution.

This new constitution would bring in some important changes. One of them was to bring the women of Grace into the decision making process by making them voting members. They also would be able to serve on boards, with the exception of our Board of Elders. I wanted to be certain that all would have a chance to express their views on the changes this constitution would bring to Grace Lutheran Church.

Our vow, our synod, our congregation

“In the coming months you will be hearing about another program to aid in this responsibility. It is called Forward in Remembrance. This program of our synod is to raise a minimum of \$40 billion dollars over a three-year period to spread the Gospel here at home and in areas where our church body is at work. While at first glance this amount may seem extremely large, if each congregation of synod does its part, it can be done.

“Currently we are asking our members to examine and react to our newly proposed constitution. Organizations need rules and regulations by which they conduct their business. All of us are sinners and therefore need to be guided by a set body of rules. A constitution is not something to be taken lightly. It is the responsibility of each member to look at this newly proposed constitution. For when it is adopted, all are bound by it.

“Our newly proposed constitution speaks specifically to the responsibilities each member has as a member of the group. Each member who remains a member is bound to it. Thus we consider

it. Now is the time to evaluate it and react to it. Such opportunity is being given to all; for on May 18th there will be an open hearing on our constitution. Get a copy of it, read it, and then come and react to it. No one can say, 'It is their constitution.'

"The church as a corporate entity is not separate from its members. Each member is a part of that corporate entity. Each has a responsibility as a member. No one can ever say 'they' are doing something. We as members do it. Except when the Word of God says otherwise, the principles of democratic decision-making are the guides by which decisions are made. So all are bound by those decisions, whether they participate or not.

"While the principles of government in this newly formed constitution are not unique, they are unique to Grace. We need to examine them carefully. I believe they can work effectively in this congregation if everyone realizes and subscribes to the fact that each is a servant to the other. When that takes place, great things can and will happen."

Confirming our Baptism

Each year through the 1980s, a class of young people was confirmed on the first Sunday in May. They had their first communion on Mothers' Day, the second Sunday of May. As I write this, that tradition is still being followed.

Confirmation again became the subject of my Voice of Grace column in 1986 and 1987. As the young confirmands, their parents and other members of Grace were again nearing that important day I, wanted to remind them all of the importance of their vows and how they are closely related to our baptism and our faith.

Confirmation is an event in which many of our members are not directly involved. For example, in 1986 there were 35 confirmands and in 1987 there were only 22. But in a sense we were all involved for two reasons: At Confirmation, the Grace congregation welcomes these young people into communicant membership with us. In this event, we also should recall our own Confirmation and ask ourselves, "*How have I treated these vows over the years?*" My May Voice of Grace columns provided an opportunity to highlight the Confirmation event

for all members, and to remind them of both their Confirmation and their Baptism. We did that by reprinting the final lesson from the workbook our eighth graders used, called "To Be a Disciple." It is such a powerful statement I will repeat it here again for others who may read this in the future:

To Be a Disciple

"Baptism is the action of God through water by which a person is recreated and reborn through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, which he receives in baptism. That person enters the Kingdom of salvation by being entrusted to the Triune God through His Name.

"The person being baptized receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation through baptism as the Holy Spirit through the power of the gospel—God's own Word—cleanses his conscience from within. He receives the benefits God is offering through faith in the promises of God; and God makes that possible by creating within him the very faith He requires.

"Because he has been taken into the very life of Christ Himself, the believer (disciple) has died to the old life of sin and rebellion and has been raised to the new life of faith and obedience (discipleship) through daily repentance and faith. Christ Himself in all His thoughts, words and deeds has become the new standard of the believer's life because Christ lives within him and helps him as he shapes and molds the believer (disciple) in His own image.

"The believer lives out his discipleship in the Body of Christ, the Church, for it is into that Body he was baptized. It is in the Body of Christ that he remains in unity with Christ by power of the Spirit so that he may live the life of faith and obedience that makes and keeps him a disciple."

This is quite a statement, is it not? But what does it have to do with Confirmation? I went on to explain in my column:

"The first question in the rite of Confirmation is: '*Do you this day in the presence of God and this Christian congregation confirm the solemn covenant which at your Baptism you made with the*

Triune God? Note that Confirmation is the *confirming* of that solemn covenant. The covenant is: I believe God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the covenant that is in effect in our lives. I believe I am a disciple. Belief implies faith and obedience. Not only do I have faith in my God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but I seek to obey Him and follow Him.

“The last two sentences of the statement are also important. For we do this all in the framework and the context of the Body of Believers—the church. Within the church we strengthen one another as we celebrate our God with one another.”

All of the baptisms and confirmations that have taken place and in the lives of our members provide the very foundation of Grace Lutheran Church. Those baptisms and confirmations are among the “*Wonderful acts of our gracious God*” that our beloved Pastor Fahl so fondly recalled as he wrote his Reminiscences. As we think of confirmations

year, let us pray that God would give each of our young confirmands the power and love that they need to remain faithful to Him and that they would diligently seek to keep the vow they are making. So we too need to be faithful and diligent in keeping that vow ourselves.

Remembering our Covenant

Do you recall your Confirmation? It is good to make much of Confirmation. Too many seem to feel that it is the “Lutheran Good Christian Award” that seals heaven for the individual. The children are relieved. “*Now it’s finally over.*” Parents say, “*I’ve done my part, now I’m finished.*”

No confirmands, it is not over. It is the beginning of your Christian journey of life.

No parents, you are not finished either. For all of us parental responsibilities lasts until we breathe our last and we give an accounting of our parenting to our Lord.

*“I pray that out of His glorious riches
He may strengthen you
with power through His Spirit
in your inner being.”*

-- Ephesians 3:16

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus*

X

Remembering Summers: 1978-82

It was good for me that my installation as a pastor at Grace, and the surprise resignation of Pastor Zehnder came at the beginning of summer. The Sunday after I learned the news about Pastor Zehnder was May 14, Pentecost Sunday. The long Trinity season was ahead of us before the next Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.

Summer, as usual, would be a quiet time at Grace. But not for me, especially that first year when I knew the new responsibilities I would face. You see, a pastor always needs to be looking ahead. The summer is the time when you can think. That first year I had a great deal to think about: the first year as well as the long-term future of Grace.

First there was 1978-79 to think about. I believe in having everything laid out for the church year. I tried that for a couple of years. I would spend the summer in writing what I wanted to do, whoever would preach, what would be preached about. Then what I wrote was given to the church secretary to type and put into a book. That book became the plan for the entire year. Whoever would be preaching knew in advance what would be emphasized on each Sunday.

I believe in tying it together with the lessons for each Sunday, but sometimes I chose my own lessons because this is what I wanted to expand on for this month, or this period of time. I wanted to emphasize these, and forget about the church year.

Making a Beginning

After my first month at Grace many thoughts were racing through my mind. I had attended a special congregational meeting where a very controversial issue had been discussed. Would we go ahead and build the Christian Activity Center (CAC)? I was impressed at watching the democratic process at work. I commented on this

and other thoughts I was having in my first Voice of Grace column, for June 1978.

"Having taught American history for many years, I prized these last vestiges of pure democracy that we still had at Grace. In the pure democratic forum of the congregational meeting each individual vote counts.

"It was good to hear the members voicing their concern and their joy over the proposals. Then in a democratic way, as befits the saints of God in the world, each spoke his mind in the ballot. Herein we speak as individuals. Once the ballot is announced, the body speaks, not the individual.

*"Be thou faithful
unto death and I will give thee
a crown of life."*

-- Revelation 2:10

We may still have private opinions, but Grace has spoken. Once all of us have spoken, all of us rally behind the decisions and go forward."

It may be a bit idealistic though, to hope that all would unite behind the CAC decision, especially when the vote had been so close. It didn't help that Pastor Zehnder announced his resignation shortly after that meeting. The decision remained controversial for some time. Now, as the years have passed, it is clearly a benefit for Grace.

I remained optimistic as I wrote that first column, and decided to name it "Smoke Signals and Pipe Dreams," because often I smoked as I wrote and dreamed of what would be ahead for the Lord's work here in Menomonee Falls.

"We dream of great things Grace can do, individually and collectively," I wrote in that column. "We think of the possibility of having

young people in next year's Confirmation class participating in the services as acolytes. This would be a fine service on their part and help make their instruction more meaningful. What do you think? Let us know."

Well I soon found out what some of our members thought. "It sounds like we're turning Catholic," was their concern. It was the word "acolyte." That one was easier to solve than the CAC controversy. We called them "candle lighters" and everybody liked it.

There were more thoughts that first May and June. "We look out the window and see the rail fence, reminding us of our past and the great things God has done. We see homes, the cars and other signs of our affluence and material blessings and then we see the stately trees, the green grass, the budding branches and the beautiful sky—reminding us of the great love of our God—and then we open the chancel door and look at the cross and we see the still greater love, and it is before that Cross we gather and under it we live."

Our Strengths and Weaknesses

A month later when I wrote my next column I had moved into an office in the annex. There was a new view out of my window that reminded me of some growing concerns I had about Grace and the challenge ahead:

"As we look out the window we see trees, some tall and stately, some short, with luscious dark leaves, some are light green and some are full of needles. Meanwhile, others with dead wood have fewer leaves showing.

"*Maybe that's Grace.* Some are active, strong, vibrant and vital, while others are inactive, passive. Pragmatically, that's Grace.

"*What do we do about it?* Well, to those who are active: tremendous, keep doing it. To those who are not: we miss you, we need you, and you need us. You need to grow and develop. *How?* Be in church. Through Word and Sacrament the Spirit builds. You can't be built up in the Lord if you stay away. Certainly you who have been absent from the Lord's house know who you are better than anybody. But the Lord knows also. He calls to you with all His love and concern. Come worship,

praise, grow, and develop. *Think about it and do something about it.*

September Kickoff Time

As the fall approached I was often thinking about the season ahead. Columns I wrote for the September Voice of Grace were often about kicking off the next season. While the new church year is yet to come, the ending months of the Trinity Season bring an increase in activities. School begins. The vacation season is over. Church attendance will begin to pick up.

I was optimistic in the summer of 1978 as the signs of fall began to appear. I was optimistic and had planned a challenging fall program for Grace. At the same time, work on the CAC was progressing nicely and we expected much of it to be completed during September and October.

"So please come to the services on September 10th to hear about it," I urged members in my Voice of Grace column. "We would like to have 1,000 or more in church on that Sunday. It can be done if each family makes it a point to be there. Why? Grace people uplift themselves and one another when they worship together. There is something stimulating when Christians get together and lift up holy hands in worship and praise."

Progress on the CAC would be a part of our worship in the year ahead. "God is interested in wood and stone, as shown in the Temple he designed. It is within such structures that the children of God worship and praise Him not only in formal worship, but in building mind and body and generally growing in grace."

The Challenge Ahead

By October I was less optimistic, but still convinced God was planning great things here at Grace Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls.

"Sometimes dreams become reality, sometimes they do not," I wrote in my October Voice of Grace column. "Last month we had hoped for 1,000 Grace people at Grace on September 10. That hope and dream didn't become a reality. Why? We don't know. Maybe some didn't hear the Voice of God saying, 'Come and be fed.' Maybe that is the problem. Sometimes we are so full of desserts, the

blessings that God has given us, so busy using and enjoying these blessings of health, job, home, family, and recreation, that we don't have time for the meat and potatoes. 'Oh I know I should but I don't. I can get along without it.' Must God first withhold or withdraw his blessings?

"Throughout the centuries people who received God's grace and blessings have often failed to listen. In the Old Testament His people failed to heed *His Voice of Grace* that calls with love and mercy, '*Come eat and drink and be fed.*' You, who are fat on the desserts of God's blessings, come and be fed 'ere it is too late!"

Then when attendance began its seasonal decline in the late spring of 1979 my concerns about attendance returned. "Four services are available for our members to worship. Yet two thirds do not take advantage of this," I observed in my July-August 1979 column. "Some, I fear, are operating on spiritually empty tanks with only a whisk of a vapor to sustain them. Yet the fuel of God's Word is in abundant supply, if only our people would all avail themselves of the opportunities to worship."

Still, in 1979, there were reasons to be hopeful for the year ahead. For one, a new assistant pastor James Redmann had been called and would be installed in November. In addition, Grace received a set of Schulmerich hand bells as a memorial to Susie Kangas, who had been a student at Grace school. We can still be thankful to the Kangas family for being so thoughtful. That was the start of our hand bell program, which has grown and thrived. Our worship has been greatly enhanced with these beautiful bells.

The Church Survives All

As June of 1980 approached, I would soon complete two full years as senior pastor of Grace. My thoughts were on how our great God has protected and grown His church throughout the ages. And just how is He doing it now, at Grace Menomonee Falls?

I reflected on these thoughts for my June-July Voice of Grace column:

"June is almost here. With it comes the fact that we have celebrated the great festivals of the Christian Church. What effect has the celebrations

of these festivals had on us? Within fifty days we have celebrated Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. The victory over sin, death and the devil is ours; our glorified Lord sits at the right hand of God. He rules and controls. Men in their idolatry of self-service plunge headlong to destruction. Yet the church lives in such a world among such people.

"The church, the Body of Christ needs to witness more than ever before, to this world that Jesus Christ is Lord. Pentecost reminds us that God has sent His Spirit the Comforter, to His people. He is who motivates, leads, guides and directs. We dare not underestimate the power of this Spirit.

"The early church grew by leaps and bounds, yet we read of those who threw roadblocks into the way of the Spirit's work. That same Spirit changes the hearts and lives of people today. He works through the Word. The Word is carried by men. We are the carriers and spreaders of the Word. We dare not be the roadblocks in the way of the Spirit."

And so it has been at Grace. There have been so many roadblocks over the years. But yet many people of Grace have remained strong in the Word and the Holy Spirit has been here doing His work. Through that Grace has thrived.

Health Warning!

Graduation time 1981 and the end of the school year reminded us that the vacation time was just ahead. It has always concerned me that so many people seem to think this is the time to take a vacation from regular church attendance as well. So, once again I tried another way to highlight my concern in my June Voice of Grace column.

"For some it will be spending time at a cottage up north. For others it will be getting away for the weekend or for a few weeks. For all of those we would call attention to the fact that we should not and must not take a vacation from God and worshipping Him.

"As the federal government attaches a warning notice to products that are dangerous to our health and may cause cancer, so we must attach the notice that infrequent and irregular church attendance can and will cause cancer of the soul. This diabolic cancer can eat away at the souls and destroy the life-giving faith that alone can save. The mere fact

of church membership cannot check this cancer. Regular doses of the healing power of the Word and Sacraments alone can prevent the growth of this cancer. The Word and the Sacraments alone can and will totally destroy it.

“For healthful living we need rest and relaxation. For a healthful soul we need the constant application of the Word. We weed and feed our lawns to kill the dandelions and nourish the grass. We cut our grass, trim it and water it so our outside yard looks good to people. Well, don’t forget to weed and feed your soul to kill the weeds of sin and keep your spiritual life trim so that as God looks at you He sees a healthy growing Christian.”

We Are the Body of Christ

After breaking an arm in the summer of 1981, I learned a lesson about the human body. That led me to thoughts about the “Body of Christ, the church,” so I decided to share those thoughts with the members of Grace in my August Voice of Grace column.

“This is being written by a one-armed functioning preacher. When one arm is in a sling then it comes home how helpless we are and how incapable we are of functioning properly. It reminds me of what Paul says about the various parts of the body in I Corinthians 12. Each part is needed and dependent upon the others for support.

“When one part of the body doesn’t function, the others have to do extra duty. An arm in a cast is dead weight. The neck and the shoulders need to support the sling to hold up the injured part. The other arm needs to do extra work. So it is with the Body of Christ, the church. When one is hurting the others need to help. But sometimes people say, ‘Why should I bother? I am not needed. I don’t need to participate in the church.’ Or some put themselves into the cast of non-participation so they are dead weight and expect the rest of the congregation to do their work for them.

“Some want to be members of Grace, but when we question their activity regarding church attendance, communion attendance or giving, they arise in righteous indignation as if the church, the Body of Christ, has no right to inquire as to how healthy they are spiritually. Some still feel that a

passive membership in the church is all that is required. This is a wrong attitude. No one should put minimums or maximums on church attendance, communion attendance and giving. Yet our Lord demands that the fruits of faith be there and be demonstrated.”

As the fall of 1981 approached I learned that I would again be the only full-time pastor severing Grace. Pastor Redmann accepted a call to Trinity in Conklin, Michigan. He had served us well and he was missed, especially as we launched a new season of activity and planned for Advent and the Christmas season. Thank the Lord our prayers for an assistant pastor were soon answered. On February 14, 1982, Pastor Tom Paul Willadsen was installed as a pastor of Grace.

“Be Thou Faithful . . .”

As the spring of 1982 arrived I again found myself reminding members of Grace about the meaning of worship and church attendance. As I had learned to expect, summer is a time when people want to get away, and one of the things too many Grace members get away from is regular weekly worship.

I had just returned from a funeral of a former colleague at Concordia. The title of funeral message had been three words, from Revelation 2: 10, “Be Thou Faithful.” The complete phrase in the words of Christ are “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” They were words that seemed so very appropriate for my continued concern about the seeming lack of faithfulness among too many of our members, as I explained in my June-July Voice of Grace column.

“These words had been written to the church at Smyrna, a church that suffered great persecution. We would say they were under the gun. They were being wiped out. These persecuted Christians needed the exhortation: ‘Be thou faithful.’

“What about us? Today the world cares not what we believe. So we are in danger of becoming apathetic. This can especially happen during the summer months. The programs of the church wind down; as a result of this, plus vacations, there is a danger of saying, ‘Let’s skip church today.’ We don’t skip anything else, why skip church?

“On the one hand worship is an obligation. God commands us to honor and worship Him; but worship is also a privilege. God calls and invites us to come and worship. Let us always remember our obligation, but realize what a tremendous privilege we have.”

As one reflects on those times it becomes so clear how Grace has thrived despite the times of sparse attendance and what seemed to be a lack of interest. The Holy Spirit has been at work. The power of God’s words have reached the hearts of many who have been faithful, who have understood the meaning of worship, have honored God’s commands and have appreciated the privilege of regular worship together in His house.

We were reminded of that in August of 1982. There was a double 50th wedding anniversary of a double wedding that took place August 3, 1932 at Saron’s Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. Two sisters, Ruth and Esther Wilke were married; Ruth to Bill Petzold and Esther to Ted Rott. The two dedicated couples helped to organize a new mission church in Menomonee Falls that September and less than a year later, in June 1933, the formal organization of the Grace congregation was completed.

The Petzolds and the Rotts continued their faithfulness to Grace and to their Lord throughout

their lives. They were among our most active members. They were faithful and regular at worship services. With their regular worship and hearing of the Word, the Holy Spirit worked in them and many others to build and to grow Grace Church in Menomonee Falls.

As the summer of 1982 drew to a close, I had decided that the pipe would be retired. I had quit smoking during a summer vacation trip and decided to end it there. I would need a new title for my Voice of Grace column “Smoke Rings and Pipe Dreams.”

The new title would be “Thru The Back Window.” The front of the house is always dressed up. Our back yard is where the action is. We looked out where the action is and that’s what I wanted to do in my columns. I wanted to look out and comment on the actions I was seeing or not seeing at Grace.

There would be much action to see, especially in 1983, the 50th anniversary year of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Menomonee Falls. By September 1982, plans were already under way. Indeed we would have much to celebrate, and there would be more summers to come for me to plan and ponder the future of Grace. Those thoughts will continue in the next chapters.

*“I know thy works:
Behold I have set before thee
an open door,
and no man can shut it:
for thou hast a little strength,
and hast kept my word,
and hast not denied my name.”*

-- Revelation 3:8

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus*

XI

Celebrating 50 Years of Grace*By Looking Back and Looking Ahead*

*“From the fullness of His grace
we have all received
one blessing after another.
For the law was given
through Moses; grace and truth
came through Jesus Christ.
-- John 1: 16-17*

The summer of 1983 was an exciting time at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Menomonee Falls. Grace had completed 50 years of growth from a small storefront group of 10 faithful members who signed the constitution and a total of 17 baptized souls. From there it had grown into one of the larger congregations in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Preparations had been underway for months with a large number of people involved on various committees. The celebration took place in June. Many letters of congratulations were received, including those from the first two pastors who had helped to establish the mission church here and then assisted in getting it organized into a congregation.

The Rev. Erich M. Keller began his letter with the words of Apostle John: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.” These are words, Rev. Keller said, “I can endorse and personally make my own on the occasion of your 50th Anniversary.” Rev. Keller had served as a “spiritual father” of Grace from the early beginnings in 1932 until 1941.

In another letter, the Rev. John Pingel

remembers preaching the first sermon at the first service in the storefront church on September 4, 1932. At that time Rev. Pingel was a recent graduate of the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and a Candidate for the Reverend Ministry.

“The Word I used for my text that morning was Romans 1:16. ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.’ As you look over the years, it is clear how good and gracious God has been to you in giving you the Word of God together with the Sacraments to feed your precious souls. Thank and praise the Lord for these blessings.”

The celebration was on June 5th. There were the anniversary services in the morning and a Festival Anniversary Service at 3:00 p.m. followed by a banquet and program at 5:30 p.m.

It was a glorious day. Dr. Oswald Hoffman, the Lutheran Hour speaker preached at our morning services. His theme was “Jumping for Joy.” His text, 1 Peter 1:8-9:

“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Dr. Walter Stuenkel, former president of Concordia College of Wisconsin, delivered the Festival Sermon. His text, John 1:16-17, was most appropriate.

“From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Remembering Our History

Finally there was the Banquet celebration. But the highlight of the evening was a slide presentation of the History of Grace by Pastor Emeritus, Rev. E. P. Fahl. Pastor Fahl had been Senior Pastor of Grace for 36 years, from 1941 to 1977. He led Grace congregation through its most dramatic period of growth. The church that had started from 17 baptized members in 1933, grew to over 1,000 during its first 25 years, and was just over 2,000 after 50 years.

As pastor Fahl wrote in his Reminiscences in 1986 of these years he was moved to describe all of what had taken place as, *"The wonderful acts of our gracious God in the 53 years of Grace's history."* We were given a sampling of what he remembered and wanted to share with the members of Grace that evening. In a letter to the congregation announcing his intentions to retire, Pastor Fahl wrote the following words:

"Your pastor is humbled by the thought that the Lord of the church has permitted him to serve this congregation for well over a third of a century, and in spite of his personal short-comings and weaknesses, has so bountifully blessed this parish. All of which prompts your pastor to join with the sacred writer: *'Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy Name be all glory.'* "

A New Beginning

There was community singing, led by our Minister of Music, Mr. Frederick Meier, and music from the Junior Bell Choir, led by Delores Jobe. In addition, the banquet that evening marked the beginning of something new at Grace. The program committee had asked Fred Meier if he could organize a barbershop quartet from men in the choir as part of the entertainment for the evening. He found four willing to give it a try and in a few weeks they had learned a few old time tunes nearly well enough to present in public. The four included Al Crass, Al Piepenbrink, Al Schumacher, and Royal Fraedrich. For that one evening they were known as the Royal Als Quartet.

That group was the beginning of male choir music at Grace church. Other men from the choir became interested after hearing the group. Several

of them got together summer evenings to sing old barbershop tunes just for fun. Often Fred Meier would join them and eventually asked if they would like to practice some worship music as well to sing in church. They did, even though the group remained small, from six to eight singers depending upon who showed up.

The group continued to grow and had reached 12 by the time Joel Zelinsky became the Minister of Music at Grace. It was Joel who named the group the "Maker's Dozen," It has had that name until now and still varies in size from 8 to 10 to as many as 12 to 15 men who now devote most of their singing to worship services.

Seeking Sheep That Stray

The 50th was such a joyous time at Grace, but my heart was sad for those among our 2,000 who were not there. Some for good reason, but too many who were not there were seldom seen at any of our services. As the shepherd of the flock, my concerns again turned to those who were astray. My heart went out to them. They were missing so much joy, and putting their very faith at risk! What could I do? What could I write?

While the glow of joy from our celebration remained I was moved to write the following in my August Voice of Grace "Thru the Back Window" column:

"Grace congregation has celebrated a fiftieth anniversary and it was a joyous time for many. To some it appeared they could not have cared less. They seemed to prefer to be nothing more than names on the roster.

"It is sad when some people become so wrapped up in other things that their relationship with their Lord becomes strained and distant. Sunday after Sunday the Lord calls. Yet the excuses are many. 'I don't have time,' 'I need to bury someone,' 'I have to work in the field.' These were excuses at the time of Christ. Others were totally indifferent. Others turned their backs on Him completely.

"Sad to say, it is the same today. The excuses are many, the indifference is there. Yet it is interesting, at the time they were sick and hurting, when they needed something, they knew where to find Jesus. Then they came to Him. So it is today. Our sinful

nature keeps us away. But being hurt or in the hospital—then people suddenly know where the church is or the name of the pastor.

“Our Lord offers the invitation. Regularly we need to respond. Our Lord calls to us. We need to hear and come. Statistics are difficult to use, but it appears that our church attendance is down. Why? We do not know the reason. Too many feel, ‘I don’t need to go to church regularly.’ But you do! *You owe it to yourself.* You need to be built up. *You owe it to others.* You need to lift them up by being there.

“The church is the Body of Christ. It is like a building. Each brick is mortared to another. A brick does not make a building, but many bricks joined together make a beautiful façade. Remove a brick and you have a hole. So the mortar of God’s Word and faith in that Word and its promises binds and unites us together.

“There appears to be too many gaping holes in the façade as too many members of Grace are saying, ‘They won’t miss me today.’ These members are putting a higher priority on other things while ignoring their Lord’s call.”

Those may seem like harsh words. How could I reach out to them, for their own good? What could our church leaders do?

Elders Try Tough Love

Often I brought my concerns about these members to our Board of Elders. It is the elders who must take responsibility to carry out the “Office of the Keys” instituted by Christ:

What Christ Asks His Churches To Do:

“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

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

-- John 20: 22-23

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

-- Matthew 18:18

 These are very hard responsibilities for any man to accept. Yet, it is what our Lord expects us to do. It is His way of dishing out “*tough love*” upon His people. It is what He expect us to do to send a *wakeup call* to those who are separating themselves from the many blessings of worship and faith in their Lord.

As the elders considered these things they also realized that many would misunderstand. How often when a parent admonishes a child, does the child not understand that what may seem like harsh words are delivered out of a deep love for the child?

That next month, August 1983, the Board of Elders approved a resolution to take action and send a wake up call. This came after years of effort to visit these members and talk with them about the blessings of regular worship to receive the Word and the Sacrament of the Altar and encourage them to return. These efforts by our elders had been difficult and hampered by unknown addresses, disconnected phones, and broken promises.

So, on August 29, the Board resolved that any member who had not attended communion at Grace for two years would be sent a registered letter notifying him or her that they had been dropped from the Grace membership rolls. The doors to Grace would not be closed to them, however. Our Lord is a loving and forgiving Lord, and His church must be a loving and forgiving church.

The letters being sent would also invite these former members to have their membership reinstated. A notified member could easily do this by meeting with the pastor for instruction and reaffirmation of faith.

Exceptions were also made for a number of reasons, including those in nursing homes, in the military, at college or living away from home. Meanwhile, I continued to express our concerns about regular worship attendance and participation in my November Voice of Grace column:

“Our confirmation workbook’s summary of Matthew 6:1-18 states that, *‘The purpose of all worship is to honor God, whether it is the worship*

of actual prayer or the worship of active aid to others in our daily lives. The key idea in worship is to honor God. This is true. Obviously the reverse is also true. Not to worship is to dishonor God. God has a right to expect us to worship Him. He made us and He preserves us. As our maker and preserver we are to praise and honor Him.”

Member or Disciple?

The summers and falls of years that followed often gave me more opportunities to express my concerns and share my thoughts with the members of Grace. First there were those faithful members who were present for my sermons. But I also prayed that what I wrote in the Voice of Grace would somehow attract the attention of those who did not attend regularly and were in danger of missing the full measure of God’s love for them.

In 1984, Grace was involved in a church growth process. In August I had attended a workshop on Church Growth Ministry. In my next column, I pointed out how a “process” differs from a “program.” A program has goals, a beginning and an end. A process also has goals and a beginning, but from there on it continues.

Church growth is a process, not a program. The Great Commission from Christ, to “make disciples of all nations,” had a beginning, but it has continued. Grace had a beginning in 1932-33, and its membership has continued to grow. Growth, however, is more than just adding members.

Christ did not say, “*Go sign up members.*” He said, “*Go and make disciples.*” There is a difference. A member has his or her name on a membership list and thus is granted certain privileges and has accepted certain responsibilities. A disciple is involved in the process, is working toward goals and takes responsibility. I tried to make that point clear in my September 1984 column:

“To be a disciple you must be a follower. That means you are in motion. Discipleship involves activity. You have to be doing something. There is a cost to discipleship. If you are a disciple of Christ you are a follower of His. You walk where He walks. This means giving up some things. It means leaving the world behind. ‘*Come follow me,*’ the

Savior invites. To follow means to dedicate oneself to Him. To follow means to give up your self. To follow means to use your gifts to share this Good News of a Savior from sin with as many other people as possible.”

There were often times when the view through my back window provided an inspiration for what I could write. Such was the case in the fall of 1984 when I wrote the following for my November column.

“Encased in fog as we were for over a week, the peaking of fall colors passed us by completely. We just caught glimpses of the beauty of fall, but then came heavy winds and many of the leaves became items to be raked up and thrown away. We missed a part of the fall. So it is in our lives, the fog of materialism and of daily living in the world so engrosses us that we miss the real beauty of why we are here on this earth. For some it passes by and they miss it. We need to be careful that the love of God for us and our faith-filled response to that love does not pass us by or we will be lost.”

A Time for Change

In our church growth efforts to “make disciples” out of members, we were constantly looking for changes and adjustments that might be needed in our services and organization. Such was the case in 1985. It was time to evaluate our church and reconsider how it could best accomplish its Christ given goals.

Questions needed to be asked and answered. *Where is Grace going? What is Grace’s purpose? How can we best achieve that purpose?* That led to another question. *Should we change our service schedule to two services on Sunday, with time for Bible study?* These were important questions for us to consider. There were far-reaching ramifications involved for the future growth.

By fall, the decision was made. The Board of Elders agreed that the service schedule would change, setting aside 9:30 for Sunday School and Bible Classes. I had always preferred to have it that way, but now we would need to explain the reason to all of our members. One place I provided our members with that information was in my September 1985 Voice of Grace column.

“The hymn ‘Abide With Me’ by Henry Francis Lyte was written about 138 years ago at this time of the year, August and September. Not so much an evening hymn, it is a hymn about the evening of life. The words of the second stanza are ‘Change and decay in all around I see, O Thou who changest not, abide with me.’

“Change and decay are a part of our lives. Change *can* and *should* take place. Doing the same thing over and over again can be dangerous. It becomes rote. Change can have a wholesome effect. Changes are taking place here at Grace. *Changes need to take place.*

Using Time for the Lord

“People become complacent, so we do things by rote. When our worship becomes rote then it is no longer worship. Worship must be *alive* and *vibrant*. Therefore we are changing the times of our services. TIMES ARE CHANGING. The pessimist says we are dropping a service. The optimist says we are opening up the time so that we can involve more people in Bible Class.

“I am an OPTIMIST. The reason for the change is not to cut back, but to move forward. Is there a risk? Always. The Christian is always at the cutting edge of life. He takes risks. These are not foolhardy risks that might jeopardize an individual, but risks that say:

“‘*GOD owns my time-- I give it to HIM!*’

“The devil would like nothing more than for Grace people to say, ‘If I can’t worship at 9:30 a.m. I am not going to church.’ People who say that are giving in to the devil. He is hard at work. You can stop him by saying, ‘I am going to church and to Bible Class. I want to grow in grace in the knowledge of our Lord.’ ”

Starting Outdoor Service

We were doing other things in 1985 to get more people to take an interest in our church. One of them, which is still a popular event today, was our outdoor services. It caught on so well in 1985 that we scheduled an additional one on September 15th at 10:30 a.m. It was much the same each summer. It was a time for me to ponder and plan. It also was a

time when I could address special concerns I have for the members of Grace. As church attendance was often down during the summer, there were many I could not reach with my sermons. Once again I went to “Thru the Back Window” columns.

Summer was also a time when we did not have as many activities to write about or annual church year celebrations such as Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter. Anyone who reviews the back issues on file will see a clear pattern. Seasonal topics were most common during the rest of the church year, but for summer columns I address special concerns. Then as fall approached, I often would focus on plans for the church year ahead.

That pattern continued through my remaining years at Grace, from 1986 until my retirement in 1989. In my September 1986 column I announced another theme for the year ahead and made several points about it for our members.

Calling the Saints

“One of the songs that cause people to clap their hands and stamp their feet in rhythm is ‘*When the Saints Go Marching In.*’ The words ‘*I want to be among that number*’ are a part of that song. Well, for us the saints are marching now. We need to straighten up the lines, and get everybody to march in step. That’s because we are ‘*called to be saint.*’ That’s our challenge for this year. We need to live up to our calling.

“We are called; we are not volunteers. Volunteers see some activity they like and then they decide to participate. The Body of Christ *uses* volunteers, but it is not *made* of volunteers. Our call is from outside of us and the end result is a foregone conclusion, because even the acceptance is out of our hands. It is all in His hands.”

The rest of this column explained how this works and how we can respond to what God has done for us. God the Father has created us. Christ, the Son of the Father has saved us, and then the Holy Spirit gathered, enlightened and kept us in the one true faith. What our God has done is what makes us “saints”—not what we have done.

Unfortunately the word “saint” is used to mean one of exceptional holiness, one who has led an

exemplary life. But God's Word uses saints as the ones chosen by God. A saint lives not for self, but for others. That's what we need to do.

There were and are many avenues open for us to be saints. There is the sainthood of serving, of giving of your wealth, of singing, of working at a job in a church group. I then urged the members of Grace, and I urge you now, whenever you might read this, to recognize that "YOU ARE CALLED TO BE SAINTS." There were a number of annual themes we used through those years. In 1985-86 it had been "*Alive in Christ*," tying our theme to that

of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Then in 1986-87, the theme was "*Called To Be Saints*," and for 1987-88, our theme would be "*Growing in the Lord*."

"As Christians, we all need to grow, and continue to grow throughout our lives. We need to grow in our *oneness and unity*, in our *diversity of gifts*, in our *stewardship*, in our *knowledge*, and in our *need to reach out*."

Our growth is God's gift to us. As He bestows, we need to use growth, not to become big, but do big things for Him through our growth.

*"Though you have not seen Him, you love Him;
and even though you do not see Him now,
you believe in Him and are filled
with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
for you are receiving the goal of your faith,
the salvation of your souls."*

-- 1 Peter 1:8-9

Section III

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Dr. Paul T. Dietz, Pastor Emeritus***XII****Final Years, Farewell Blessings**

*“And after the fire came a
gentle whisper.”*

-- I Kings 19:12

My final years as senior pastor of Grace and the occasion of my retirement in 1989 offered a few more opportunities to share concerns for the spiritual welfare of the members of Grace and the future of the Lord's work in Menomonee Falls.

There were concerns about the moral decline in our world, especially in comedy and the entertainment world. Jokes making fun of God or the clergy were becoming commonplace.

Our attitudes about marriage and the words we too often use in everyday speech were out of step with the commandments instituted by God. From what I observe today, that moral decline has continued.

“The things we speak come from out heart. If our heart is unclean then that which comes out will be unclean” Matthew 15:17-20.

There were my continued concerns about church attendance, participation in church work and activities as well stewardship. “When is the best time to write about stewardship?” I asked that question in my July 1987 Voice of Grace column. “Any time is the answer. We are stewards all of our lives.” So I wrote another column on the meaning of stewardship.

Who Will Carry On?

One of my concerns as 1987 was drawing to a close was the question of a replacement. My 65th birthday was less than a year away. We needed a pastor who had the experience and maturity to lead a very large congregation. There are few such men

available in our synod. Those who would be capable were already where they were needed.

The Lord would provide, as He had 10 years earlier when Pastor Fahl was considering retirement. God has plans for Grace. In Pastor Fahl's “*Reminiscences*” he observed how God had “prepared him” for this work. He prepared me as well, and I was certain that He had already prepared another man to carry on. We were yet to find out who it would be.

The Rev. Tom Paul Willadsen had accepted a call to serve as an assistant pastor at Grace in 1982, but he had left and I was alone again. Pastor Berg and others were helping me, but I was getting closer to retirement.

I think people were trying to tell me something. I was looking stodgy in terms of these new trends in liturgy. I didn't care for the new hymnbook. When it got down to a vote the old hymnbook stayed, but I still got the message that “it is time that you retire.”

Finding a Candidate

I didn't want to leave abruptly. I wanted to have an easy transition. I thought that if we could get somebody here who could serve for a year or two as an associate with me, he could gradually ease into becoming the senior pastor.

Harvey Krueger was the district president at that time. Now Harvey and I go way back to old Immanuel. We were classmates from kindergarten on, so we knew one another. I talked with him maybe once or twice a month. We often drove together to district conferences. I told Harvey what I had in mind. “Yes, that sounds good,” he agreed.

At that time Pastor Granke was a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), which is an arch conservative, relatively small synod, centered in the area of Minnesota and Wisconsin. Pastor

Granke was serving a congregation in Madison, but wanted to make the move out of the ELS into the Missouri Synod.

A number of pastors from other Lutheran synods were expressing an interest at that time in moving to the Missouri Synod. The synod had discussions over the procedures to use to absorb pastors from other synods and decided that it would require a year of vicarage and then a pastor could be merged into our synod.

Pastor Granke had contacted Harvey and told him of his desires to move into the Missouri Synod. Their discussions and preparations had to be kept confidential. If the ELS would have heard about Pastor Granke's plans, he would have been kicked out immediately, leaving him with no home or employment.

After talking with Pastor Granke, Harvey Krueger called to tell me that he had a candidate for what I wanted to do. I thought it might work out and suggested that I meet Pastor Granke. So Corinne and I, along with Celeste and Harvey Krueger, agreed to meet with Sharon and Warren Granke.

That meeting was at the old Gobbler Restaurant, just off I94, halfway between Milwaukee and Madison. We met there for lunch and I outlined what I had in mind for a pastor. I was impressed with Warren. They left and Harvey and I talked about it a little more and drove back to Milwaukee.

Then I came to the congregation and said, "I can't tell you who it is and can't tell you where he is, but I can tell you that I'm impressed with him and that I think it would work out. But I have to handle it myself because if others find out, he will be in deep, dark trouble, so you'll have to trust me." And they did. It was a beautiful thing. They trusted me and basically said, "Go ahead, you make the arrangements."

There would be no need for a call or a contract, just a verbal agreement for the first year and a salary. He would be responsible for finding his own home. All we had to do was set a date and that's when he would come.

I still remember that Sunday when they all showed up. There was this tall fellow, Warren, with his wife Sharon, two girls, Heidi and Kirsten and a boy Erick. They walked into the congregation and

that was his introduction to Grace. Warren knew what I wanted, what I had in mind, but according to synod rules he was supposed to be a vicar.

Under Missouri Synod rules, he wouldn't even be able to wear a stole. I said, "This is for the birds, this is utterly ridiculous, I'm not going along with anything like that." I told him that, "You're a full fledged pastor. You've done it all. You're an equal." And that's the way I treated him.

Under the rules he could not officially be called an assistant or associate pastor, so we called him the "assisting pastor."

We talked frequently and I would tell him what I thought of Grace and what I thought of its future. In that way he could absorb what I had in mind and what I thought about it, but he could then go ahead and do his own thing.

When Pastor Granke first came, he had talked to other Missouri Synod pastors in Madison, who knew me from Concordia. He was asking them, "So who is this Paul Dietz, what do you know about him?" About half of them had known me as their instructor. "Oh he's strict," they warned, "but he also wears a bow tie."

Farewells and Blessings

There were so many things I wanted yet to say to the members of Grace as my retirement approached. Some of them were included in my farewell "Thru the Back Window" column, which appeared in the June 1989 Voice of Grace.

"Since April of 1978, many people of Grace have passed by the window, some in joy and happiness, and others in pain and grief. I wandered down memory lane as I paged through the church register of official acts. These papers bespeak the joy and pain of the public ministry.

"There were the babies who were baptized. What a blessing of God is baptism. Through it the child becomes the child of God, special in the sight of God. But in our highly mobile society, some parents have moved away, and others have drifted away. What a joy to see the little ones who are growing up at Grace and in His grace.

"Then there were the confirmation classes, one after another. Some members remaining faithful and others are seen only occasionally. Still others

have drifted away and are gone, victims of the back door losses. I pray to God that this number will diminish, and that we will have youth programs that hold them in church.

“Then the happy couples as they stood before God’s altar. Some couples still married, others separated or divorced; some regular in church attendance, others haphazard. There is a joy in a pastor’s heart as he sees couples whom he has married and whose children he has baptized still kneeling at the altar with their children to receive the Lord’s Supper. There is joy also when a spouse agrees to be confirmed and the first time the husband and wife kneel together at the altar. That makes the long hours, the endless meetings, and the constant pressure all worthwhile. Yet it is not the pastor who has done it, but here is the true, wonderful, awesome working of the Holy Spirit.

“Then paging through the register I see the burials with names of friends and co-workers pass before my eyes. Then remembering visits to bedsides, and the sudden chilling call.

“The valley of shadows is there. But pastor and people do not walk it alone, the Lord of Calvary; the Lord of Glory was always there.

“A little over eleven years of service here, an active ministry of some preaching, much teaching that began on August 20, 1950, in a rural church in mid-Wisconsin comes to an end on June 30, 1989. Many mistakes were made, many wrong decisions, opportunities were lost and feelings were hurt. The wonderful thing is that there is forgiveness, the forgiveness of a loving, kind and gracious God. As our God speaks to His people, so He speaks to His pastors and says, ‘You are forgiven.’ What a blessing and comfort to all.

“Retirement is a real word and a real event. It comes with finality. But we look forward to it. It will be interesting and different. The beauty and wonder of it all is that the public ministry goes on. As Paul the Apostle said, *‘I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow,’* 1 Corinthians 3:6. Each pastor plants and waters, we work with our gifts. But God blesses. Grace is in good hands—your pastor-elect will guide you and lead you to great things.”

My final opportunity to share parting words with

the members of Grace was on Sunday June 25, 1989 when I preached my retirement sermon. I had given it a great deal of thought. It is easy to write an Easter sermon or a Christmas sermon, but how often does one retire? This one had to have the words I wanted to leave with the members of Grace.

Parting Words, A Gentle Whisper

So for a number of weeks as I watched those days go down to that Sunday morning I had been rummaging about in my mind. What shall we say? Then I looked at the appointed lessons for that Sunday, particularly the pre-text, the verses right before the Old Testament lection, the 19th chapter, of the first book of Kings.

There God is speaking to Elijah His prophet and He says to Elijah:

“Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and scattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”

That was the answer. That would be the text. That was the theme for my retirement message. After reading that text, I first explained the circumstances of the story and then made several points about what message that story had for members of Grace.

Elijah was running away. He saw enemies on every side. He saw the people being decimated, killed and destroyed because they believed in the God Jehovah.

While we at Grace did not have to face such fears, it still does happen in our world today. Elijah saw the kings of Israel and Judah moving against the people of God to destroy them. He became so discouraged he moved out of the area to escape. He was feeling so sorry for himself. Woe is me. What will happen to me now!

Then the word of the Lord came to him. *‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’* Elijah complained to God. All of my friends have been killed, Lord. I’m the only one you’ve got. You’d better hang on to

me. If you lose me there's nobody else! I could just see God smiling a little as he listened to Elijah complain. But then He said, "Come out of your cave. It isn't all that bad. Come out and listen to me as I pass by." And Elijah saw the earthquake and it shook the mountains and the mighty wind and the fire. Devastation was there but God was not in the earthquake, nor the wind, nor the fire.

But then came the *gentle whisper*. It was the gentle whisper of God saying, "Come on Elijah, *let me be God*. You do what you are supposed to do. You go about your task. I sent you to anoint Hazael king over Aram, and I sent you to anoint Jehu, now go ahead and do that. Continue on your way, and on the way stop and talk with Elisha and get him to be your assistant, your follower."

The gentle whisper of God came to Elijah when he was afraid, "*Let God be God*."

That same gentle whisper came to the members of Grace that Sunday morning and he continues to come and whisper to us week after week and day after day. I hope that you will remember it. When we have fears, He comes to you and to me with that whisper. He is telling us to remember, "*let God be God*!"

And God is God. God guides, God directs, God takes us in the way that we should go. He nudges us this way and He nudges us that way. I can see that again and again in my life. I saw it early in my life. When my father died and my uncle was a pastor and my Grandfather was a pastor, there was no question what I would do. I would be a pastor.

I saw it again when I was in the seminary and World War II broke out. I didn't like the idea of a 4-D seminary deferment. I wanted to serve my country, as others had to do. I went to a Navy recruiting office. The recruiting officer told me to take off my glasses and read the wall chart. It was soon obvious. Uncle Sam did not want me. Again, the Lord was nudging me. He wanted me back in the seminary.

Then again He was nudging me when I got my first call to central Wisconsin. He wanted me to cut my teeth up there. "Then I'll bring you back to go to graduate school and teach at Concordia." And there I was happy teaching and enjoying myself, and out of the blue came that call to Grace Lutheran

Church. God was nudging me. You and I see God nudging us again and again in our lives. Let God be God. That's so vital and important for a Christian congregation. He nudged you from that little white church on the corner to this complex here. He nudged you to build and start a school. He is nudging you again with the number of children we have entering Grace school

God is nudging us and we don't dare wring our hands and say, "we don't have enough money, we've got to cut here, we've got to cut there." Our God is nudging us, saying, "Go and do the task I have given you to do."

In Step With the Spirit

Then I saw the Epistle lesson for that day. Paul again is right on target as he talks to us and he says, "*Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit*," Galatians 5:25. That's the gentle whisper of God to Grace today. Keep in step!

You're on the way. You are moving. Grace can never sit back and contemplate its navel, and say, "there's nothing more that we can do." There is so much that we can do. There are so many challenges for each and every one of us as God's children here in this world, particularly as members of Grace. Hear the gentle whisper of your God, as He urges you to keep on the march, to keep on going.

The Cost of Discipleship

Then there was the Gospel lesson for that Sunday. Jesus was moving down from Galilee to Judea and He was passing through the country of Samaria, where the people had little to do with Him, because they worshiped at Samaria, while He worshiped at Jerusalem. So they wanted no part of Him, but He kept on going. Then came the young people and there was this young man who said, "Hey Jesus, I want to follow you."

Then in a kind and gentle way, in a gentle whisper of God, Jesus said, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head*" Matthew 8:20. Following Jesus would mean sacrifice and hardships.

Another one said, "I want to follow you, but first I need to bury my parents and then I'll come." His parents were old, and he needed to take care of

them until they died and he could bury them. "I've got to take care of these things first, and then I'll come and follow you." Jesus had to remind him. *"Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead."* I need you now. I need you to be ready to give up and follow me.

You see the gentle whisper of our God comes to us and reminds us that there is a cost to discipleship, a cost we may not want to pay. But how can we compare it to the cost He paid for us? We need to look to the cross and see the great sacrifice of our God in that he sent His Son to be our Savior and then see the empty tomb, that sign and symbol of that tremendous victory. That victory is ours, it is all given to us, it is there for you and for me, and all we say is I believe and I accept it.

As we believe and as we accept it then, leading our lives in him, there is then that cost. Accept that cost willingly. It's not having it in both hands, it's an either or. You can't say, first I have this cabin up North to take care of, and then I'll get back to church. I'm just too interested in this world now. There'll be another time.

We never know when the Lord will come to us. But when He comes, he comes with a grim finality. There's a cost to our discipleship. If we say I believe there is a signed and sealed commitment, the gentle whisper of our God. When He comes to you He says, "Let me be your God. Let me guide you. Let me direct you."

You young people as He seeks to have you serve him in various capacities. As you young adults, as you husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, God's people here, God's army, He comes and he says, "Hear me, beloved. Listen to my whisper." Listen to the cooing, gentle whisper of a loving God. As a mother whispers loving words to her child, so He whispers to you and he says this day, "Let God be God." "Let me be your God." Keep on the move and remember there is a cost to that discipleship.

Then when we came to the final words for my sermon I was reminded of our 50th anniversary. Dr. Oswald Hoffman preached and referred to that beautiful word, "amen." That ties it all together. That brings you and me, pastor and people, in a

close relationship. Together we can say "Amen." So be it. This is most certainly true, as we say farewell, we say Amen, and so be it. God be with you. This is most certainly true, Amen.

The Retirement Years

After retiring, I continue to have close relationship with Grace, but mainly as a member. I was called upon from time to time to preach a sermon. Before retiring, I had resolved that once I had resigned as a pastor of Grace that I would be in a sense a lay member here.

One of the things I did enjoy doing is working with the church cleaners, a group of senior members who come here early every Thursday morning to clean the church. To make the point that I was no longer the pastor here, I insisted that they call me Ted. "If you call me pastor, it will cost you a dime." They learned real fast, but still slip once in a while.

When I retired, I had seen what happened to other pastors. They had no credentials. So when I retired I asked to be called Pastor Emeritus so that I had some credentials. Then when I went to visit someone in a hospital and wanted to see somebody, I could say that "I'm Pastor Emeritus at Grace." So I had a credential, I had a base. There is no stipend. I'm Pastor Emeritus at Grace and Pastor Emeritus at St. Peter Immanuel. I have about 40 to 45 shut-ins that I visit. When I go to nursing homes I can always say that I represent a congregation.

*"By the grace God has given me
I laid a foundation as an
expert builder,
and someone else is building on it.
But each should be careful
how he builds. For no one
can lay any foundation
other than the one already laid,
which is Jesus Christ."
-- I Corinthians 3:10-11*

Section IV

The Times and Memories of the Rev. Warren Granke

Introduction



When the Rev. Warren Granke arrived at Grace Lutheran Church in May 1988 he was introduced to a congregation facing new challenges in a changing world. Ten years earlier when Pastor Dietz was installed as a pastor of Grace the congregation was deeply divided over the controversial decision to build the Christian Activity Center and needed healing. The Lord provided Pastor Dietz, a strong spiritual leader, who would guide the congregation back together.

By 1988 Grace was united, but was bogged down with financial problems. Meanwhile, the population of this area continued to grow and the culture was changing. It was a time when doing the work of the Lord would require Grace to begin looking *forward* and *outward*. God again provided just the right person to address that challenge.

In this section you will find the story of how God prepared Warren Granke for the ministry and called him to lead Grace Lutheran Church. As a young man, he was interested in the farm implement business;

but the Lord had a higher calling in mind for him managing the business of a church. At Grace, Pastor Granke soon recognized that before the congregation could move *forward*, it would need to manage its finances and pay off some debts. Much has been accomplished in the past 20 years under the leadership of Pastor Granke. The constitution was revised to provide stronger financial management under an elected board of directors. Successful capital fund raising campaigns have helped to pay off old debts. Land has been purchased to provide space for a larger church and school campus.

Pastor Granke has also helped Grace to look *outward* to the community and beyond. Contemporary “Rejoice” worship services have helped to attract more young families. Grace ministries and mission programs have reached out to many people in need of God’s love and mercy.

In the pages that follow Pastor Granke tells his story. He shares his boyhood experiences in a small town near La Crosse, including the life events and relationships which influenced his decision to enter the ministry and led him to Grace Lutheran Church. In addition, he tells the story of his years as senior pastor of Grace, and of his vision for the future of Grace Lutheran Church. The story of the Rev. Warren Granke is another important chapter in the history of the *wonderful acts of our Gracious God* at Grace Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls.

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

I

From Boy to Man to Ministry 1945-71

During my early life I didn't have a clue as to what the Lord had in mind for me. I was born on October 6, 1945 in La Crosse, Wis., and grew up in a little village of Chaseburg, Wis. You'll find it on State Highway 162, about 14 miles south of La Crosse and eight miles east of the Mississippi River.

My dad was in the farm implement business and worked with International Harvester. My mother was a stay-at-home mom. I didn't have any brothers or sisters, but I did have a cousin, Kenny Granke who lived with us. Kenny's parents had died during my early childhood. His dad was my dad's brother, so my dad decided to raise him as a part of our family. He was like an older brother to me.

The early years of my life were spent in a two-

*“Train up a child
in the way he should go:
and when he is old
he will not depart from it”*
-- Proverbs 22: 6

room school house with lower grades and upper grades. I only spent one year in the upper grade room. When I was in fifth grade, my parents and some other folks were trying to figure a way to get a carload of kids into a parochial school in La Crosse.

They found enough kids to make the carload, so when I started the sixth grade I went to the First Lutheran School in La Crosse. Coming from a two-room school, and going into a city school was major culture shock for me. I hated it!

The next couple of years of my life were really a struggle. I just didn't fit into the context of an urban school. While it was a struggle, it was also a time of transition in my early life, and a time of reflection.

Those junior high times left me with a lot of memories, but it is not one of the favorite times of my journey.

There were a lot of new friends for me to make in that setting, including one I still keep contact with intermittently. The Christian school aspect was a precious thing and it shaped a lot of who I am today. Still, during my time in junior high I had no real concern about the future, and no hint as to what it would bring for me.

The first clue I had about my future came when I was in the eighth grade, the 1958-59 school year. A missionary from Japan, the Rev. Richard Sieger came to speak at my home church. This was a Wisconsin Synod church and he was a Wisconsin Synod Missionary who served in Japan.

Pastor Sieger was an excellent speaker and a wonderful man. After the presentation, my childhood friend from the village where I grew up, Dennis Peterson and I were standing in the front of the church, just visiting. The congregation was moving downstairs for a time of fellowship. Then I recall that Missionary Sieger saw us from the back of the church and made his way up to the front, leaving everyone else behind.

He wanted to talk with us. We were taken aback by this, but I can still remember him asking, “What do you intend to do with your lives?” “What do you want to do?” Then he said, “I'd really like to see the both of you study for the ministry.” I had never thought of anything like that before, but that started the process going.

On to Onalaska Luther High School

After the end of eighth grade at First Lutheran School, I moved on to Onalaska Luther High School, also a Wisconsin synod school. I went in with the intention of pursuing the pastoral ministry. But then, in my freshman year I made an executive

decision. The decision was that high school is a time to have fun and nothing else. So in many ways I blew my high school experience. I had a lot of fun, but I didn't really take it very seriously. I was involved in a lot of extra-curricular activities, such as the band and choir. I also went out for track and played basketball one year. There was a lot going on all of the time, but I was really not very focused. Actually, I was pretty immature.

The Wake-up Call

Then there was that "wake-up call" at the end of my high school years and a visit with my high school principal. The principal of the school was a man by the name of Wayne Schmidt. He is one of probably three people who had the greatest influence on my life. He saw me go through this whole time, and by the way, I did have reasons to visit his office from time to time, so we knew each other well.

I remember that day. It was the day that my Dad had asked me, "Where are you going to go to college?" Well, my grades weren't college grades. I was not sure what I was going to do. I remember going into the principal's office, and sat down. "Well, what do you want today, Warren?" he asked. "We need to talk," I said. "My dad wants me to go to college, but I have no idea of where to go or what to do." I recall him looking at me and with a snicker saying, "Well, you know your grades aren't that great." But he also said he had an idea for me. "The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) has a junior college in Mankato, Minnesota. I've been trying to get some kids to try it out, and I think you would be an excellent candidate."

At that time I knew little or nothing about Bethany Lutheran College, but by then I was ready to consider whatever I could get, so the principal called the Registrar and got a catalog for us to look at. While I had given some thought to the idea of going into the ministry, that idea was still on the back burner for me. Instead, I was looking at business training, which I could also get at Bethany.

I was especially interested in the farm implement business. My dad, on the other hand was not enthusiastic about that. He had experience in the farm machinery business and could see that it was

changing rapidly. He was very futuristic. "There is no future in this," he said. Looking around today at what has happened in the smaller towns and to smaller farm implement dealers, I know now that he was right. "All of this is going to come to an end and all you are going to know is grease and oil," my dad said. "Don't go there. If I were ever to do it over again, I wouldn't be here."

Still, back then I was young and didn't think my dad knew anything. However, both my dad and mom wanted me to get an education, in whatever course of study I might choose. My dad had ended his schooling at the sixth grade and my mother at the eighth grade. They felt that it was absolutely imperative that their son go to college.

My folks encouraged me and gave me whatever help they could to finance my education. I was an only child and my dad was older when he got married and I was born, so he was able to give me a lot of help. But still, I would need to find work to get through the entire time that I spent in college, getting married and completing my seminary studies.

Starting the College Experience

In the fall of 1963 I went off to Bethany. I can still remember that trip. It was my first long-term trip away from home. My folks took me to Mankato and I moved into the dormitory. There was no one there that I knew, but it turned out to be just a precious two years for me. By that time, I realized that I had to buckle down. I had lost a lot of time in high school, and if I were to do anything I would really need to be able to focus.

At the start I enrolled in the business program, but after one semester I hated it. The math classes and the business theory classes were boring. At the same time I was taking a lot of general education courses. By the end of that first semester, I had had it with business.

In addition, there were those nagging thoughts of warnings my dad had given me about the farm implement business. It made me think a bit more about what a career in business might be like in a rapidly changing world. I also knew my dad and my mom would be very happy if I would change my mind and go into the ministry. I was ready to heed

their wishes and now I'm really grateful that I did.

Another person who influenced my decision was the dean of students at Bethany, Julian Anderson, an ELS seminary professor. He was an interesting fellow, a Greek scholar, and I really became very fond of him. What a tremendous mind he had! While spending time with him, I remember him saying, "I think you should try the ministry again."

I decided to take Prof. Anderson's advice and finished out that year getting a lot of general education courses out of the way. Now I had a plan, so during my sophomore year I started a process to make preparations to enter the seminary. My first choice would have been to go to a Wisconsin Synod seminary, but because I had not started with them, they rejected me, so I ended up deciding to stay at the ELS seminary in Mankato.

So what did the Lord have in mind for me as these decisions were made to first to enroll in Bethany, and then to begin training to enter the seminary? A part of the answer is Bethany and the ELS. Both have influenced who I am, how I think and what I have done with my life. Bethany is where I met and married Sharon, so it also has become a part of the heritage of my family.

Both Bethany and the ELS have a rich and interesting history. The ELS is a very small synod of about 125 congregations, with two thirds of them concentrated in four states: Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan. By contrast, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod numbers about 1,240 congregations and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has 6,150 congregations.

What's remarkable, though, about the tiny ELS is that it has been able to establish congregations in various locations in 19 states across the country. There are 21 of them in three western states: California, Oregon and Washington. Then to the east and south, there is one in Texas, one in Pennsylvania and 10 congregations in Florida.

When the ELS was formed in 1853 it was called the "Norwegian Synod." The name was changed to Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1918, but today it is still often referred to as the "Norwegian Synod." In 1872 it joined with the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod and others in helping to form the

Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Bethany Lutheran College, where I had started my studies, was formed in 1927. The Bethany Lutheran Seminary was added in 1946. In 1961 the Wisconsin Synod broke its relationship with the Missouri Synod, but maintained fellowship with the ELS. In 1993 both the ELS and Wisconsin Synod helped to establish a new, more conservative alliance known as the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

To prepare for the seminary meant that I would still need to take all of my first year language classes. My sophomore year I took German, Hebrew and Greek. I ended up graduating in 1965 with an Associate in Arts degree, but I had fulfilled a lot of my general education requirements and I had a year of seminary prep under my belt.

But where was I to go after receiving my junior college degree at Bethany? I tried again to get into the Wisconsin Synod's preparatory school, Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, but once again I was rejected. At that point I made up my mind that I would go the ELS route, so I went to Mankato State University to complete my junior and senior year. During that time it was still called Mankato State College.

My goal was to graduate in four years, so I took a full load at Mankato State. At the same time I took 12 credits of languages at Bethany to continue my language studies.

To graduate from Mankato State, I would need to choose a major course of study. As I had already studied some German, I pursued German as minor. I could have chosen to major in psychology or something that could have been helpful in the ministry, but decided against it. Instead, I wanted something totally different, something that I found interesting that would help me if the ministry didn't work out. I majored in geography with a minor in German. At the same time I was pursuing my language courses in preparation for the seminary.

Finishing College, Getting Married

In May of 1967, four years from the time I started college, I still needed a few more credits to graduate. To get those credits I went to a summer session at Mankato State. I took an art class and

driver's education training to get the last two credits I needed. I actually graduated at the end of the first summer session and was all pre-enrolled to begin at the ELS seminary at Bethany in the fall of 1967.

Sharon and I had met at Bethany in our freshman year. We had been dating for four years and had made plans to be married August 6, 1967. Sharon was short of credits as well, but she had to take two summer sessions and I only had to take one. I've enjoyed being able to remind her that I graduated a summer session ahead of her.

After I finished school that summer, I worked in the Bethany library and helped the grounds crew. Sharon went to school both summer sessions and we got married on August 6 as we had planned. Sharon was then a trained day-school teacher and got a call to a little country church near Mankato and took that call. I started the seminary in the fall of 1967 at Bethany Lutheran Seminary in Mankato.

The seminary provided us with a place to live. It was a tiny little tarpaper house. It was built straight up and looked like a giant privy. The bathroom was in the basement. The first floor was all one big room. We purchased a room divider to make two rooms. Upstairs there were three beautiful bedrooms.

It was a very unique house. While it was tarpaper on the outside, the inside was all hardwood floors and woodwork. I have no idea why they had built it the way they did. We lived there for three years. Sharon taught school and I went to the seminary and continued to work a lot in the library.

Finding work

My folks provided a good deal of financial help, but still all through college I had to find some work. There were two things that I did. When I was in Bethany the first two years, and even my junior year, I ended up cleaning houses. An elderly lady who was very wealthy lived near the school and was a member of the congregation where we attended. Her name was Lila Packman. Her husband owned lumberyards.

Lila had theory about house cleaning. Her theory was that she would never hire college girls to clean her house. Their mothers had already taught them how to clean. But that's not what Lila wanted. No

one else knew how to clean a house the way Lila wanted it cleaned. So she would hire college boys and train them to clean the way she wanted it done. It was unique, and she always could get boys to do it because she paid so well. I cleaned her house on a regular basis. In addition, her sister and brother-in-law lived near by and eventually I was cleaning their house as well. By cleaning those two homes I made more than enough for spending money, books and other expenses.

During my junior year I needed more money than I could earn by cleaning houses. Also, I got a car and needed to support the car. A hamburger joint opened up near to the campus. A lot of the guys went to work there for \$1.25 per hour. I just hated that atmosphere. Instead I went bullhead fishing, and while that doesn't sound like a moneymaking task, it was a way to make money. A custodian at Bethany just loved bullheads. He didn't like to fish for them, so I went bullhead fishing for him. The best place to catch bullheads was a lake just south of New Ulm, Minnesota. It had a reputation of being a great place to catch bullheads, but there was no public access to the lake. I went to a farm near the lake and asked the owner if I could go fishing. He agreed. In addition, he said, "You can go fishing today, but how about coming to work for me." Well, that was right up my alley. The next day I was there and I ended up doing plowing for him that fall.

The lake and farm where I worked were in an interesting area of Minnesota. The farm is right by the tiny hamlet of Walnut Grove, Minnesota, a town highlighted in the television program "Little House on the Prairie," based on the classic book with the same name.

Plowing and doing other farm work was a good way to earn the money I needed. As it turned out I had a lot of time to work there. Many of my classes were on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday I had only one class at eight and no classes on Thursday. With that schedule I could spend most of Tuesday and all day Thursday working on the farm, and I could work as late at night as I wanted.

I was paid a buck an hour plus meals for doing farm work. While that was less than fast food

wages, the meals saved some money. In addition, I could work a lot of hours and I could work my own hours. I made a lot of money for those days. The farmer I started working with also had a neighbor who had health problems and needed help. I worked for him as well. That's how I supported myself in my college years.

Then we came to that first summer in 1968 after getting married and finishing my first year of seminary studies. "What am I going to do? What kind of summer job could I find?" There were several choices. Many of the seminary students still worked in fast food restaurants, making and selling hamburgers for \$1.25 per hour. There were a couple of hamburger joints that had come into town. That choice had not appealed to me before and my opinion had not changed so I checked into some alternatives.

We were in a rural area and I found out that there were a lot of buildings that needed painting. I went out and bought a compressor and ladders. In addition, I hired a couple of seminarians and we painted a church, several barns and several houses in the area that summer. We kept very busy and made a good buck that summer painting buildings.

First Time in the Pulpit!

The next summer, 1969, I was offered a summer vicarage. That would take me to far northern Minnesota to help a pastor who served two parishes. One of them was located in Langbed and the other in Oklee. These two parishes were made up of 11 congregations that had been combined into two; there were six congregations in one and five in the other. That summer I would preach at least twice each Sunday morning. Sometimes it was three times in the morning, once in the afternoon and once in the evening. After that, I would be all worn out for the week.

We lived in the little village of Trail, Minnesota, maybe 60 miles from the Canadian border, northwest of Bemidji, Minnesota, right near the Red Lake Indian Reservation.

A little church in Trail was one of the two that I served. It was an interesting little church with a seating capacity of 30. It looked very much like a church. It was a white frame miniature church, and

they were very proud of it. I tend to think it was a school at one time and that they had made it look like a church. It was neat. Sharon and I spent the summer there, and it was one of the most memorable summers of our lives. The days are long in Northern Minnesota. We would have daylight until 10 p.m. and we were very busy with meetings, Ladies Aid activities and other weekday evening events as well as preaching. It was a lot of fun.

Our northern most church was near a little town of Grygla. Grygla was basically a Scandinavian community, and even by standards of 1969 was very backward. Very few of the farms had indoor plumbing. Any farming that was done in that area was far behind the technology and methods used in other areas of Minnesota. It was an interesting area that reminded one of earlier times.

The church in Grygla had been built at a time when churchgoers still came by horse and buggy. There was a horse and buggy trail that went through the area and the church was built on that buggy trail. But when they put in the roads, they didn't follow the buggy trail. That left the church probably three quarters of a mile off the road in the middle of a cow pasture. The members had put in a gravel road to the church with a farm gate a block or so from the church. That gate had to be opened whenever they were going to have a church service. A Norwegian carver, who had lived in that area when the church was built, had carved all of the wood in that church. It was stunningly beautiful.

One of the memories that strikes me from that summer in Trail took place in July of 1969, at the time when man first landed on the moon. We were going up to Grygla for a Sunday night service. The organ in that church provided a striking contrast with the technology that was being demonstrated in space that evening. It was an old pump organ, the type that would require the organist to pump it with his or her feet. The organist was a lady from our church in Trail. Her name was Tomina Moen. She had never married and lived on her home farm. Her family had been very distinctive in their Norwegian heritage and traditions. But now she lived alone, her mother, father and brothers had all died. Tomina played the organ at many churches in that area.

That evening is easy to remember because of the

moon landing. We picked up Tomina and we drove up to Grygla for worship. After the service we drove back to Grygla. It was about 10 p.m. and we were talking about going to the moon. We wanted to get home to see the news. We also got to talking about Norwegian food and I remarked to Tomina how I liked Rommegrot, which is a distinctly Norwegian dish. It's a cream porridge that turns into a type of pudding. You eat it with a little butter, cinnamon and sugar. After I mentioned how I liked it, Tomina suggested that we stop at her house, "And I'll make some Rommegrot." So there we were at one o'clock in the morning eating Rommegrot and applesauce. We had a delightful time as we watched the men walk on the moon.

That summer had been a wonderful experience. But then it was back to the seminary for my third year before finishing up in the spring of 1970. In the ELS system, the seminary graduate would go out as a vicar after finishing three years in the classroom.

I was called to vicar in Eau Claire, Wis. to help out Pastor Luther Vongon, who served two

churches there. One church was in downtown Eau Claire and one in the suburbs of Eau Claire. They were Concordia Lutheran Church and Ascension Lutheran Church. Sharon and I lived in Ascension's parsonage. We moved in June of 1970 and Sharon was very pregnant. We no sooner got there and Erick was born on July 4th, right after we had moved. In December of 1970 it was decided that my call would include starting a mission church in Bloomer.

So while I served at Ascension, I also ended up completing my vicar year by doing the legwork to help establish Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Bloomer, Wis.

That year turned out to be another new experience that the Lord had provided to prepare me for things to come. His plans for us often come as a surprise. At the end of my vicarage year the Eau Claire parish split. Concordia stayed alone and pastor Vongon remained as the pastor of Concordia, while I was called to Ascension and Bloomer. That takes us to the point where I was ordained in 1971.

*"And that from a child
thou hast known the Holy Scriptures,
which are able to make thee wise
unto salvation through faith
which is in Christ Jesus."*

-- II Timothy 3:15

*“Here is a trustworthy saying:
‘If anyone sets his heart
on being an overseer
he desires a noble task.’ ”
-- 1 Timothy 3:1*



Pastor Granke came to Grace in 1988 from a small ELS congregation in Madison. After becoming the senior pastor in 1989, he maintained the team ministry concept established by Pastor Dietz, employing talented pulpit assistants to provide variety in weekly sermons.



The Rev. Wayne Rasmussen was ordained into the ministry at Grace in 1990, served as a pulpit assistant with Pastor Granke and was Minister of Education from 1992 to 1995.



The Rev. Professor Ron Berg, a colleague of Pastor Dietz at Concordia University served as a pulpit assistant at Grace in the 1980s and early 1990s. He is remembered for his inspiring sermons, the most memorable was his Easter message, “It’s Friday . . . but Sunday’s coming!”



The Rev. Jerome Stecker was called to Grace in 1991 and served as an associate pastor with Pastor Granke until 1997 when he received a call to St. Martini in Milwaukee.



Pastor Granke burns the mortgage used to finance the building of the CAC in 1978. That debt was paid in April 1994 following the successful 1993 ‘Freedom to Serve’ campaign. Others taking part are Steve Anderson, Larry Borenz, Joyce Starck and David Peterson.

Section IV

Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor

II

Beginning in Ministry, Moving to Grace

Our Lord welcomed me into service as a pastor in His Church in 1971, when I was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It was on Sunday, June 13, a beautiful warm, sunny day. I was ordained in two church services, one on Sunday afternoon at Ascension Lutheran Church in Eau Claire and the other on Sunday evening at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Bloomer. I remember that the service at Bloomer had to be no earlier than 8 p.m. so the farmers in the congregation could have time to finish their evening milking chores.

I had received and accepted a call to serve at Ascension and Good Shepherd. From that time on it seemed that God had plans for me that eventually brought me to serve Him here. It was His guidance and His loving hands that directed the events and circumstances of my life, especially the events of

*“May the words of my mouth
 and the meditation of my heart
 be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord
 my strength and my redeemer.”*

-- Psalm 19:14

1987-88 that brought me to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

In the pages that follow, I will continue my story by reflecting on the “Wonderful Acts of our Gracious God,” as Pastor Fahl did in his “*Reminiscences*” in 1986. I pray that I can reflect on those circumstances and events in ways that will please Him. My purpose is simply to illustrate for anyone who may read this how our loving Lord did, indeed, continue to carry out His “Wonderful Acts” here in Menomonee Falls.

The thought process that brought me here began

early in my ministry. The idea of making a move from the ELS to the Missouri Synod had been on my mind from the early days of my ministry. In the 1970s I had a very close friend who was a Missouri Synod pastor. It was the Rev. Arleigh Lutz who later became president of the North Wisconsin District. Our friendship kept those thoughts alive. At the same time, the Lord had things for me to do in the two ELS parishes where I was serving. Those churches kept me in the ELS because I felt my leadership was making a difference. One of those congregations had made a strong confessional stand in the community. There was more work to be done.

Service in Madison, 1978-88

In 1978, I was called to an ELS church, also named Grace Lutheran Church, in Madison and served the Lord there from 1978 to 1988. The ministry in Madison was frustrating for a number of reasons, especially the last two years. It was very frustrating to be limited by a parish of 350 or less. Too often in small congregations there are certain members or families that dominate the parish. Still, I know that it was 10 years of my life when my Lord wanted me there.

The complete lack of foresight among the parish leaders was highlighted for me again when an insurance company next door wanted to purchase our church property for a day care center at a premium price. At the same time a beautiful site on the west side of Madison could have been purchased for a larger, entirely new campus. It was 12 acres of land at the top of a hill in the middle of a rapidly growing residential area. It would be a perfect location for a new church. The church leaders could not understand the mission. All that they saw was to stay put and get out of debt. With that attitude, I felt they would just continue to die

on the vine. My frustration over parish leadership was one of many things that again prompted thoughts of leaving the ELS. Two doctrinal issues were also causing concern for me and became important factors in my decision to join the Missouri Synod.

One of those issues was the view on church fellowship held by the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS. Their view is that every aspect of relationship in the church should be governed by a strict understanding of fellowship. Under that interpretation, we could not pray with anyone else—that is with anyone who is not in full agreement with our doctrine.

The Missouri Synod has a different position. We don't share the altar or pulpit with anyone who is not in agreement with us on doctrines, but we do pray with other people. The Missouri Synod, I believe, has the correct position on fellowship.

When I asked about this issue, synod representatives told me that Missouri Synod churches do take part in worship activities related to a civic context, such as a bicentennial or centennials celebration. Missouri Synod churches do not become involved if, in fact, it is a joint worship service. I agreed and accepted that view.

Grace church has a long history of cooperation with community events, parades and celebrations. In 1976, Pastor Fahl was a driving force behind a July 4th Bicentennial "Religious Convocation" held at Schumann Field. The event included Scripture readings, prayers and an address from Pastor Fahl, *"Americans, Don't Forget God!"* Congregations that participated included Grace, Emmanuel Community, Gloria Dei, Good Shepherd, Holy Cross, Prince of Peace, St. Anthony's, St. Francis, St. Mary's, and St. Paul's.

The Role of Women

The role of women in the church was the other issue with which I disagreed with the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS. Women need to have more flexibility than the ELS or the Wisconsin Synod will allow. Women in those churches are not allowed to vote or serve on any formal boards. I do not believe the Scriptures supports that position. Grace revised its constitution in 1980, giving

women of the congregation the right to vote and to hold offices.

At the same time, I agree with the Missouri Synod on women in the pulpit. I do not accept the notion that women should be ordained in the holy ministry, however, when it comes to all other aspects of service, I believe women can serve.

So, as I contemplated what our Lord had intended for me, it became increasingly clear that He had other plans for me. There were my growing concerns about doctrine as well as outreach. It also became clear that the doctrines and evangelistic objectives of the Missouri Synod were much closer to convictions than those of the ELS.

The Decision to Move

In November 1987, a Missouri Synod pastor and close friend of mine, the Rev. Harold Senkbeil, suggested that we meet with the president of the South Wisconsin district, Dr. Harvey Krueger. The Senkbeil family had been neighbors of ours in Madison, and we often got together for family visits.

As two pastors, the Rev. Senkbeil and I had much in common and talked often about a wide range of issues, many related to our work in our churches. He knew my concerns. At that point, I was very interested in meeting Dr. Krueger. A meeting was arranged and we got together at Diane's Supper Club in Milwaukee.

Making a change would be a difficult journey because of the perspective that the ELS had on the Missouri Synod. Dr. Krueger said he would work with me to solve any problems I might have with ELS officials. Dr. Krueger had just one more question for me: "When can you start?"

The formal process began in March of 1988 with inquiries sent to the Missouri Synod in St. Louis. Early that spring, Dr. Krueger informed me that he had a church where he'd like to have me serve. He wanted me to meet the Elders from that church.

That meeting was held at the Gobbler restaurant in Johnson's Creek. It had to be completely confidential because of the possible reactions in the ELS to my considering a move to another synod.

Grace was the Church. Four men from Grace

attended our meeting, Jim Mayer, Bob Pieters, Bob Burgardt and Jim Bartlett. We had an excellent meeting. By then, I knew that I would be making a move to the Missouri Synod, but was Grace to be the church where the Lord wanted me to serve?

That first meeting was very encouraging. The next step was for Sharon and me to meet with Dr. Krueger and his wife, along with Pastor Dietz and his wife. We had a wonderful dinner together. After dinner Pastor Dietz said, "Okay, let's see what you're made of," and the questioning began.

There were two types of questions. The first set had to do with doctrine. Pastor Dietz was very familiar with that type of interview. He was chairman of the Board of Regents of Concordia University Wisconsin at Mequon and had interviewed many church workers being considered for the Concordia staff. My doctrinal review with him was intensive, covering my views on every possible issue of doctrinal concerns. The second type of questions had to do with practice. His concern was that he was in this parish and had developed a practice that worked. He did not want anyone else to upset the apple cart. In these questions, his concern was not so much on the basis of doctrine, but that I might be someone who is too bound up in trivia and not able to move forward. We soon found that our ideas on practice in a large congregation were very similar.

After that meeting, Pastor Dietz recommended that Grace should pursue bringing me on to serve here. I was excited. I couldn't believe that the Lord was leading me along this path in such a logical and smooth transition.

A year of Preparation, 1988-89

After our meeting, Pastor Dietz and I kept in contact by phone. Plans were made and dates were set for me to make the big move. In April, Pastor Dietz said everything would become public in June. "When can you start?" he asked. We agreed on the first of June.

It was a smooth transition from the ELS. I informed my congregation in Madison on a Sunday morning, telling them that I would not be taking another position in the ELS. I also called all the officials of the ELS to inform them of my decision.

That was the fourth Sunday in May of 1988, and I was finished in the ELS.

By the first of June we had not yet purchased a home in this area. I had spent the last part of May looking for a place to live. Pastor Dietz suggested that I try to find and buy a home with an assumable mortgage. We did find one, but the owner wanted me to cover past-due mortgage payments that he had not made. That would not be a wise move. Instead, St. Francis Bank arranged for me to purchase it outright.

It was urgent that I be here the first of June because Pastor Dietz was involved with the district convention that summer. He needed someone to cover the parish. Pastor Dietz decided that would be me, so I came. We could not move from Madison that quickly. The Senkbeils invited me to stay with them for a couple of weeks until we could move. Meanwhile, my family was able to stay in the parsonage in Madison.

While Pastor Dietz was away, I took care of the parish, preaching and handling all of the other parish duties that first June. It was a great experience!

The synod considered me to be a vicar because I was in transition from one church body to another. Pastor Dietz said, "We are not calling you a vicar because you have 18 years of service." Under synod rules I could not be called a pastor because I had not been officially accepted into the Missouri Synod. Pastor Dietz came up with a solution, calling me the "Assisting Pastor." That was my title from June 1988 to June 1989.

It was a wonderful, marvelous experience to be working with Pastor Dietz. It would be a very intensive year of work and study. It seemed as if I had three jobs. One was my work as the Assisting Pastor of Grace, another was learning all I could from Pastor Dietz, and the third was meeting the requirements of the Missouri Synod.

To work with Pastor Dietz, I knew would be especially rewarding. When I first met him at that meal in Johnson Creek he was very aggressive in his questions for me. I liked that a lot because I could speak very forthrightly. I could tell he was a no nonsense guy. I could say what was on my mind and he could accept that.

The reaction of pastors and church workers I knew from outside of Grace was very interesting. Many of them had known Pastor Dietz at Concordia. He had been the librarian there and had taught some classes. The perception they had was that he was a really hard-nosed teacher and I had better look out! So I didn't know what I might be in for here at Grace. Those concerns were unfounded.

From the moment I came here and started with Pastor Dietz, he exhibited consistent and loving leadership. That was reflected in his attitude toward the parish and in his attitude toward me. I understood that he had his way of doing things, but that was okay with me.

I was more concerned about learning his method than I was whether I was going to fulfill all of my own goals and objectives for my life and my ministry. He would be the boss and I wanted to do everything in my power to make him look good all the time and not allow anything adversarial to surface. As it worked out, he was just a wonderful person to work with. We just got along great.

From the first day on, his management style and objectives for me were very clear. "You'll be in charge of the youth program and you'll need to preach," he said. "I want you to take full responsibility for your job descriptions. You have license to do it your way, but I want you to understand that I don't like surprises. Inform me of everything, especially if anything has the potential for a problem." That's what I did.

Then there also were the requirements of the synod while doing my transition called a "colloquy." That included getting some additional graduate study credits. I had already taken courses through the Fort Wayne Seminary by correspondence, but the synod advised taking more credits for a total 30 hours of graduate level study before the end of that year. I took courses at Concordia Mequon and spent two weeks at Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne. When the year was over, the 30-credit goal had been reached.

The Call to Grace

The call to become Senior Pastor at Grace came in June of 1989. Pastor Dietz retired the first of July 1989 and I took over as Senior Pastor. My decision

had not been difficult. The call had been approved by the Voters' Assembly of Grace, but I also was satisfied that it was a call from my Lord to serve Him here. The pieces of the puzzle of my life had been put together so well by His loving hands. The events of the past two years all pointed in one direction. It appeared that God wanted someone here who could pick up and carry on what Pastor Dietz had started.

There were many things about Grace that surprised me. Before coming here, I had this vision of German Lutheran churches in the Milwaukee area. They had an image of being static, unbending, unwilling to do anything new. Grace is not like that. My views began to change with the positive experiences I had in that first meeting with the four men from Grace. Next I had a very positive impression in my first meeting with Pastor Dietz. Then there was the meeting with the leadership and representatives of the staff in April of 1988. Having a competent staff is what makes it possible to stabilize a large church such as Grace. Their enthusiasm and warmth were overwhelming. It just said to me that this will be a fun place to work with this talented group.

The membership of Grace is a very heterogeneous, but a very progressive group of people in their own way. Not to a fault, but progressive in saying, "if you can show us logically that this is what we should do, we're going to do it."

That is a very healthy attitude in a church. Very few German Lutheran Churches in the upper Midwest have that perspective. It is a beautiful thing.

Then there was Pastor Deitz's understanding of a large Lutheran Church. He was absolutely correct and ahead of his time. It helped me to implement many of the goals and objectives Pastor Dietz saw as important. .

Clearly it was all a part of our Lord's plans for Grace, a plan Pastor Dietz had put into motion, a plan that I now had the responsibility to carry forward. The greatest challenge for me was that I would now be in charge of a parish with 2,000 people, and I would be all alone in doing it. I had never done that before. Still, it didn't scare me. The Lord had prepared me for it in many ways. I had

been exposed to large church ministry and ministry of the church at large in so many contexts that moving into a large church ministry was not a problem for me.

Ministry in a large church is very different than a small parish. It's an exhausting ministry. It takes such a tremendous commitment, but is a wonderful ministry in which anyone would feel privileged to

participate. It is challenging but also rewarding.

As I reflect on the years I've been at Grace, my leadership style and understanding of ministry were what Grace needed. There would be many challenges ahead such as establishing a firm financial foundation and establishing plans for the future. I firmly believe it was the hand of God that brought me here.

*“Many, O Lord my God,
are the wonders you have done.
The things you have planned for us,
no one can recount to you;
were I to speak of them and tell of them,
they would be too many to declare.”*

-- Psalm 40:5

For 75 years God provided faithful pastors, teachers, musicians and many willing volunteers who all played a role in spreading the Gospel and sharing God's love through Grace Lutheran Church.

The Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson served Grace with Pastor Granke for nearly 10 years. He started as vicar in the fall of 1997 and became Associate Pastor in 1998. In early 2007, Pastor Peterson accepted a call to serve as a vice president of Concordia University Wisconsin.



Dolores (Dee) Jobe and her husband Larry came to Grace in the 1960s. She served 32 years as a Grace School teacher, played the organ for services, directed the bell choir, and directed children's choirs.



Church secretaries Barbara Baas and Donna Hein. Barbara has served as office secretary since 1985. Joyce Starck was secretary from 1964 to 1985.



The Women's Ministry Administration Circle provides the Grace office staff with volunteer help.



August 20, 2006 Pastor Granke was honored for 35 years of faithful service in the pastoral ministry. Kathy Klatt and Pastor Peterson presented him with a plaque recognizing his service.



Grace volunteers planted trees and shrubs in the front of our church and school under a church beautification project started in 1995. The landscape is maintained by volunteers.

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

III

On My Own, 1989-91

*“Put out into the deep water,
and let down the nets
for a catch.”*

-- Luke 5:4

In July 1989 I was installed as the Senior Pastor at Grace. Those first years were an overwhelming experience. The Rev. Ron Berg of Concordia became my pulpit assistant. Not long after that I was also able to get Wayne Rasmussen, a teacher and coach at Concordia, to help. However, I was holding the reins and had full responsibility for the ministry of Grace.

Pastor Dietz had helped me so much over the past year by being there for me. Now he would help me by not being there. Pastor Dietz opted to stay away from Grace from the time he retired until the fall of 1989, just to give me space to get my feet on the ground. He and Corrine wanted to be members of Grace, but he didn't want to interfere or get into any aspects of my ministry. Pastor Dietz just wanted to be a parishioner and he was absolutely true to his word. It was just wonderful for me to have Pastor Dietz in the parish all of those years.

A Very Busy Time

The summer of 1989 was especially busy. There were a lot of weddings scheduled. I had gone from doing two or three weddings a year in Madison to doing weddings every weekend. We also had a good number of funerals, some very difficult, including a young man who had committed suicide. There were some funerals of beloved family members. It was a very difficult time just to stay ahead of things. Managing the preaching with two

pulpit assistants was something new to me, after spending so many years in churches where I had always done it all by myself. I had to manage everyone's schedule. That was a challenge, but it worked out very well. Ron Berg was such an accommodating person, just a real champ in helping me. Then Wayne Rasmussen came to help. He was also an excellent person to have working with me.

The first couple of years were just a whirlwind of activity. It was a real challenge just trying to keep up with all that was there for me to do. There was no time for a proactive ministry, for looking to the future for Grace. Instead it was like being a fireman who must be ready to react quickly when fires break out.

Keeping up with it all was difficult. Until the spring of 1990 we were still living in Milwaukee, on 84th street just east of Appleton and just north of Hampton. That took some added commuting time. There was a lot of running back and forth. Every morning I had to plan my whole day into the evening to make sure I would make good use of all of my time. It was a unique experience.

While it was a very busy time, I was also trying to get a handle on the potential growth of Grace church. The first step was to work with Barb Baas, our church secretary, to do a study of attendance trends in the congregation. We went back to the early 1980s.

That study of attendance was a start on one of my first goals. It was to make sure that our membership trend line would remain level or would turn up, which would be the most important thing. Many large churches are going in the wrong direction. They reach a peak and then their attendance goes down. Looking at those records we found that there were some years that we went down, but overall the trend line has been moving upward.

My second goal was to amass a good staff. A good staff doesn't just happen; you need to make it happen. While the Divine Call is a very important part of that process, I also believe that God uses us to reach out to bring personnel together. By following His ways, we can find a common spirit and like-mindedness that will create a good work situation.

Pastor Dietz also provided an excellent example in the way he worked with me.

Starting a Proactive Ministry

When Pastor Dietz came back in the fall of 1989 we sat down for a visit. One of the questions that he raised was, "What kind of a ministry are you going to pursue?"

Well that seemed like a rather strange question. What he meant soon became clear. He had started a strong team ministry for the congregation and that team ministry had been functioning. While it wasn't always at full strength, it certainly worked because it divided responsibility. He had a strong presence in that team ministry. He ran the show.

Pastor Dietz knew that I did want to do team ministry. That's why I came to the Missouri Synod. There would never have been an opportunity to do that in the ELS. I had been intrigued with the idea of being on a larger staff.

Pastor Dietz knew of my interest in team ministry, so why was he now asking me what kind of ministry I wanted to pursue? My vision of team ministry had been a little different than his. I felt you could empower people and allow them to go off on their own to do what needs to be done. When I explained my thinking he gave me some good advice. "Well, I hope it works," he said, "but I don't think it will. You've got to be the boss to make it work."

Pastor Dietz really helped by being frank with me about my view on team ministry. So I tried his approach. We added some new people to our staff, including Kristy Miller, who is now my daughter-in-law, to our staff to be our Lay Minister. We also had a strong team of volunteers. Pastor Dietz had been right. My view of team ministry would not work. I found out quickly that I had to be in charge and be a strong presence at the hub of the ministry.

As my management style changed I began to realize that in many ways the Lord was gently leading me into my new role. He had prepared me for this by giving me the gifts needed to manage larger groups of people. Those gifts were being wasted in the smaller congregation in Madison. My gifts were more suited to a larger than a smaller setting.

It wasn't just my observation. A layman in my Madison church had told me the same thing. He was a businessman who had been in the automobile business and the farm implement business, so we had some interest in common. "Why are you wasting your time in Madison?" he said. "You need to get into a larger setting. You have too much energy for this place."

I believe that God led me here. First He blessed me with the gift of management skills. Then He kindled a strong desire in my heart to get into a large church ministry. It has now become clear that my gifts are more suited to a large church than a small church.

Calling an Associate

Our plans at that time included calling an associate pastor. A call committee was put together, with Bernie Gering as the chairman. As we discussed the qualifications to look for in our candidates I realized that from a leadership perspective someone would need to be the boss to make things go.

So when we got to the interview process it became very clear that we would need someone who could take on an associate role. That became an important part of our pursuit. We were looking for a team player, a person who would fit in well being guided by a strong leader. The call went out to Jerry Stecker who was in Arkansas at that time.

Pastor Stecker accepted the call to Grace and was installed as Associate Pastor on January 13, 1991. His call was to serve in the areas of evangelism and stewardship. In addition, he was to have a good deal of responsibility in the areas of visitation at hospitals and of shut-ins. Pastor Stecker's family did not make the move from Arkansas until the school year was over. His wife Paulette had a teaching job there. He lived in an

apartment near Northridge until his family arrived. Then they rented a town house and later purchased a home in the neighborhood near highway 45 and Appleton Avenue.

Learning a New Paradigm

An interesting thing about those early years was that I had to change the entire paradigm of my ministry. I would need to make a complete change in the pattern of things I needed to do and the way I needed to approach my work. God was still changing me, preparing me to assist Him in the wonderful acts He would perform here at Grace Church.

Before coming to Grace, I had a picture in my mind of a ministry with a large staff in a large church. It was a beautiful picture that I could put on paper and I did many times. In reality, all of that was just a picture. I had to change my way of doing things. In retrospect that was good! My old paradigm was stale. The new paradigm was excellent and it has been with me ever since.

There was so much in the way I had been doing things that had to change when I came to Grace. In a smaller church, the pastor does everything. In a large church you can't physically do everything, you must learn to delegate. There are more spokes in the wheel, and you begin to draw on them for all sorts of things.

A pastor who moves from a small church to a large church often needs to give up some things he thought were essential to doing ministry. In reality those "essential things" are just busy work that should be turned over to other people.

A second aspect of this is that when a pastor is in a small church doing everything by himself, there is no one to critique his work. When one is in a large parish with many people working together, they learn to build up trust to help each other improve.

Another aspect I soon learned about working in a large church is that not only would my decisions be scrutinized, so would those of my staff. As senior pastor I would be responsible for the whole thing. That was a major difference. It is one thing to mop up after my own messes and another thing to deal with some one else's mistakes.

It is very important for a staff leader to stay on

top of any problems that may surface. That's why I tell staff people that the best way to avoid problems is to keep me informed. It's the same advice Pastor Dietz had given me for that first year working with him. It was excellent advice.

I live by that today. I can deal with a situation if I know about it, but if something comes up as a surprise, it is much more difficult.

A Change of Lifestyle

While I was experiencing many changes in my work, our family life was changed as well, and in many ways. The summer I came here in 1988 was one of the hottest summers in history. The next winter was very cold and there was a lot of snow. My assumption had been that Milwaukee would not have as much snow as out in the state, and found that was not the case. I can still remember the pain of trying to clear our city sidewalks with my small snow blower.

Our move to the city of Milwaukee was an interesting transition, and living there turned out to be a good experience. We had the opportunity to be in the center of a lot of activity. Kirsten went to Grace School, Heidi was at Milwaukee Lutheran and Erick was at Concordia, so we were right in the middle of a lot of family activity and it was a good place to live. We enjoyed it. We were there from June of 1988 until 1990 when we moved to Menomonee Falls.

We had not planned to move to the Falls as soon as we did. One Sunday Jim Mayer said he wanted to take me to see the Bellin family. Their mother had just died and they wanted to sell her house. I told him I wasn't ready to do that yet, but he insisted, so Sharon and I went. Family members were there cleaning out the house and I had a conversation about their plans with the oldest son, Jerry.

He said, "We absolutely want you to have this house." His father had been a banker at the F&M Bank. He knew people there and said he was going to call them to tell them I'd be coming in to talk about financing it.

We ended up waiting through the winter. By spring they wanted to sell the house and had everything arranged for me. We went to the Associated Bank to see about the financing we'd

need. Dick Klug was the president of Associated and a personal friend of Jerry Bellin. Dick gave Mary Metzger, a member of Grace, the assignment to work with me.

We were now on our way to purchasing a home in Menomonee Falls. We really enjoyed the Bellin family. Jim and Ethel Mayer also helped a lot. Ethel arranged for an attorney from the firm where she worked to take care of the transactions.

Then there was the financial stress during the time when we were making payments on two homes, one in Milwaukee and one in Menomonee Falls. The next few months were a very trying time. Wally Baas was helping us to sell our house in Milwaukee. When it finally sold we soon began to realize how great it was to be living here in Menomonee Falls. It was not our plan to move that soon, but we are very grateful that we did.

Living here in the Falls has worked out just excellently. Many pastors feel that living close to their church is too intimidating, with too much going on. I feel just the opposite. I do not like to live far from the church. I want to be close.

In the Lord's Hands

Sharon and I have talked a number of times about our move to Menomonee Falls and my call to Grace Church. We believe there was divine guidance in everything that happened. So much has happened in our lives, especially starting in 1986, but we are now convinced that it was all a part of a big picture plan that God is carrying out.

His plan is what we were seeking. In retrospect, it all has fit together so well. There was the fact that I was prompted to come to Milwaukee and meet with the district president. There was the fact that we said yes, and nothing happened to us before we made the move. If the ELS people had known, I would have been kicked out as an ELS pastor and we would have been on the street with no home or income to support our family.

The move was still a financial strain, but through the entire transition, God always provided a way. During the time I was here and Sharon was in Madison, I was able to live with the Rev. Senkbeil's family. We took a sizable salary cut during that first year from what we had received in Madison,

because I was in an assisting capacity. My income was down, but our expenses were up. We had to pay for all the schooling at Lutheran High School and Concordia, but the Lord always provided.

When I made the decision to come to the Missouri Synod, we were not prepared financially for what we would face. I didn't think it was going to cost that much. It first hit home with me when we started think about purchasing that first house in Milwaukee. "How are we going to afford a house?" I thought we could somehow work out the monthly payments, but how could we come up with the down payment? The Lord had provided. This was in 1988 and I had just sold a bunch of toys. My toy money paid for the down payment on the house. It was just enough.

History repeated itself when it came time to purchase our Menomonee Falls house. We again needed a down payment, because the sale would be made before we could sell our Milwaukee home. But once again, the Lord provided a way.

A year earlier, in February 1989 my cousin, Kenny Granke, died of a heart attack. We had grown up together because his parents had died when he was young and my father took him into our family. I had helped Kenny to build up a collection of about 150 John Deere toys. Kenny had made provisions that I was to get the toys.

Here I was in need of a down payment. If I could just sell those toys for what they were worth the payment could be made, but doing that often takes time. It must have been the hand of the Lord at work again guiding events.

Out of the blue one day a man called me saying that he had heard that I was a toy collector and was wondering if I had any John Deere toys I'd be willing to sell. Yes, I certainly did! He wanted to see them that night. He and his son bought the entire collection for enough to cover the down payment on our Menomonee Falls home. Who would have thought that a hobby could have helped me that much?

So many things were changing in our lives as we came into 1990-91. We had made two moves. Erick was through high school and at Concordia. He had made the decision that college was not for him and wanted to get into hands-on work, so he joined the

custodial staff at Concordia. Then Heidi finished high school and was off to attend the University of Wisconsin in Green Bay. All of those things came at a time when my ministry was extremely busy. When I think of those early 1990 years I find it hard to believe how we made it through them.

Growing Pains at Grace

As our family changed, so did Grace. The parish was growing; it was strong, but facing growing pains. It was about 1990 that we first came to grips with the fact that as a large and expanding church, we would need to make some changes. When we began to look at what would be needed, two important areas stood out from the rest.

First we would need to make changes in our polity and in our governance. We were going to need to change the way that Grace was organized and operated. Until then, Grace had been organized in a way suitable for a small church. It would need to be reorganized to accommodate the needs of a large and growing congregation.

A large congregation, such as Grace must be well organized to keep everything running smoothly. It was then, in 1990 that we began to realize that we would need to move from a context of governance that puts everything into one pot, to a context that segregates things and allows the various ministries to manage their own affairs. We needed a plan that would give the leaders in each ministry the flexibility to respond to the needs of a growing congregation in an era when our community was also changing rapidly. It must be a plan that would open wide our church doors to all of God's children in this area who were in need of His love and of the wonderful acts He would perform for them.

Secondly we would need to change the way we were providing for our financial needs. The parish needed a stronger financial base, and a sound plan for future growth. I knew that Grace had struggled financially, but I was not aware of the extent of the financial problems the congregation faced.

Financial matters became a priority at a quarterly voters' meeting in early spring of 1989. The problem before the voters was that we were facing a deficit. We had some money invested a Lutheran

Brotherhood account at that time and we were wondering if we should withdraw that money to cover the deficit.

That Lutheran Brotherhood money, however, had been put aside for debt reduction, but was never used for that purpose. Still, the voters agreed to go ahead and withdraw the money and use it to cover our current deficit. That was not a wise financial move. Charlie Puls made that point when he warned, "That's all there is!" When that money is gone and there is another deficit there would be no reserves.

That meeting got me to thinking that if God has called me here, I know what I'm going to need to deal with. I'm going to be dealing with money issues. If we start using money set aside for other purposes to meet a current deficit, we'll be in trouble.

It was at that spring quarterly voters' meeting that I became fully aware of how critical it would be that we do something about the finances. We now had two new priorities: to change the way Grace is governed and to do something to improve our financial picture.

When I started here in 1988 with Pastor Dietz, those two things were not a high priority.

A Change in Polity

Those two new priorities would work hand in hand. Before we could plan for the future we would need to pay off some debts; and before we could find a way to pay off debts we would need to change our organizational structure and decision-making processes.

A plan to change our method of governing started to take shape in 1991. Making the change would not come easy. The decision to look into it started as the result of a very frustrating council meeting that was going nowhere. We had a church council that was made up of the chairmen of every board. This is typical of the organization used by most small congregations. It was good system for a smaller church because everyone is informed about all of the ministries. It can lead to problems, though, when some of the board chairmen feel the need to guard their own turf. It can lead to some very interesting, but not helpful, turf spats.

It was at a meeting like that, with some frustrating turf battles going on where I suggested that perhaps we needed to take a look at our church constitution. That was the beginning of what was known as the Laabs Committee. Dick Laabs was the chairman. Other committee members included Bob Pieters, Mary Metzger, and Kevin Keeler.

The committee met every Monday morning at 6:30 at Dick Laabs' office in Park Place and made the preparations. We made a thorough study of our constitutions, of model constitutions, and of constitutions from other congregations. We also took time to discuss and understand what it means to be a small church vs. a large church.

From these 6:30 a.m. meetings we came up with a new constitution that has been in place since

1991. The major difference was that we changed from a traditional Lutheran system of a strong voters' assembly and council to a corporate context with a Board of Directors elected by the voters.

Under our new constitution, the Board of Directors is empowered to manage more of the decision-making, rather than requiring approval of the voters' assembly, as the old constitution dictated. Meanwhile, all of the various boards would be free to focus their attention on their own specialized ministries of the church.

This change has made church management much less complicated for me as well as for the members of our boards. It has enabled Grace Lutheran Church to move ahead and do the ministry that needed to be done in the various areas.

*“Here is a trustworthy saying:
 ‘If anyone sets his heart
 on being an overseer
 he desires a noble task.’ ”*
-- I Timothy 3:1

Section IV

Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
 By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor

IV

Planning Our Future, 1991-97

*“David said to Solomon:
 ‘My son, I had it in my heart
 to build a house for the
 name of the Lord my God.’”*
-- I Chronicles 22:7

“If you build it, they will come.” How could anyone forget that memorable line in the movie *Field of Dreams*? It was about the Iowa farmer who dreamed of luring baseball heroes of the past to appear and play baseball if he built a baseball field on his farm.

Pastors and church leaders often hear those words in their dreams as well. Grace was growing and would need more and better space. If we didn’t have more space, Grace would no longer grow. But with finances being as tight as they were, we couldn’t help but wonder. If we build it, will they really come? Only the Lord would know.

Come what may, the matter of the church building and facilities did become an issue when we were not able to accommodate some handicapped people because we were not handicapped accessible. That issue became a priority soon after I was installed.

Several times after that we had initiatives to build, but were always stopped by something. That was very frustrating for me. In 1993 we were already beginning to look for possible building sites. There was a beautiful location at the corner of Pilgrim Road and County Line. It was tied up in an estate settlement and after more than 10 years had still not been developed. Back then, I also saw a “for sale” sign on 80 acres along County Highway Q that belonged to the Ken Dreger family. They

were asking \$1.3 million for it. That seemed like too much money, so I put it out of my mind, but eight years later we were buying that same property.

The bottom line was that finding a suitable site would be difficult and expensive. With that in mind, the leadership and I began looking seriously at upgrading our facilities at this location. We had plans drawn, but just could not get them off the ground. Apparently there was a bigger plan that we were yet to learn about.

Our Potential for Growth

When I came here in 1988 and evaluated the congregation it was obvious to me that Grace had tremendous potential to grow. Pastor Dietz drove me around the community and around the area, including Colgate and Hubertus to the west and northwest of Menomonee Falls. I also drove around with others who were in the Grace leadership at that time, including Dave Potter, Reinhard (Reinie) Fleming and Henry Spanley. These people really helped me to become acquainted in the area.

When I drove around those same areas years later, the revolution I saw taking place was unbelievable. I could recall what it looked like in 1988, driving in Germantown on Donges Bay Road and on into Colgate and Hubertus. Back then there was still a strong farming rural presence. You would see the influences of the farms. Within 10 to 15 years there were no farm fields left. It had all become subdivisions with homes and office buildings. You go out into Hubertus and Colgate and literally thousands of acres that were farm land had been turned into subdivisions.

When I was driving around with Pastor Dietz in 1988 I recall him saying that this will all be built up some day, and we really should be thinking of establishing a church presence out in the Colgate-

Hubertus area. He was absolutely right. We did experience a boom in the development of these areas. Much of the area we drove through at that time is now covered with homes and growing populations.

Start Another Church?

We did some research on establishing a church presence out in the Hubertus, Colgate and Richfield areas. We looked at some town halls and thought about starting some Bible studies. We had talked about starting vacation Bible school programs out in that area.

When we visited with the families in these outlying areas it was apparent that there was not much interest in our doing that. We had done extensive research discussing this with families that lived there. Our membership out there was telling us that they thought nothing of driving into Menomonee Falls for a loaf of bread, so why should they be concerned about driving into Grace Lutheran Church for services or activities. So we dropped the idea. Initially the idea had been that we might plant another church out there. There just was no interest in doing that when we considered it in the early 1990s.

We continued to do research on the area within a 12-mile radius of Menomonee Falls to get a better measure of our growth potential here. Every demographic study we could find in the mid-1990s indicated continued growth. Another evangelical church was doing research on this area at the same time. They started to worship in the YMCA and then they worshiped in a theater for a while, but were never able to get a start on what they had planned. They had spent thousands of dollars on demographic information. Their pastor gave me a copy. While they had spent the money, we were able to take advantage of it. I really appreciated that he was willing to share all of it with us.

We also had demographic information from the district office. It indicated that Germantown was really going to take off and there was some discussion at that time that the district wanted to plant another church in Germantown. I was upset about that and told them that we already were more of a regional church than a community church. We

were reaching out to a wide community. Faith Germantown was also there. While it was struggling it should be given a chance. I just made my feelings known at the district office and the idea was dropped.

It was apparent to us that this area was going to grow. Increasingly our area was showing the same signs of the growth patterns seen in the Hales Corners-Muskego area to the southwest. Our growth area is to the northwest, including the growth pockets in the Germantown, Hubertus, and Colgate area.

Connecting With the Community

During this time, in the early 1990s it became apparent to me that for Grace to be a player in this community, we would have to become a part of the community. Bob Harthun, a long-term member of Grace, came up with an excellent suggestion. I had mentioned to Bob that I felt we needed to play a greater part in the Menomonee Falls community. His suggestion: "Why don't you come to Rotary?"

So I joined the Rotary, and enjoyed the contacts. Bob Harthun was a very active Rotarian and helped me to go through the process of getting into the club. At that time the Rotary Club was very strong in the community, it had about 100 members. We met each Wednesday at Lohmann's Steak House on the Corner of Appleton Avenue and County Line Road. The people who are a part of Rotary are community leaders, including a number of retired people. It is just a great group of people. It is a good experience.

As time went along I became an active part of the club and all the activities that took place. I served on subcommittees and our major fund-raising events. I made a lot of contacts and those contacts were very beneficial when we had issues that related to the community. There was a time when the village was interested in purchasing some of our land at our present Kenwood Boulevard site. They wanted to establish a greater Lime Kiln Park presence. At that time I was negotiating with people at Village Hall that I knew through Rotary. Later these contacts would be very helpful as we were purchasing land and planning a new church.

One of the things we did to make ourselves

better known in the community was to become involved in the 1992 village centennial. We were very involved in that in the planning of religious events. Of course, that was when they kicked off the Falls Fest celebrations at the North Junior High School.

The centennial celebration was a major event that helped to endear Grace to the community. We took part in the planning for the events. As I remember, the parades were a big deal that year, and of course, the Memorial Day parade was a real big deal. In addition, we offered and supplied parking for centennial events.

Our Maker's Dozen also took part in the stage show at the Junior High Auditorium. We were involved in supporting the community. Many of the floats staged here in our parking lot. We had a semi truck and trailer that Jerry Sholz supplied to be used for our float in the parade. We really went all out for that. It was a fun, fun time and helped us to gain recognition as a part of the Menomonee Falls community.

Planning For Future Needs

The planning process that brought us to where we are today dates back to 1991-92. We started with a business management approach called "strategic planning" and actually came up with a strategic plan. That first plan was presented to the board in 1993. It was written by Bob Pieters, and was a rather extensive plan that went into all the facets of our ministry. One of the problems we faced was that a majority of the people on our boards had never done strategic planning. They had never been a part of that process and didn't understand what they needed to do or how important strategic planning would be to our future.

One of the steps in strategic planning is to develop goals and objectives. A part of that was for me to develop my own goals and objectives in light of the strategic plan. I shared those with the board of elders. Their reaction was quite amusing, "What in the world are we supposed to do with this?" They had never considered anything like this before; so we talked through it and I continued to refine my goals in light of our discussions. In fact I used those goals as a personal working document

until about 1995. That planning process helped us to realize how much we were being held back by the all of the long-term debt we were carrying. The cost of servicing this debt was between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year. We also realized that some of this debt had been hanging out there for years and had never been challenged. So we made the decision to begin looking into some group or organization that could help us to challenge the long-term debt.

We also were interested in building up our endowment fund. In addition, we had a number of maintenance needs that the trustees had defined and wanted to address.

Paying Off the Debt

This was new turf for me, to go to an outside source to get counsel for fund raising. We talked with a number of them before we came in contact with a group from Texas. They sent Jim Runyon to be their representative and work with us. Jim first came to meet with me to get all the background on our situation. Then, after working up an initial plan, he came here again to set forth a plan for our Board of Directors to consider.

At that point I was reluctant to go ahead because the total cost of this program. It represented a lot of money. It would take in the neighborhood of \$60,000 to \$70,000 to support the plan. At the same time, I realized that if you are going to make money you need to invest money.

The decision was made to present the plan to the Board of Directors and to the voters. An agreement was reached and the decision was made to employ the firm for a fund raising drive. A contract was signed and in 1993 we went ahead with what became known as the "Freedom to Serve" campaign. The goal was to raise \$800,000. We actually raised just under \$700,000, but we did retire the long-term debt and we did put money into the endowment fund. In addition, we had enough money left to do some needed repair and upgrading projects on our church facilities.

What is really important about this fundraising effort, in my mind, was that we could be successful at raising money. There were a number of people in our congregation who had been able to absolutely hamstring anything progressive that we wanted to

do. They did it each time a progressive idea was suggested by reminding us how, in their minds, things had been done in an incompetent manner in the past.

Too often in the past these same folks had said, “That’ll never work.” And too often in the past they had been right. Any time we wanted to approach something pro-actively, this was always thrown in our face. I recall that while we were working to get “Freedom to Serve” started the same group surfaced predicting that it would “never work.” However, the board was committed to it. Everyone was committed to it.

As we began the campaign and saw the success and the positive structure to the campaign, the folks who had had this negative attitude were soon reduced to a quiet grumble in the background and then disappeared entirely. That negative mood has never come back. It was a turning point for the ethos of the congregation, toward a more accepting, forward-looking attitude. The debt issue and mistakes of the past were resolved. Now Grace would be able to move ahead and do the things we needed to do.

The Key to Success

Was the success of “Freedom to Serve” our doing, or was it the good advice we got from Jim Runyon and his firm? I can’t help but feel that it was a part of the “wonderful works” of our Lord. It was He who sent His spirit to warm the hearts of our people, telling them that He expected bigger things of us here at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

We wished the campaign had raised more money. However, it was a campaign to retire debt, and campaigns to raise money just to retire debts are not very attractive. It was unlike a campaign to pave the driveway or make some other improvement our members could see and enjoy. It promised nothing that would make their church going experience easier or more enjoyable.

“Freedom to Serve” was the first time we had ever had a campaign purely to pay off debts. It was a situation where we were plowing new ground and didn’t know what to expect. As a result we were very happy with what did happen. It was just a

tremendous blessing for this congregation to be free of long-term debt for about nine years until May 1, 2002 when Grace purchased the 80 acres of land where we plan to build a new church.

Looking Beyond “Freedom to Serve”

As we were going into “Freedom to Serve,” and began to have hopes for success, we also knew that we had better do some more planning for the future that would go beyond paying the debt. A committee was appointed by the Board of Directors with the assignment to again look at our strategic long-range plan. We came up with the plan that was referred to as the 10-year plan.

That 10-year plan was basically to expand our facilities by renovating at our present campus, and to complete the work in nine years. This would take place as three, three-year campaigns within a 10-year period. The plan called for starting the first phase in 1994 to 1995. That did not happen, however, for a number of reasons.

We had come to realize that we would need more space. In addition, we had been challenged for our inadequate handicapped facilities. So we contacted Doug Stadelmann of Stadelmann Engineering. Doug did a lot of analysis for us. He concluded that we could renovate this facility with a 10-year plan in three phases, however that plan also had some costly problems and would still have left us with some limitations.

The first phase would have been to bring the facility up to handicapped requirements. We would have built in the space now used for the driveway. The front doors of the church would have been moved all the way to the back of the gym. We would have put elevators in that space for handicapped access. The addition also would have included bathrooms and required ramps, so the handicapped issue would have been resolved. A part of phase one would also have included expanding the narthex. The cost of phase one, as I recall, was estimated at about \$800,000.

Phase two would have been a program to create a greater capacity for seating in the sanctuary of the church. At that time we were talking about 500 to 600 people at worship. To expand to that level we would have had to move the altar from where it is

on the east to the south and then expand that wall to the south. Basically the entire new sanctuary would have been south of where it is now and the area where the pews are would have become the narthex.

It was a beautiful plan. In fact, I think it was a marvelous plan with one exception. Parking would soon become a problem if we added space and attendance at each service would grow. Parking was an issue that could have been solved if it were for the church alone. But we also had the school and if we were going to expand the school, it did become an issue. A parking structure could solve that, but also would be expensive.

Phase three was to renovate the school. Doug Stadelmann did a lot of analysis on the school building, and concluded that the best thing to do with the present building was to knock it down, rather than trying to renovate it to expand. The foundation was not adequate to carry more weight. In addition, the walls are constructed with so much area in windows that he concluded that it would not be wise to invest the money trying to expand the current structure. It would be less costly to take down the school and start over with a new structure.

A Difficult Time, Plans Stalled

We had a lot of support for that 10-year plan, but it still had problems, including high costs, parking space limitations and the need to completely rebuild the school. We also began to have some personnel issues that surfaced in 1994 that distracted us from the expansion plans. The Board of Directors had become bogged down with so many other issues that many of the ideas we had started were sidetracked by problems that needed to be addressed immediately. We actually had personnel problems to deal with until about 1997 and into 1998 before they could be solved.

Those years, 1994-98, were a very difficult time for me. It was a busy time. We were trying to do ministry. At the same time we were constantly having personnel issues surface. The Board of Directors had an incentive to do something about these problems because they saw what it was doing to the planning process.

At the same time we were bringing "Freedom to Serve" to a conclusion. The original plan was to add

another three-year fundraiser for further expansion right after "Freedom to Serve." However, when "Freedom to Serve" was coming to an end in 1996, we realized that we would not be able to get another campaign off the ground. With the personnel stresses exhausting much of the Board of Directors' time as well as my time and energy we just would not have been able to make it work.

Leaving the plan on hold and not starting another campaign in 1996 was a devastating mistake. It set us back in a number of ways. Perhaps the Lord didn't feel we were ready for it and allowed our problems to stand in the way.

In June of 1997, Pastor Stecker left us to accept a call at St. Martini in Milwaukee. At the same time we had some school personnel issues that were surfacing. There were some changes in leadership. There had been some stresses in the upper grades, where we had personnel problems.

Looking Back, Giving Thanks

By the end of 1997 all of these issues had been pretty well addressed. We were then ready to rebuild our staff and move on into the future. That was about the time Vicar Peterson first came to us. But that is another era we will cover later. First let's go back to 1990 to gain some perspective on the period just completed.

The Lord really blessed the ministry of Grace during that time, from 1990 through 1997. We saw the "Freedom to Serve" campaign, which was just a marvelous plus for the life of this church, and still is today. We saw strong statistical numbers that provided a picture of a church that is healthy and growing. At the same time many other churches of our size were seeing their numbers go down. We were able to maintain balanced budgets every year after being relieved of our debt servicing obligations.

The blessings came in many forms. It was much more than money and debt. There was just a great spirit among the people. They were willing to pitch in and do what was needed to be done. The church picnics were launched as a family event. The annual picnic continues to be a success. They have been just great!

A number of other projects were going well in

terms of ministry during that time. We launched some sermon series. What fun we had with them and with the positive feedback we got from our members. Our Bible study program was growing stronger. In general it was a great time.

A Time to Move Ahead

Grace had come a long way in the 65 years since it was organized in that storefront on Main Street in

1933. In the eight years, 1990-98, it grew stronger and became more active in the community. Debt problems were reduced and problems were being solved. The leadership had recognized that Grace would need more space and new facilities to carry out its mission in the Menomonee Falls area. But it would take more time to find the site and before ground could be broken for new facilities.

*“Now my son, the Lord be with you
and may you have success
and build the house of the Lord,
as He said you would.”*

-- I Chronicles 22: 11-12

Section IV
Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace
 By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor

V Making a New Start, 1997-2001

The summer of 1997 was a very busy time. Pastor Stecker had left in June to accept a call at St. Martini in Milwaukee. Pastor Rasmussen helped out with some preaching, but the rest was up to me. During that summer we were trying to decide where we could find a second pastor. One of the options we were made aware of was Roy Peterson who had decided to go into the ministry as a second career.

Roy was a member of St. John's at West Bend and had been in private business. He was a very energetic and ambitious person. While working full-time running his business, he also served as a part-time lay minister at St. John's and did part-time class work at Concordia University Milwaukee. After completing his degree work at Concordia, he sold his private business and enrolled in Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. By fall of 1997, he was completing his seminary education and was ready to begin his vicarage.

We had gotten to know the Peterson family. Some of our members learned to know him through activities at Milwaukee Lutheran High School and some through business contacts. While in the seminary Roy had been a guest speaker in our services, giving our members a chance to become acquainted with him.

Decisions Made

After some discussion, the Board of Directors and the Board of Elders agreed that Roy would serve his vicarage here. That would give us a year to consider our options. One of those options would be to call Roy Peterson after he had completed his vicarage.

Roy's vicarage was different than most because he had completed all of his classroom work. Most vicars go out for a year and then go back for another year of school. Roy would be ready to begin his

ministry as soon as he had completed his year as a vicar. That would give me the help I needed for another year, and would provide an option for us to consider after the year of vicarage was completed.

*“Preach the word;
 be prepared in season
 and out of season;
 correct, rebuke and encourage
 -- with great patience and
 careful instruction.”*
 -- II Timothy 4:2

Then in January of 1998 we began to consider our alternatives. A decision would need to be made. Would we convert Roy from a vicar to a full time pastor on our staff? That decision would need to be made by the voters. A call committee was formed. The committee did research on the alternatives and gathered reactions and comments from members and from the leaders of the congregation. Based on that research, the committee recommended that a call be sent to Roy Peterson to become an associate pastor at Grace.

The vote on the recommendation by the voters' assembly was unanimous. A call was sent and accepted. Pastor Peterson was then ordained at Grace in November of 1998 and he was installed as an associate pastor.

A New Team Looks Ahead

Pastor Peterson was a big help for me right from the start. He worked in evangelism, stewardship, and finance as well as doing a lot of visitation. He was an all around utility person in the parish

ministry and did many things very well. He is very capable. He was very helpful.

The years after Pastor Peterson arrived were an excellent time of ministry at Grace. Each of us has unique talents. What are strengths for me are weaknesses for him and what are strengths for him are weaknesses for me. Between the two of us, we make a whole. It's been fun working with Roy in the ministry. It has been an energized and a very successful period that we served together.

As I look back, I'm convinced that it was really the hand of God that brought him to us. We were not certain of what we were going to do. There was a lot of indecision. When he first came as a vicar our objective was to buy some time to be able to evaluate things. It soon became clear that this was a good match, so he was called.

Now with a new team in place we were ready to again begin looking ahead. We were growing and we had been using our facility to the maximum. We had committees meeting and talking about these things since the early 1990s. From early on the same question has been on the table. What are our options? I recall an early brainstorming session out at the home of Karen and George West, who lived out beyond Colgate. We sat in the living room. Everyone from the council and other leadership groups talked about dreams that they had for the ministry of Grace.

Learning about Real Estate

One of the challenges we faced at our present site is that we didn't have enough total space on our six acres to balance growth in the church, growth in the school and parking. How could we get more space? A number of suggestions came up. One of the more ambitious ideas was to buy all the land from our present site all the way up to Main Street and build a superstructure on Main Street. Then our present facilities could be used to expand our Christian day school. Another option was to buy residential properties adjacent to the church property to provide the space we would need to renovate and enlarge our church and school.

We began to investigate the possibility of buying more space around the six acres where our church and school are located. We soon learned some

interesting things about Menomonee Falls real estate, and how costly it would be to acquire more space in our neighborhood. The greater issue was that homes within two blocks of Grace never get into the real estate market. When they do sell, they are often turned over within families or sold without a public offering.

It was nearly impossible to get information on homes that might be sold. We soon realized that we would not be able to afford buying more space in this neighborhood. In addition, it would take an eternity to do it that way as we waited for property to become available. We considered buying the little white church again, but the owners had no interest selling. A house west of the white church came up for sale due to a death. It was sold in a few days, before we knew it was for sale.

If we don't have enough space here, what can we do? Would we need to move to a new site? Bob Pieters had first suggested that in the early 1990s. Moving to a new location was a foreign concept back then, but we did do some investigating. One of the sites we looked at back then was the 80 acres that we did eventually purchase. At that time I didn't consider it to be the best site in the world. Development had not yet taken place on County Highway Q. The \$1.3 million asking price seemed out of line with what we could afford. I just walked away from that thinking it was totally unrealistic.

By the late 1990s we again started to get serious about finding a new location where we could build to expand. It was clear from the study of our present facilities that we did not have enough land to expand where we were on the corner of Kenwood and Hayes. I remember getting into my car and saying, "I'm going to track down what has happened to those 80 acres." I drove by and saw that it was still being used for farm crops. So I drove to Menomonee Falls Village Hall to find information about the owners of that land. They gave me the names of Ken and Barb Dreger who lived near Fox Lake. When I called them they said yes, they were still thinking about selling the land, so we made an appointment to meet at their home.

As I drove onto their farmyard the first time we met, I remember seeing big signs they had prepared to put on the land offering it for sale. The

signs had just been painted. As we talked about it, they said they would be very interested in having the land sold to someone who would use it to build a church. The price at this point had risen to \$1.5 million. That price was not now as far out of the picture as it had a few years earlier. As I was leaving, I told Ken that I had noticed the signs and asked if he would put them in a shed for now. He agreed. "I won't put them up for a while so you can have a chance to wrestle with this," he said.

Problems and Delays

A number of other people representing Grace visited with the Dregers on a number of occasions over a period of time and we were making progress toward making a decision on the purchase. Then the discussions were delayed because Ken Dreger was diagnosed with terminal cancer. We knew that would detain things, and at the same time we felt it would be urgent to get this done and the Dreger family did too. They thought Ken was going to die. Ken had been diagnosed with cancer of the liver by a local doctor who would give him no hope. A clinic in Madison gave him the same diagnosis.

In February of 2001, Ken Dreger pulled the land from the market because they were making revisions in their estate plans. Their attorneys had advised them to hold off on any sale of the land. That was a big disappointment, although in looking back it seems as if the Lord wanted Grace to own that land, but not quite yet.

Ken was in the process of selling his farm equipment. He had a tractor that he advertised across the state. A farmer from the Mineral Point area was interested in the tractor, which was in excellent shape. The man asked Ken why he was selling everything. Ken told him the story, and it turns out that the man's father had recovered from the same type of cancer at the Rochester Clinic in Minnesota. A surgeon there had developed a method of removing this type of cancer.

As a result of this visit, Ken went to the Rochester Clinic, had the surgery and recovered, making it possible for Grace to restart the negotiations for the purchase of the land. That would not happen quickly. There were many details to be ironed out and decisions to be made. Above

all, we would need a sound financial plan and a resolution from the voting members to go ahead with the purchase.

The need was clear. Our facilities were crowded. Our site was too small to expand. Now we had a viable 80-acre solution at hand, but would we be able to buy it? To move ahead and buy the land would require a step of faith for our members. We did not want to get back into the long-term debt problems we faced in the early 1990s. The only way we could buy the land and move ahead with a building campaign would be to launch two or more capital campaigns to finance these investments in our future.

The first of those campaigns would begin in the fall of 2001. The theme, "*A Foundation of Faith, A Future Built on Grace*" expressed it well. Grace had been founded with a step of faith in the early 1930s. Over the years, the members of Grace have often faced the need to take steps of faith in order to continue to grow and carry out their mission here in Menomonee Falls. It was a step of faith when the small flock took on debt to move the little white church to Menomonee Falls in 1938. It took faith to buy the six acres for the church on Kenwood and Hayes. It took faith to build the church, and then the school and the Christian Activity Center. At each step doubts were overcome by faith and Grace was able to move ahead with its mission to serve the Lord here in Menomonee Falls.

A Step of Faith

Now the time had come to take another step of faith. As I looked back over the 13 years I had served as pastor of Grace, I had become convinced that God has big plans for His church here at Grace. When you consider how far Grace had come and how much Grace had grown it was clear that God is at work in this place. He helped Grace grow into a caring congregation of believers committed to bringing the message of Jesus Christ to our community. I also believed that God was not yet finished with His plans for Grace.

As with Freedom to Serve, we again got professional fund raising help to lay the groundwork and help to run our campaign. This time we employed INJOY Stewardship Services, an

organization founded by a pastor, Dr. John Maxwell, to provide a fundraising resource to pastors and local churches in America.

We presented the members of Grace with three goals: A \$1 million goal of thanksgiving; a \$1.4 million goal of celebration; and a \$1.8 million goal of abundance. But before we could get started, the “Foundation of Faith” campaign was faced with a very serious problem. The fundraising effort was scheduled to start in mid September 2001, and then on September 11, terrorists crashed hijacked air liners into the Trade Towers in New York, the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and a farm field in Pennsylvania. It was a time of much fear and economic uncertainty. How would that uncertainty influence our members and their willingness to make significant financial commitments over the next three uncertain years?

With this unexpected development we decided to delay the start until October 1. Even then, it would be a leap of faith for our members to make commitments without knowing what this event would mean for their jobs and for our economy. But perhaps it was no less a leap of faith than that faced by the founders of Grace who decided to start a church during the Depression of the 1930s.

It didn’t take long to get an answer. By November 10, 2001, we were able to come together for a Celebration Sunday and thank our God for the faith of our members, a “foundation of faith” that could carry Grace forward in its mission of preaching, teaching and ministry. The members of Grace had pledged \$1,073,000 to our three-year capital campaign. We could now move ahead with confidence with the purchase of the 80 acres.

Buying the Land

The time leading up to the purchase of the land was a stressful period for the leaders of Grace as well as for the Dreger family. Before buying the land we needed to be certain that the Village of Menomonee Falls would allow building a church on that site. At that time a part of the land was zoned residential, a part agricultural and a part commercial. The contacts I had made through working with community leaders in the Rotary Club were very helpful during this time when we were

purchasing land. We were in a delicate situation. On the one hand we wanted to purchase the land and the Dregers wanted to sell it to us. On the other hand we wanted to make certain that we could get the proper zoning so the land would work for us. Through my Rotary contacts I had learned to know people I could work with to move ahead with that whole process. There were many times when members of the Rotary family could provide assistance and answers I needed to move forward on community relations activities for Grace.

Our attorney John Niebler found that it would be to our advantage to have the entire property zoned agriculture, because agricultural zoning includes a provision for institutional buildings. You can build a church or a school on agricultural land, but you first need to get a provisional use permit for a particular piece of land. So we went through the process with the planning commission to rezone the entire 80 acres agricultural to make it all consistent.

*“Keep your head in all situations,
endure hardship,
do the work of an evangelist,
discharge all duties
of your ministry”*

-- II Timothy 4:5

So those were busy days, but finally on May 1, 2002 we purchased the land from the Dregers. I remember the day we made the purchase. We had to go to Waukesha to sign all the papers. Then we had to go to attorney John Niebler’s office and sign more papers and finally, we owned the property and now were faced with the challenge of executing a plan to build a church on that land and use it to carry out our mission for the Lord here in Menomonee Falls.

The Dregers had told us that they had hoped that their land would eventually become a site for a church. Ken died in late summer 2004, but he lived long enough to complete the sale of his land to our congregation and to be assured the plans to build a church on his land were under way. Much planning and work was still to be done.

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

VI

Looking Ahead to Growth and Change

*“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.”*
-- Matthew 28:19

The growth and changes taking place in our membership and community had been a factor in deciding to buy 80 acres of land. Now it would be a factor in the way we should be shaping our ministries and the kind of facilities we would be planning to build. The changes we had been anticipating for more than a decade were now taking place. It would be important to understand all that was happening around us and to pray that we would know how God would want us to respond.

A Changing, Growing Membership

Over the first 16 years that I served at Grace we saw a tremendous shift in the makeup of our membership. When I first came to Grace, our membership was heavily weighted toward the 50 plus crowd. As those years passed we saw a shift and by 2002-04 we had much younger membership.

In June 2004 we did an analysis of our membership by age groups. At that time about 32 percent of Grace members were under 20 years old, and 56 percent were under 40. Grace had a higher percentage of young people than is found in the U.S. or Menomonee Falls populations. With such a

high percentage of young families we had more evidence for the potential for growth in our church and our school. Our Lord had blessed us with a time and place, with a great opportunity to reach out with His message of salvation.

New members were being attracted to Grace because of the diversity of what we were offering. We were providing more opportunities to worship and more styles of worship than many churches in our area. Our Christian day school was also providing what many young families wanted for their children. We were not doing a lot of high-level publicity, but word was getting out. People were attracted to what they were hearing about Grace and we saw a tremendous increase in people who were interested in joining Grace.

Some of these new members had no background in the church. Some had been church members years ago, but were turned off by the church for whatever reason. We had strong interest in our new member “Discovering Grace” classes. This trend has added to our membership, and also brought in people with a different set of life experiences than we had in the past.

We are serving more and more people who do not come from Lutheran German roots. More of them have a heterogeneous background and settings in life. This definitely has an impact on the congregation. It changes the ethos of a congregation. That’s a struggle and can cause tensions among members. Long-time members react to situations in the “way it has always been.”

I’m talking now about non-doctrinal areas. We have some unique customs; such as potlucks or the way we celebrate the Reformation. If new members have no history with that we need to pause and do some teaching before we can go on. If you look at Grace 20 years ago and you look at Grace today,

you see two different congregations. Some people struggle with that, but this is doing mission work and when you do mission work you don't reach just Germans and Lutherans.

It is interesting to note that people are different today, they are so individual and they look at everything from such an individual perspective rather than a more corporate perspective. "What's in it for me?" "What am I going to get out of this?" These attitudes add an interesting aspect of our work.

A Growing Changing Community

We knew we would need to prepare for more changes in our membership because of what we saw happening in Menomonee Falls and the surrounding communities. More people were moving from the city to the west and the northwest and Menomonee Falls. The "Old Falls" area was becoming a stopping place as people looked to move even further west, while Menomonee Falls was becoming a center for business and shopping.

At the same time, there were people who wanted to stay connected to the metro area. They were building and buying homes on the south side of Menomonee Falls. Many of these were high-end homes in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 range, which served as the permanent residence for people with businesses or jobs in Milwaukee. They want to stay connected to the metro area but want to live out of the city.

We also were seeing families move to the "township" areas. We already had members who were living all the way west of highway 83, so it would not be surprising to see new members coming from that area. In addition, the Germantown area and south end of Washington County was exploding with new homes and residential development.

Many of the new members coming to our "Discovering Grace" classes were coming from Germantown. The potential for membership could come from a wide area. If you were to put Grace at the center of a circle covering the homes of our members it would have a radius of about 12 miles. Within that circle both the population and business activity were growing by leaps and bounds. We

were being blessed with so many of those people coming to be a part of our church. The message was clear. God was telling us that we had a mission to be ready to serve them.

Menomonee Falls itself was a very well defined community. As we looked at the trends in the community, property values were rising rapidly, but to a great extent the established central Falls area had mainly starter or second homes. But if you look at the pattern, Menomonee Falls in many ways was becoming a stepping-stone to go on to the west and to the north. The whole corridor along highway 83 and all the growth out there, and then in the Merton and Sussex area, there was unbelievable growth.

So as I looked at the community as a whole, I felt that Menomonee Falls itself was going to become more urban in terms of its ethos, and the trend was going to be for people to take that step beyond Menomonee Falls out into the next corridor. At the same time the Falls was becoming a strong business and service center for this growing suburban area. There is a major hospital here, along with clinics, doctors and nursing homes. All of this makes it an ideal spot for a large church ministry to be located.

Trends in Churches

As we looked ahead we had to consider what kind of churches were attracting this new generation of members. There's been a trend to mega-churches, such as Willow Creek in the Chicago area, and Elmbrook in this area. As you go around the country, you'll see mega-churches everywhere. It is evident in suburban Milwaukee that more people have come to believe a large church is a good thing. That's why people are willing to drive a good distance to worship at Grace and think nothing of it. We have members who built homes west of highway 83, but they think nothing of driving here to go to church. These people had become familiar with belonging to a large church. This put Grace in an opportune situation to continue with a large church ministry.

I first became aware of this trend to larger churches in the early 1980s when I was still with the ELS. The synod sent me to take part in a church planning study with the AAL in Appleton. There

were people there who had an accurate vision of the trends that were already starting to develop. I can see it in what has happened in our own area. They were absolutely right. The large churches are growing, and the small churches seem to survive with a closely-knit group of members who prefer small church life. Churches that are in the middle are having the most problems. They are not large and not small. They can't afford to do big things and yet they are too big to do small things.

Grace had been able to weather that storm. It started as a small church. It was growing rapidly when it moved into a new church building in 1959 and started a day school in 1963. It soon became one of the larger Lutheran churches in the area. There were problems associated with that growth. Grace often faced a dollar crunch, but with the success of the "Freedom To Serve" and "Foundation Of Faith, A Future Built On Grace" campaigns we were now at a point where we were well established as a large church and could look forward to more growth as a large church ministry.

Another major trend we saw in church life is that people were looking for "options" in the context of their church. We went through a struggle with that in the 1990s. We found out that we had members who held either formal or informal memberships in three churches. They would come to Grace because we had a school, they would go to another church because they liked the family ministry and perhaps another church where they liked the music ministry. We tackled that in 1993 and 1994 because I felt these people were really abusing us and abusing our school. Many of those people disappeared.

A New Generation

While our membership was growing, we also were seeing a generational shift. As I reflect on the people here when I first came to Grace, I remember them as a very strong Germanic, conservative minded group of people. Most of them had grown up in Lutheran families and were confirmed in Lutheran churches. But as time went on we saw a shift as people from other backgrounds, other age groups and generations were incorporated into the membership of Grace. This change required that we also make changes in our ministries and programs

to serve the interests and needs of these new members.

Worship has been a part of that. Many members were coming to Grace because we had added a selection of worship formats, including a contemporary format, a blended format and a more traditional format. People were comfortable here at Grace because of the variety we provided. We had families where one spouse likes traditional and the other likes contemporary services. They found a home at Grace. Many of these families attended the 9:30 service in which the style of worship is rotated from Sunday to Sunday.

We were not radical in our contemporary worship. There are many Missouri Synod Lutheran churches that use a much more radical form of contemporary worship than we do here at Grace. We were quite conventional in terms of our contemporary services. But people liked the differences in music and the variety in the services. As we planned to move on to our new site I was expecting that we would need to continue the trend toward a more contemporary free context of worship. It is a form that is here to stay.

I can remember visiting with a family that had been members of Grace for some years and moved to another state. There were four churches in their new area, but all offered the same liturgy. They are struggling trying to find a happy church home. In addition, the membership of the four churches was made up mainly of a senior crowd.

One of the blessings at Grace is that we have multiple service times. People really appreciate having Thursday evening, Saturday evening and three Sunday services. The downside of having multiple worship opportunities is that it has hurt the momentum of our Bible study program. It is not possible for the pastors to be involved in worship at 9:30 Sunday morning and lead a Bible class as well.

Our plan was to focus on the Bible study problem again once we got to the new church. That would give us a much larger space and should be able to accommodate more people at a given service. It also would mean that we could open an hour for Sunday morning Bible Study, which I believe is very important for us here in our congregation at Grace Lutheran Church.

A Changing Culture

Changes taking place in our culture have been a challenge. I have thought a lot about the negative influences of culture on our ministries and our worship. The culture influences the way people dress and the way people act. In fact a lot of the dress today is inappropriate for a church setting. Some of the subcultures touched us. I think of situations where young people became involved in some of negative behaviors that are so prevalent in society—alcohol, drugs, and the sexual revolution. We were not immune to these issues.

As I got older and reflected on this, I became less tolerant. It was time for the church to speak out on these issues, and it was going to have to start in our Christian day school. It seemed as if we were just going along with things and didn't realize that we were being influenced by society in ways that aren't necessarily positive.

I was thinking of becoming an advocate for uniforms in our day school. One of the places where you see the most distinct influences of culture is in the dress of our kids. You can take away that influence of culture if you have uniforms. Many Christian schools were doing it, and I saw some public schools doing it to eliminate that cultural influence.

As a Christian school we need to be looking at ways that we impose our will to a greater extent rather than letting parents impose their will. The school does not belong to the parents, the school is a ministry of the church, and should be driven by the church.

My feeling is that we must establish a very strong program plan and vision for the school. If someone doesn't like it, that's okay, because there will be two more who will like it. In this age when people are searching for structure and searching for strong biblical identity we need to be working on that. Our school board was also doing some strategic planning. We discussed a lot of this with the board and with our staff. Culture and cultural change was an area of concern we needed to address.

It was hard to comprehend all the changes that were taking place. A prime example was in Iraq in 2004 when we had American soldiers who thought

nothing of beating up on Iraqi prisoners. We say "how horrible," but we have people in America who have absolutely no respect for anyone. We were losing any concept of respect or concept of authority. It concerned me to think of these soldiers wearing the uniform that makes me proud, but inside that uniform you have cultural illiterates.

I was shocked that this happened, but I was not surprised at it. That is the way our society had become. Our kids were being bombarded with the whole rock and roll syndrome. In the 1960s and 70s there was this initiation of music as a vehicle to move culture and we had the sitcom television phenomenon and they did their job well. Today we have the rappers and they have no respect for anyone. We have lost that concept of respect and that concerns me a lot. That free for all, anarchistic attitude came from the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 70s.

It was encouraging to hear that some were predicting a backlash to these cultural changes. There was more talk about values and the role of religion in our society. It was highlighted as a factor in the 2004 presidential election. I remained skeptical of all that. Some of the trends in the movies and television were being challenged, although in terms of the society as a whole, I was not seeing it at all.

Our churches need to be able to face up to these challenges. The attitudes of people, including our members and our children, are influenced by what is going on in the world. So cultural change is one of those things we fight against all the time. It's very challenging because we often have to deal with issues we are not trained to address.

What Next, And When?

So now we had 80 acres with a changing and growing membership. What next? People were soon wondering what we were going to do with that land. How soon would we be building a new church and school? Obviously it could not be soon. The purchase price of the land was \$1.5 million. We had capital fund pledges for over a \$1 million, but the money was not yet in the bank. The land purchase was financed with two mortgage loans, one from the Dregers and one from the Lutheran

Church Extension Fund. Interest and principle payments on these loans were paid with contributions to the “Foundation of Faith” campaign. In addition, campaign funds were needed to pay campaign expenses and pay off debts Grace still owed to the Lutheran High School Association. The bottom line was that after all “Foundation of Faith” pledges had been paid, we would still owe nearly \$1 million on the land we had purchased to build a new church.

In the spring of 2003, after the first 15 months of the “Foundation of Faith” campaign our leaders were optimistic. In less than half of the three years the campaign had collected \$641,000—about 60 percent of the total pledged. The facilities committee was already at work looking at potential building plans. Town hall meetings were being organized where members could get information and express their views on our building plans. The building committee was working on the assumption that groundbreaking could take place in two years, in the spring or summer of 2005.

In early 2004, it was clear that “Foundation of Faith” contributions would exceed both the Goal of Thanksgiving and the original amounts pledged. The facilities committee had continued to lay the groundwork for a building plan. During March we went through a needs analysis process. There were 38 groups and well over 100 people taking part to project what their needs would be in a new facility. The information gathered was then sent to an architect, Excel Engineering, Inc., to draw up a site plan and floor plan.

We went through a very exhaustive needs analysis, going to every corner of the church to get input from all of the organizations and various people. That provided direction on what we would really need in facilities at the new site. Our architect took all of that data and processed it and that became a part of the basic concept for the new building. The wish lists were long, and when they were all added up we were looking at a very big project, costing perhaps \$10 million to completely build everything we wanted.

The initial idea was to break the project down into two phases beginning with the church first and then when more funds were available build the

school and gymnasium. A special voters’ meeting was held June 1, 2004 at which the plan was presented and discussed. From views expressed at and after that meeting, it was clear that the congregation would prefer to build both a church and a school at the same time. That plan also had some financial advantages. We could sell our old church for \$2 million to \$3 million to help finance building at the new site. By moving all at once we also would save the cost of paying upkeep and operational costs on our old facilities.

Building to Reach Out

After the June voters’ meeting, the building committee developed a new plan to avoid a split campus and allow moving both church and school at the same time. Preliminary building sketches and budgets were presented to the congregation at informal town hall meetings during the week of September 12, 2004. The same information was presented at special meeting of the Voters’ Assembly on September 19. At those meetings a resolution was presented and approved to proceed with a building plan not to exceed a cost of \$9.5 million. This plan would have included:

- A small church/chapel, similar to our current church with seating for about 200.
- A worship center with seating for no less than 500. This center would be designed to become a gathering area when a larger church could be built.
- A school with facilities for no less than 250 students.
- A gymnasium that could be used by both church and school.
- Space required for offices, youth activities, a kitchen, nursery, bathrooms and storage.

The resolution was approved by a wide majority of those voting. There was a good feeling that Grace was ready to move ahead with the physical plant needed to grow and carry out a bigger mission in this area. Whatever the plan, we would definitely need another successful capital campaign to move the project ahead. Grace had completed two successful three-year capital campaigns since the early 1990s. Could they do it again?

The first was a campaign to reduce debt and to build up our endowment fund called our “Freedom

to Serve” campaign. It was a very successful campaign. The campaign produced a little less than our \$1 million goal, but it was our first venture into something like this in the history of the church. It gave our leaders confidence that the members of Grace were willing and able to commit large amounts of capital for the work of their church.

Our second campaign “Foundation of Faith, A Future Built on Grace” was to retire some Lutheran High School Association debt and then to address the land we had purchased on County Highway Q. Again it was a successful campaign. For the first time in the history of Grace we exceeded \$1 million of contributions to one campaign.

By early May 2004 we had selected a campaign consultant for our third campaign planned to run from October to December. We chose a local firm, the James Company, located in metro Milwaukee to guide our efforts. They are a smaller firm than some we had used in the past, but they are very aggressive and very knowledgeable. They had raised some big funds and would cost less for the campaign because they are local.

We saw this as a very important campaign. It included a three-year commitment to the building fund and a one-year commitment for current giving. Our goals were very ambitious, \$3 million for the building fund and a 5 percent increase in current giving. To reach that goal, our members would need to double their level of giving over the next three years. We were hopeful because never before did we have such a marvelous incentive to offer our members as a new church and a new school.

We chose “Building to Reach Out” as the theme for our Stewardship Appeal. Building new structures was an important part of our plans, but not the only part. Another part is constantly striving to build up the individual faith journeys of all of our

members and friends that we serve. This happens when we focus on God’s Word, the Bible and on the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Here is where we find Jesus, God’s Son!

To truly succeed, “Building to Reach Out” would need to be much more than being able to point with pride to a new church and school up the hill on 80 acres of land. In my letter to the congregation about the campaign I stressed that Grace is building to REACH OUT to share the “Good News” of Jesus and what He has done so that people, the world over, may come to know Him as their personal Savior!

The purpose of our campaign and our plans for a new campus and new buildings was to better serve our growing membership and our growing communities. It could put us in a position for an expanding ministry for years to come. We believe that the Lord has blessed our ministry and placed us where wonderful things can happen in the future.

As that campaign was being launched, our hope was to break ground in the spring of 2005 and begin construction. We then would be able to have a dedication of our new facilities sometime in 2006. There was much enthusiasm for our plans, but the question of what we could build and how soon would depend upon the outcome of the campaign.

By December 2004, we were pleased with the generous commitments being made by the members of Grace. Clearly our members were ready and willing to reach out and support the missions of our church. But it was also clear that we would not reach our \$3 million goal and it would be necessary to take a fresh look at our plans and strategies. It would be early 2005 before we could analyze the results and move ahead. We were yet to learn the size of the challenges the Lord would have for us.

*“And surely I am with you always
to the very end of the age.”*

-- Matthew 28:20

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

VII

Reaching Out: Ministry, Manna, Missions

Grace was growing in many ways from the time we purchased land until late 2004 when our members were making their financial commitments to our “Building to Reach Out” campaign. While much of the focus had been on the “building” with bricks and mortar Grace was already “building” in other ways—by building ministries.

The years from 2002 to 2004 were a time when more Americans were asking, “Where is God when all this is happening?” They started asking on September 11, 2001 when terrorists crashed hijacked airliners into the Twin Trade Towers in New York, into the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and a farm field in Pennsylvania killing over 3,000 Americans in one day!

Those questions continued as President Bush declared war on terrorism and more Americans were killed fighting terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq. Then the day after Christmas 2004 the world was horrified when an earthquake in the south Pacific started a huge tidal wave called a “tsunami” that swept across Southeast Asia. In the days that followed, death toll estimates continued to climb to between 200,000 and 300,000 men, women and children. Hundreds of thousands more were injured and left homeless.

Where was God when all of this was happening?
Does God care?

The Purpose of Ministry

All of this came to mind as I reflect back on our ministries at Grace and how they have changed and grown over the years. We need to keep in mind that we are in a world that is stained by sin. Anything can happen in this world. God is not up in heaven operating a huge computer that can send a tidal wave here and a tornado there. As we look through the pages of history we see a world that is touched

by sin, death and Satan. It is a world with the potential for a lot of bad things to happen.

So how does God deal with a sinful world? How does He respond when bad things happen in our lives, or when disasters kill thousands somewhere else in the world? I would suggest to you that God responds sometimes very directly, even with miracles. But generally He responds through people—through ministry. He responds through His people ministering to others, through people who care and reach out to others.

*“I tell you the truth,
whatever you did for one of the
least of these brothers of mine,
you did for me.”*

-- Matthew 25:45

Our ministry started with the ministry of Jesus who came to earth to heal, to confront sin and the devil and finally to sacrifice all to save us from our sins. Our ministry is to follow in His footsteps, to share God’s love with those around us and with the entire world.

The model for ministry apart from the individual is the local congregation. The local congregation is that unit that God sets forth where His people with a common faith and common purpose come together to worship, to serve Christ by serving people. That’s the reason why it is so important for a congregation to know what it is doing and where it is going.

It was in the early 1990s that Grace established its first mission statement that clearly spells out its objectives. They were to reach out to others with the Gospel, with Christian education and with care ministries. Those objectives were stated as follows:

 -- **Proclaim** the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the
 church and unchurched in this community and
 beyond;

-- **Teach** individuals of all ages the Biblical and
 Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament;

-- **Minister** to the physical and spiritual needs of
 its members and others who come within its care.

These objectives have been reprinted every week
 in our service folders. They have been our guide in
 meetings held by our boards and various
 committees. As I have looked back over the history
 of Grace I see a strong focus on missions and on
 needs. That focus has also been reflected in how
 our ministries have grown.

The Manna Program

The Grace Manna Program provides a way for
 people who care to reach out to people in need in a
 very direct and meaningful way.

God provided bread from heaven to the children
 of Israel when they were wandering in the wilder-
 ness. They called it “manna.” At Grace, the word
 “manna” is also the food and other necessities that
 God provides through the caring ministry of His
 people.

The Manna Program at Grace dates back to the
 mid-1970s when members of the Grace Guild
 Mission Evangelism circle suggested that Grace
 hold a “Manna Sunday” to collect non-perishable
 food items that could be delivered to food pantries
 of inner city congregations. The idea of a “Manna
 Sunday” caught on quickly, and within a year it
 became a weekly tradition. The idea originated
 with Women’s Guild members Ruth Cooper and
 Dorothy Spanley. Henry Spanley and many other
 volunteers since then have taken part to help collect
 food items and deliver them to inner city churches.

By the time I came to Grace the Manna Program
 was a separate ministry, no longer connected to the
 Women’s Guild or any other group. The program
 had started just before Pastor Fahl retired as senior
 pastor and when Pastor Zehnder was his associate.

When Pastor Dietz took over, he encouraged the
 program and helped it to grow.

When I came to Grace in 1988, the Manna
 Program had two purposes. One was to gather
 money to be shared with inner city people or inner
 city outreach programs. The other was to gather and
 distribute non-perishable food through inner city
 programs or to anyone in need who may come to
 our attention. Back then Henry Spanley and I did
 much of the work. Many others helped and
 provided assistance, including Roland Hermann,
 Bud Schuettpehl, and Vern Ziegler. But on an on-
 going basis, it was Henry and I who managed the
 program. The program continued on that basis for a
 number of years.

Providing Christmas

An important new development for the Manna
 Program came in the late 1990s when my daughter
 Kirsten was working at Penfield Community
 Children’s Center on 27th and Wisconsin Avenue in
 downtown Milwaukee. She called me one day and
 said, “Dad, I have found out that there are some
 families here at Penfield who will have absolutely
 no Christmas. What can we do about it?” So we
 used Manna funds. Sharon Laabs, Kirsten and I did
 some shopping. We were able to supply Christmas
 for three families. The gifts included some needed
 items as well as some Christmas candy, ornaments
 and toys.

This Christmas gift idea really caught on. It has
 now grown to a point where we provide a Christmas
 for about 10 families every year. The Christmas
 includes a present for every person. All the children
 receive a toy and an item of need, usually clothing.
 This has been a marvelous program. Then we
 establish a relationship with these people and find
 out more about what other needs they may have.

As this program caught on some of our Grace
 families would adopt a family for Christmas. The
 donor family is given a list of all family members,
 including their ages and sizes, along with their
 needs and wants. Of course the children often had
 more wants while the adults usually listed more
 needs. The donor family then shops and pays for the

gifts for the entire “recipient” family. Both families are equally blessed by this program.

We were able to find needy families through the Penfield Center as well as the SOS Center. The SOS Center is a ministry that reaches out to the community to provide basic education. SOS volunteers assist children with their homework. They provide help to adults who need to learn English as a second language. The SOS Center also has a vacation Bible school. The Missouri Synod provides the primary support for the program. Our Deaconess Marlene Anderson served as a member of the SOS Board of Directors.

These two organizations, the Penfield Center and SOS Center, have helped to identify and screen the families we have helped. These organizations are well qualified to determine where there is a real need. We need their help because sometimes we end up in some very difficult neighborhoods, delivering to the inner city

Help For Households

In early 2002 it occurred to me that if we could address food and money we could also provide for other needs. Often I had seen furniture and appliances sitting at the curb waiting to be taken to a landfill. Often people called me asking if anyone needed things they had and no longer needed. These were all items someone else needed and could use. On Sunday, January 27, 2002, on our “Care Sunday” I threw down the gauntlet. “Let’s do something about this.” It caught on like wildfire.

We organized a manna committee that included Harvey and Arlene Dassow, Jim and Marlene Gauger, Jan Brooks, and Deb Clissa. All of them became actively involved in this ministry. Many other volunteers have helped with picking up donations, providing storage space and distributing items to families. It was just amazing how fast these items came in and then were taken to where they were needed. Donations included couches, chairs, lamps, stoves, refrigerators, washers, dryers, tables, chairs, dishes, cupboards, television sets and beds. It seemed as if we could never get enough beds. The

people in this ministry were picking up and delivering every week.

It was amazing to me to see what people throw away. Donations included a year old washer and dryer, because it wasn’t exactly what someone wanted, and a refrigerator because it is the wrong color. Through our program some needy families got appliances that were nearly new. We had a couch come in that didn’t fit the color scheme in the redecorated house. We took it to a family in the inner city with the tags still on it.

There have been other sources for second hand clothing, furniture and appliances that we have been able to get and distribute. The Dassows found a dry cleaning service that would provide clothing. Clothing and other items such as bedding and pillows that were not picked up after 12 months were donated to our program.

Meanwhile, we continued to collect donated money and non-perishable food items to share with needy families. This effort got a boost when one of our members, Debbie Davis, came up with the “Just One” concept. When you are shopping for groceries, think of “Just One,” and add one item to your basket for manna. A “Just One” cart was placed in the back of the church with a “Just One” sign on it as a weekly reminder to our members. That really helped to expand our food donations.

Our Mission Outreach

The tradition in our churches has been for the mission work to be handled by the synod. Congregations are members of a synod that handles the educational programs, the training of church workers and the mission outreach. This is the traditional paradigm that has been around for years. But the fact of the matter is it no longer works.

The traditional approach to missions doesn’t work because our churches have unified budgets. Mission work becomes a percentage of the dollars contributed. Individual members do not feel as if they are a part of it, whereas, if you have a mission project that’s personal, people will really give to it. That’s just the way it is today.

That mission project doesn't necessarily need to be a home mission project. It can be a world mission project, but if the personal appeal is there it means everything. So in the mid-to-late 1990s we started to identify personal mission opportunities. Probably the longest running one was our work in Idaho. Year after year we sent a couple of carloads of Grace members to Idaho where they did mission work and ran vacation Bible schools. These trips got started through our contacts with Pastor Gerald Reinke who had grown up in Idaho and returned there to do mission work. Many members of Grace remember Pastor Reinke as the 40-year-old potato farmer from Idaho who had decided to make a career change and study for full-time church work. He served as a lay minister at Grace while taking classes at Concordia.

Grace members who have gone to Idaho have helped Pastor Reinke with a mission program called a "Cross Country Ministry." This type of ministry is necessary because there is no strong congregational structure in Idaho. Christians are scattered on farms and in small towns. Our members go there to run Vacation Bible Schools, which provide an opportunity for the children in these communities to have Christian education.

Earlier, a former teacher from our school, Scott Benjamin, went to Russia to help a mission society there. He used some volunteers, including some members of Grace who spent some time with him in Russia. He did a great job there in the St. Petersburg area.

Grace also has sent people to China and South America. Usually it is for a week or two. This is all a part of a shift from the old paradigm. Even our Missouri Synod is starting to think of ways to use volunteers for short-term mission service. That's a good thing because it opens up avenues for people to serve and bring back their story. It helps to establish Christian contacts that go across continents. It is just a great, great way to do mission work. So this has been marvelous for us.

In June 2004, Grace sent a team of 10 members to Juarez, Mexico to build a house for a needy family there. This work has a lot of appeal. It's people doing hands-on missions. This approach is

something I think we will continue for a long time. It is a way for our members to do things that are really important. At the same time they can feel that they are a part of the greater Christian outreach that goes beyond the local community.

This type of mission outreach programming is here to stay and I think it will be very important to the health and life of the church. As we look to the future, our plans will continue to include mission projects that will place people in various ministries in our country, South America, Central America and Mexico. In 2004 we were making plans for a 2005 trip to Guatemala as well as a return to Mexico and Idaho.

So in our small way, we are influencing the world with mission work and Christian care. It is a world that is dying in sin and in need of a Christian influence, even though that influence may be building a house. It is a way for Christians to bring God's love to people in need. It is an opportunity to talk with people and that is very, very important.

The people who go on these trips make a significant sacrifice in time and money. They are rewarded with a memorable experience. Al Piepenbrink put in a great deal of effort to organize these trips and the fundraisers to help cover transportation costs. In the meantime, many other members of Grace who don't go also helped by supporting the mission trip fundraisers. These included a Scrip program, fish fries, McDonald's nights, and rummage sales. With all of these, the focus is on the support of Grace mission efforts.

Reaching Out To Our Community

An important part of "reaching out" has included reaching out to our community. When the founders of Grace decided to start a new church here in the early 1930s there was no community welcome mat waiting for them. Instead they faced community opposition. Seventy years later that situation had changed dramatically. The relationship between Grace and our community has become a two-way street, with welcome mats on both ends. Grace has become a positive force in Menomonee Falls, while our contacts with the community and its leaders have helped Grace to carry out its plans and

missions. Building and maintaining these ties also took time and effort.

My part in that effort started when I joined the Rotary club in the early 1990s. In the early years I served on a number of committees, but never in leadership. Later I took some of that responsibility as well. Rotary Club leaders serve a four-year term. Starting in July 2001, I became Vice President for one year. In 2002-03, I served as President Elect and in 2003-04 as President. The final year, 2004-05, I remained on the board as Past President. I was glad to see my year as president come to an end in June 2004. It was a very busy year with all the Rotary activities. At the same time, there were so many things going on here at Grace. When I went into this I thought my year as President, 2003-04, would be a fairly good year. Well it turns out it was one of the busiest years in the parish and with the Rotary responsibility it was really hectic.

Once that year was over I had no regrets. It was worth the effort. I believe that the Rotary International is a marvelous organization. It is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian service and encourages high ethical standards in all vocations. It helps to build goodwill and peace in the world. The organization reports it has about 1.2 million Rotarians who belong to more than 31,000 Rotary clubs located in 166 countries. They have an important worldwide impact.

The people who are a part of the Menomonee Falls Rotary include community leaders along with a number of retired people. It is just a great group of people. It has been a good experience.

Personally I treasure my experience with Rotary and I intend to remain a Rotarian for years to come. Involvement in the community in this way is also very helpful for a church. There are a number of situations, sometimes small and subtle where the contacts I've made at Rotary have been very helpful for our parish.

Reaching Out With Parades

Community parades are an important way for Grace to reach out and be a part of community

activities. We started with our participation in the Christmas Parade sometime in the early 1990s. Each year since then we have developed a theme and built a float to put in the parade. It is good publicity because we can hand out a program with our Christmas Schedule.

For the Christmas Parade we are known as the organization with the live animals. We worked with a man from Colgate who raises and rents out exotic animals for use in parades and promotional events. While it does add to our costs, it has been a very effective draw and a way for Grace to attract attention. We've usually had a couple of camels. Sometimes we had a cow along with some sheep, goats and donkeys.

Later we started taking part in the Memorial Day Parade and the Fourth of July Parade. We use these parades to promote our Vacation Bible School. During this period our participation in parades took on a unique new life because I owned antique tractors and several trailers. Not only was Grace represented, but I also provided units for other organizations. It was another way for Grace to cooperate in community activities.

In 2004 I provided seven tractors in addition to the Grace float. My tractors are linked to Grace. Basically the parade ministry gives us exposure in the community and it gives us a chance to hand out promotional materials. That has worked out very well. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to get Grace members to participate because of holidays and vacations. It's a lot of work, but I enjoy it.

Reaching Out With Music

Our music ministry has contributed much to what has happened here at Grace. The fact that we have incorporated music that appeals to more people has strengthened our ministry. We offer great variety in our music both in worship services and in special musical events produced by our Music Coordinator John Marrs. The first was the "Passion for Jesus" production presented during the Lenten season. It told the Passion story in a musical presentation with actors and singers in costume. There were soloists and choirs, adults as well as

children from our school. The music included original songs written and arranged by John Marrs.

Christmas is another season when music plays an important role in the life of a church. For a number of years, Grace had a live nativity scene in front of our church. It included nativity characters in costume, along with a camel and other animals we rented from the same man who had provided animals for our contribution to the Christmas parade. A lot of people drove by and many stopped to see our nativity.

In 2004 we moved the nativity scene into our gymnasium and used it as a part of an hour-long Christmas musical production. We promoted the event throughout the community and attracted many non-members from the area to come and hear the story of Jesus' birth. The program included the live animal nativity with live music performed by members of our choirs and children from our school all directed by John Marrs. The program was presented six times, twice on Friday evening, twice

on Saturday evening and twice on Sunday afternoon the weekend before Christmas. About 1,800 people attended the event.

We've learned that people are attracted to churches by good music programs. One of the things John Marrs has been able to do for our music program is to draw together the various groups and various choirs and work jointly. That has been a real blessing. One of the challenges we faced as we looked at our choirs is that certain age groups are attracted to certain choirs and certain types of music. At the same time the members in some of our groups, including our Maker's Dozen and our Chancel Choir were getting older and it was becoming more difficult to keep these groups going.

So each of these outreach ministries is a part of what our God wants us to be about here in Menomonee Falls. They are a part of our stated purpose to "proclaim," to "teach," and to "minister" not just to our members, but to "all" who come within our care.

*"I will praise God's name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving.
This will please the Lord more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hoofs."*
-- Psalm 69:30

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

VIII

Caring, Praying, Making Contact

The ideal character of a Christian church is patterned after the life and work of Christ. He came to earth on a mission to save us all from our sins. He also came to institute a general ministry among people as a way to carry on the purposes that He was given to perform. We are to be ministering together as we reach out to people, whether they are in Southeast Asia or in our own back yard.

During my time at Grace I've seen this ministry continue to grow and mature; and to change in ways that help it to carry out its purposes more effectively in our time and our world.

There was a significant amount of change in the ministry of Grace through much of the 1990s and into the next decade. One of the factors that helped to strengthen our ministries came when we added a deaconess to our staff. The role of deaconess is defined as one who shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a ministry of works of mercy, spiritual care, and teaching the Christian faith.

Marlene Anderson became our first deaconess in August, 1992. Since then she has had a wide range of responsibilities, such as teaching confirmation and Bible classes. She directs our Stephen Ministry and Care Ministry programs. Marlene oversees our Bible study and Small Group Ministry. She also coordinates our Women's Ministry, makes hospital visits and follows up with guests and new members.

Following His Footsteps

As our ministries have changed, the focus has remained centered on Christ and His ministry. It is interesting to contemplate the similarities of the ministry of Christ and our ministries today as individuals and as a congregation.

-- The ministry of Christ started with His baptism. God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit

*"Therefore confess your sins
to each other and pray
for each other so that you
may be healed."*

-- James: 5:16

and with power and equipped Him for His ministry. Our baptism is also a commission into ministry. The Holy Spirit also blesses us in our baptism. We are given the power of faith and are set apart for service to God. We are not to be God as Jesus was God, but we are set apart as special, because of what Jesus has done.

-- Christ came to earth to do good and to heal.

That's ministry. That's where the rubber meets the road. While we may not have His gift of healing, we do have the gift of His Word and the gift of prayer. We can talk with God about situations, about people hurting. We can pray to God to make a difference in their hearts and lives.

-- Christ also came to confront the devil. He did that when He confronted the devil head on at the cross, where He suffered and died and won forgiveness for all humanity. His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave are a signal to us that Christ lives and the spirit we see in His life and ministry is a model for us all the time.

Through Christ, we now also have the power to confront the devil. In fact that is the cutting edge of ministry, to confront the devil, to confront unbelief, to confront sin, to confront doubt. We can only do that when we are armed with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with the Word of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That's what our ministry has been

all about. That is the essence of the “*Wonderful Acts of Our Gracious God*” that our dear departed Pastor Fahl wrote about in 1986.

Now, thanks to God, I’ve had the privilege of watching and taking part in what the Lord has done through the people of Grace, through another decade and into a new century.

The Ministry of Prayer

When I first came to Grace one of the blessings was to hear that there were people who were interested in an active prayer life. They were interested in praying not only for the ministry of the church and its personnel, but also for specific situations.

I had not been here long when I got a phone call from a young lady. She would not give me her full name. She gave me her first name, but would not tell me where she was from. She needed help and said, “I can’t talk with my pastor at my home church, but I was referred to you.”

This was her story:

“I’m not married, I have a boyfriend and we are going to have a baby. I just found out that the baby is in crisis. If I carry it to full term it will die soon. The people at the clinic and the doctor are telling us to abort it. That’s what my boyfriend wants to do, but I can’t do that in good conscience. I don’t know what to do.”

So how can a church respond and carry out what God would have us do for this young woman? I struggled to map a plan on how to deal with it. I called Cheryl Tebo, who had an interest in this issue, to see if she could help us deal with the situation. Cheryl and I spent a lot of phone time talking and praying with this young lady.

Prayers Are Answered

Our prayer was that the young lady could arrive at a decision that would be God pleasing. We were encouraging her to carry the baby, as painful as that was, because the baby was still alive. What happened then was most interesting. The boyfriend was opening up to the idea that she was going to

carry the baby to full term. We were all praying that God’s will would be done. When the lady was about in her sixth or seventh month and I recall her saying something along these lines, “Is it okay to pray that God would terminate the life of this baby?” Of course it is okay in a situation where you have received that counsel.

Two weeks to the day from that phone call she called again. The baby had died. She had gone to the clinic and the doctor had taken the dead baby from her. I still don’t know who she was. The only phone call I received from her after that was a phone call in which she said, “Thank you to you and Cheryl for helping me to make the right decision.” That was the end of it. I keep thinking that some day, someone is going to come up to me after a service and say, “Do you remember when?”

That young lady’s call started something new at Grace. That’s not to say that we had not been praying before or that Grace had not been exposed to prayer ministry, but that call from that young lady was one of the things that stimulated us to say, “We need to do something in a more organized manner,” and we did. When we were helping this young lady we were actively praying together. That became the concept for a more organized prayer ministry.

Now our prayer ministry has grown to a large number of prayer warriors who are praying on a regular basis. We share information with Cheryl and she disseminates it to all of the prayer warriors. Lauree Wright has been very involved with that and we’ve had organized prayer efforts including some evening prayer vigils here at the church. I’ve attended quite a few of them. We’ve had a “prayer extension” taking place after worship services on some Saturday nights. That’s been very beneficial.

Grace has in many ways become a praying church, but it has a long way to go. All of us could admit that our own prayer life could be improved. Organized efforts can help us with our prayer and devotional life. Prayer has always been a part of the day-to-day activities at Grace church. Our staff shares some moments each week in prayer and devotional thought. The various boards pray as they take on the challenges of their ministries and business of our church. I was able to share a unique

little program with them that was introduced to me by Jay Koebert. It had some little vignettes about life that were put together on a DVD by a pastor of a non-denominational church in Michigan. They were excellent. They really make a person think.

Personal Prayer Requests

The personal petitions and prayers we have at every service is one of the things that has made Grace unique and something that I really appreciated right from the start. In my previous parishes we had personal prayers only when there was a very specific request. Here at Grace, the personal issues surface in the context of worship for all God's people to pray. Wow, that's a blessing! Just rejoicing in the things people rejoice in—and struggling with people about the things they struggle with—that's a marvelous moment each week in our service. It is very, very precious.

It is surprising how many times people will call anonymously and say, "I can't talk to my pastor, but I need to talk with a pastor, will you talk with me?" You wonder sometimes if they are legitimate or not. There are ways to screen out those that are not. There are ways to find out if people are telling the truth, but you always need to be willing to move on the side of forgiveness and grace.

Some of those who call are from other Missouri Synod churches. The girl who called about her baby told me that she was Missouri Synod. She said the reason I can't tell you who my pastor is that you know him. I've also had people from other denominations. I've had Roman Catholics call, and bounce things off of me just to get the perspective of another pastor/priest. I've had calls from people from other churches in the community.

It is interesting how people operate. Through the years I have found that it is not uncommon for people to speak to me after a worship service and say, "Can I talk with you?" Sure. "I mean privately." Sure, you can come to the office. All you need to do is make an appointment." "Can I call on Monday and make an appointment?" Yes, that would be fine and then we can set something up. But they never call.

I'm convinced that people just need to have it affirmed that they can call. Once they know they

can then go on and deal with their issues. They just need that backup system. When this first started to happen with me I thought, "this is weird." Why didn't they call for that appointment? I wait for a call and they don't call. Then it began to dawn on me that they never had any intention to call, unless they really needed it.

Once I called back to a lady who had asked to see me but then didn't make the appointment. She had some depression issues and said she wanted to talk with me, but never called to make an appointment. So I called her back to see if she still wanted to talk. Her answer was revealing. "Everything is fine right now. Thank you."

Sometimes you do ministry without doing a thing. Just having the backup system is important to people. So often people will come up and say "There is a crisis in my family, would you pray for me?" I ask if they would like it in the public prayers. "No." Would you like it if I called Cheryl so her group could pray for you? "No." Apparently they just want to keep it "between you and me and the Lord."

Through the years I've become very sensitive to those things. There are these little moments of contact. They are little bridges that take time but need a sensitive reaction from a pastor. They may seem totally unimportant in the big picture of things, but they are San Francisco Golden Gate bridges in the minds of people. People want to know that the bridge is there if and when they need it to find the comfort they seek.

Building Bridges

Bridges are important. As a church and as individuals, we need bridges to reach people in this fast paced world. People are going so fast in their lives. The moments that you can bridge with people become so significant. I remember shopping at Menards and saw one of our members who didn't come very often. I knew the face so I went up and said, "Hi, how are you?" "Why, I didn't think you would know me." "Why sure, you are a member of our parish. How are you doing?" Then we had a great conversation.

Those contacts into the lives of people are so important. They are important for the sake of the

Gospel. You can go back to the imagery in the scripture, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.” (Isaiah 42: 3 or Matt 12:20) That prophetic image is of course, speaking of Christ and His love and grace.

That imagery brings back memories for me of walking through swampy areas along the Mississippi River in the fall of the year. The reeds would break as you walked through them, but there would always be two or three strands hanging there. I think of that so often. I think of smoking flax.

Back in 1966 while in college I worked on a farm that had a lot of peat ground on it. There was a spot where years earlier they had cleared some land and burned piles of brush. The farmer told me that the fire had burned down into the peat and was still burning down there. He loved to pull your leg, so I didn’t believe him.

Then one day I was out working ground with a tractor and a digger. It was a cloudy day and it started to drizzle. I looked where that fence line had been and puffs of smoke were coming out of the ground. I thought of the “smoking flax he will not quench.” Here it was four seasons later and there was still smoke puffing out of the ground, a sign that there was still some smoldering peat under the ground.

That’s a picture of Jesus and His love and grace and patience for us. What a marvelous picture! It is so important for us to keep those images in mind and understand that little things can mean so much to people as they go from day to day. The contacts we make are so important. People do stray away and their smoldering faith needs to be kept burning.

Starting a Stephen Ministry

One of the areas of concern in my ministry has always been Christian care. It has always been a priority. Helping people was a priority when I was in Eau Claire as well as in Madison. Coming here to Grace with the Manna program already in place we already had a tremendous care ministry! It gave us a base on which we could enlarge our efforts.

Very early on, long before coming to Grace, I was introduced to a program called the Stephen Ministry program headquartered in St. Louis. Stephen Ministry is a program that was developed

by Rev. Kenneth C. Haugk in 1975. Pastor Haugk, who is also a trained clinical psychologist, saw people in his congregation and community who needed care that far exceeded what he alone could provide. So he developed materials to train members of his congregation who could assist him in providing quality, one-on-one Christian care to individuals experiencing a life crisis.

The program worked so well that Pastor Haugk then founded the Stephen Ministries. It provides training and materials for pastors in other churches who want to establish a Stephen Ministry program in their home congregations.

The focus of Stephen ministry is to deal with some of the unique situations a church should be ready to confront. There are issues of illness in a family, death and grieving. Too often there are issues related to divorce, infidelity and the aftermath of divorce. We deal with much of that in the pastor’s office, but we do not have the time to follow up with all of it. Stephen ministry is a marvelous way for people to be served by fellow Christians. If any issues surface that need the professional staff, we are always available.

The Stephen Ministry got started at Grace in the year 2000. We had been putting away some money for starting a Stephen Ministry program. Then we got a substantial gift from one of our families that had a loved one with a health problem. The family saw the need and saw the potential for the program first hand and made a substantial donation. That provided the funds we needed to get the program under way.

Stephen Ministry program training was taking place in San Antonio, Texas in February. So our deaconess Marlene Anderson, Sue Faulkner, Karen Scholz and I traveled to San Antonio and spent a week there to be trained in the Stephen Ministry Program. The training is intensive. You need to put in between 50 and 55 hours of training. We were not only trained in the program, but we also were trained to be trainers.

When we got back we were ready to train volunteers here at Grace and start our own Stephen Ministry. We started with a class of people who are willing to put in 50 to 60 hours of training. At the end of that period each volunteer makes a two-year

commitment to serve. Once he or she is trained and commissioned, each Stephen Minister is assigned to care receivers who need the kind of care they are trained and best suited to provide.

It's been a tremendous program in our parish. Phenomenal! One of the best things we have ever done. By 2004 we had about 20 active caregivers, and were planning a class with the potential for another eight. Our goal was to have 25 active Stephen Ministers all the time. We need to continue training people because there will always be turnover. Each Stephen Minister makes a commitment to serve two years. At the end of two years a person has the option of staying in the program or dropping out. The work takes time and people get tired.

Some of our volunteers, however, have taken some time off and then have come back into the program again. So over time, we are praying that the pool of experienced Stephen Ministers in our congregation will grow.

The commitment during the two years is to meet weekly with your care receiver. In addition, Stephen Ministers commit to three hours a month of on-going training. This training includes meeting with

other Stephen Ministers to share thoughts on situations they have encountered. It can help to share ideas and experiences with each other.

We've served a lot of people. Volunteers have not been hard to find. All we needed to do was to publicize the fact that we were looking for help and people came forward. We usually ended up with more people showing interest than actually took the training. Some will wait a year, but it has just been great. I taught four of the sessions and covered areas that include a need for confidentiality because they deal with more of the intimate aspects of the ministry. The training includes a lot of role-playing. People really got into it.

We also developed a program called CARE, which means Christians Actively Reaching Everyone. CARE focuses on people who have on-going situations. They may have a loved one who has become ill and needs meals so we take meals to them on a regular basis.

There are people who need rides because they have become physically impaired for a time so we provide rides. We often provide help to people who have returned from being in the hospital and need help until they recover.

*“It was He who gave
some to be apostles, some to be prophets
and some to be pastors and teachers,
to prepare God’s people for works of service.”*
-- Ephesians 4:11-12

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

IX

Teaching, Learning and Fellowship

One of the things that I found attractive when I decided to come to Grace in 1988 was the fact that Grace had a parochial school, and a very good one. The information that I received prior to coming was so positive about the school. While I had gone to a parochial school as a boy and went to a Lutheran high school, this would be the first time that I was called to a parish that had a school. It was just a ball to work with the school. I worked with Dick Maas for a couple of years prior to his retirement. Dick was a marvelous administrator. He taught me a lot and we had a lot of fun together.

After Dick announced his retirement we appointed a call committee and explored a wide range of possible candidates. During that process we learned that Pastor Wayne Rasmussen was interested in making a change and would consider coming to Grace. At that time Pastor Rasmussen was teaching at Concordia and served as their basketball coach. Pastor Rasmussen was well known at Grace because he had been serving as one of our pulpit assistants and also had preached many sermons at Grace.

A call was sent to Pastor Rasmussen and he accepted. Later when he decided to accept a call to Texas we called Steve Anderson, a member of Grace who had decided to make a career change at which point Neal Hinze, who had been one of our teachers, became our principal. So, through all the years the school has been well-covered administratively.

Grace Vs. Junior High School

Over the years there were a number of challenges we had to face with our school. From time to time there have been some personnel problems to solve. In the early 1990s we were struggling to stabilize the upper grades. The

problem surfaced because Menomonee Falls was planning and ultimately implemented a plan to incorporate the 7th and 8th grades into a Junior High School with the 9th grade. Since our school stopped at the 8th grade it created a problem for our parents. If they wanted their children to go to the public high school they could go to Grace through 8th grade, and then one year in 9th grade at North Junior High and then on to high school. This was a

*“We will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds
of the Lord, his power
and the wonders he has done”*

-- Psalm 78: 4

problem. We lost some students because parents were taking their children out of Grace so they could have all three years at the Menomonee Falls Junior High School. They felt this would help their children integrate into the public high school system better and get to know their classmates better.

Over a period of years that problem has been worked out. While Menomonee Falls continued with their junior high program, it became less of an issue. We made some changes in our program to help stabilize the situation by departmentalizing the upper grades. The 6th, 7th and 8th grades each had a home room, while the teachers concentrated on subjects in which they have the most training and talent.

In 2004-05, for example, Brian Brauer was the 6th grade homeroom teacher and taught science; Barbara Paape was the 7th grade teacher and taught the language arts; and Kurt Gruber was the 8th grade home room teacher and taught the social

studies classes. In addition, we had Art Krafft, who had retired as Principal of Walther Memorial. Art provided some additional help to our staff with our algebra and health programs.

Maintaining Enrollment

There were other issues we had to face with our school. We saw a dip in enrollment. A part of that was due to demographics. We addressed that by being more aggressive in trying to bring students into the school. We have been making certain that when children want to come to our school that we are prepared to serve them. In the mid 1990s we instituted an interview process for new students. A committee from the faculty and administration interviews children and parents who want to use our school to determine their needs and what they expect. We are not equipped as a school to handle all of the special needs situations, so we have to be up front with people. If it is a situation of need that we can't address, we have to tell them that and we have done so.

Through the years our school had a veteran staff of teachers. In fact, in August 2004 as another school year was about to begin, we had a party to honor the long service of four of our faculty members. Dee Jobe, Sandy Heckler, Shirley Piepenbrink and Joann Mueller had each been in education for more than 30 years, and three of the four served a vast majority right here at Grace.

It was a unique situation for us to have these dedicated, experienced teachers serving in our school. It has been a blessing for our children. It created stability, a link from here to the past. From my perspective it has been healthy. There are those who argue that it is better to have some turnover. We have had turnover as some teachers left and were replaced. Too much turnover is not good either. A balance of youth and experience is ideal. I've been very proud of our school and appreciate what the administration and staff have done.

Grace school has had a strong focus on reading. Jane Fritsch developed a program in the early 1990s. It includes a special needs program and an accelerated reading program. It has just been a tremendous blessing. When I talk about the school to people I always mention what an excellent

benefit we have in our reading program. A couple of my grandchildren have been a part of that program. Seeing what they have accomplished has truly been a blessing. I watch the kids and their enthusiasm for reading. That reading program has been a very valuable asset for our school.

One of the unique things that happened at Grace School was when Brian Brauer joined our teaching staff. Brian had been a student at Grace School when he was a child. He had been a member of Grace nearly all of his life and had a passion for Grace Church and Grace School. It has really been neat to have Brian as a part of our staff. We were very encouraged by that.

Contemplating a Bigger School

The size of our school was a concern as we were considering plans for our future at our new site on County Highway Q. It is very easy to grow a school, but it is extremely expensive. Should we double the size of our school, with a second classroom for each grade? It sounds great. It is very attractive. But the cost is staggering, especially when you consider that we would need to double our personnel expenses. In addition, we'd also need to make the capital investments in the additional classrooms and other facilities these teachers and students would need.

We were very cautious in our thinking on that. Some churches that tried to expand their schools too rapidly have had to go out and really beat the bushes to find the kids to fill the space. We didn't want to do that because it violates our mission as a distinctly Christian Lutheran school. Instead of growth in numbers we have focused more on maintaining the quality of education we provide to our children. We've had a limit as to how many children can be in each grade, and maintained a total enrollment of 210 to 250 students.

So in 2004 as we were looking to the future at our new location on County Highway Q, we had become enthused about the idea of moving the church and school to the new campus all at one time. We felt there would be some real limitations in splitting the campus and leaving the school behind. We invested many hours on our building plans trying to find a ways to do that, but in the end

we were not able finance it all at once. We talked a lot about how the growth of our school should take place. Should the school and its growth drive the church, or should the church and its growth drive the school? We were very committed to the idea that the church growth should drive the school. We believe that is healthy. If the families first become a part of our church membership and then want the Christian education they have an incentive to support the school. If the school is full we will have dedicated members with an incentive to do what it takes to expand the school. That is healthy and good. If you just expand the school without that support it is very difficult to bring the church along. That was our thinking.

One of the problems that came up when we were still thinking of expanding at our Kenwood site was over the way our school was constructed. It was not designed in a way that would allow adding a floor. The foundation was not sturdy enough to hold up additional weight. That really restricted the school building to its original capacity, and gave us another compelling reason to look for a new site for our church and school.

The school has also been a tremendous blessing to our ministry and will be an important part of our future. The school has attracted members to Grace. The activities of the school help to draw families into a closer relationship with their church and their Lord.

Our Struggles with Bible Study

One of the things I observed in my first 16 years at Grace was a weakness in our Bible study activity. When I first came to Grace, Pastor Dietz had been struggling with efforts to build up participation in Bible study. Not long before I came to Grace, Pastor Dietz and the Board of Elders had agreed to eliminate the middle morning service on Sunday, leaving one service at 8 and another at 10:45. Their plan was to use the time between the two services to create a strong adult Bible study program during the same time that Sunday School was in session.

After I came to Grace we really struggled trying to build up our Bible study programs. Member Al Piepenbrink also put a lot of effort into it. We did build our numbers up for a period of time. We had a

significant increase in the number of people attending Bible studies. Then the tensions began to surface. One tension was the time that our pastors could commit on Sunday morning. If we were at a Bible class we were not in front of the congregation, and we were not interfacing with the membership. But the biggest problem was that our membership had been growing so much that our two Sunday morning services were becoming too crowded. By the late 1990s we had to make the decision to go back to a mid-morning service with three services every Sunday. That really hurt our Sunday morning Bible study program. Soon our Bible study attendance dwindled.

We needed an alternative to Sunday morning, so in the next few years we tried to initiate a small group Bible study program. That was effective. We soon had quite a number of small group Bible studies that were meeting on a regular basis. Many of them are very, very strong. One of the weaknesses of the small group Bible studies is that we don't have a unified program. That was one of the issues we had planned to address in 2005 when Pastor Peterson would be working to develop a strong small group Bible study curriculum. The goal was to increase the number of small group Bible studies. There are two benefits in these small Bible study groups. Not only do you have people studying God's Word, but you also have people finding social connections in a large church environment. We consider that to be very important.

We always need to be careful that we are not making Bible study a priority just for the sake of doing it and not for the sake of spiritual benefits. I've heard pastors brag about their Bible study attendance. It can become a numbers game. Then their focus is mainly on what needs to be done and what content is needed to bring in more people. We need to be careful about that and look beyond the numbers, especially when it comes to the study of God's Word. A successful Bible study is not a matter of how many attend classes; it is a matter of how well you can feed those who are there so they will be spiritually nourished. What's needed most is a Bible study that's going to support the life and ministry of God's church. That's important.

My hope was that when we would move to our

new campus we could make some revisions in scheduling that would significantly enhance Bible study. One of things we talked about was to make Wednesday a church night and move Sunday School and all of our Sunday morning Bible classes to Wednesday evening. The evening could begin with a devotion and then have classes for all ages. The curriculum could be unified for all ages, so families could go home and talk about the topic. There would be classes for Sunday School, teens, parents, and other adults. Obviously that would take away the old institution of Sunday School, but the churches that have done this have had significant benefits from it. It was another idea we were going to look at as we planned our future.

Another idea we have talked about in regard to Bible study was the possibility of developing a Bible study curriculum for the community as a whole. We entertained the idea of bringing in personnel from Concordia to enhance the program. It was an interesting possibility to consider, because the community of Menomonee Falls did not have that kind of venue available. If we could get Concordia involved we might even be able to have classes that provide college credits. The focus could be on biblical books or Bible history. We would not need to get into denominational issues. There is much objective non-denominational information out there about the Bible and Bible history that we could share. I think it would be good for Grace as well as for the community.

Fellowship in Athletic Programs

There are many ways for a church to help draw people closer to one another, to provide different opportunities to make connections and maintain friendships. Sports teams and athletic programs are one way to provide that opportunity for Christian fellowship.

Historically, Grace has been very aggressive in developing athletic teams and participating in various inter-church and inter-community competitions. I have visited with older members who are now in their 60s or 70s who participated in softball and baseball when they were younger. That continues to hold true today. The majority of our softball teams participated in has taken place in

Sussex where they have a more sophisticated church league than we had in Menomonee Falls. Much of the focus in the Falls has been in Little League Baseball and girls' softball.

Basketball became significant after we built our gym back in 1978. The basketball program has centered on our own Christian day school. Our gym has also been available to the children who attend public schools, through our confirmation program. It also has offered our adults with an opportunity for recreation. It has been a very, very significant way to bring people together.

Our gym has also provided a useful way for Grace to reach out to our community. Germantown schools have had some of their basketball teams use our facilities, for practice and for some games. The YMCA has used our facilities. So our gym has been useful for our own programs and has provided an opportunity to share it with others.

We also have had an active volleyball program. Volleyball has primarily been an intramural program, but we also have had multiple teams come in on Wednesday nights to play. Other Grace athletic activities have included couples bowling, golf outings and bicycle rides.

Athletic programs were also a part of our long-term planning as we considered a move to our new site. The 80 acres of land and plans for a new gym and other facilities would open the door to a wide range of new possibilities. We could continue and expand our athletic activities as well as our community cooperation. Eventually a new gym would be out there. We also have the space for a couple of soccer fields and couple of ball diamonds.

The location of our land is ideal. As we considered our options there were no athletic facilities in that part of Menomonee Falls. The nearest gymnasium was at North Middle School on Main Street. Most of the ball fields were on the south side or at the high school.

Fellowship on Grace Tours

Traveling together is another way for people to make connections and get to know each other better. I had always thought it would be fun for a church group to travel to a common site and have some fun together. So in 1994, I approached a travel

group to put together a tour to Kentucky and Tennessee. That was the beginning of what became an interesting activity in Christian fellowship. The destination of that first tour was Nashville. The plan included stops on the way down and on the way back. The travel agency had put together the details of the tour plan. I had doubts about it. "This is going to be a bust." But we went ahead and publicized it, although only 15 people signed up.

I can still remember sitting in the tour company office to dismantle everything. Then it occurred to me that I did have 15 people signed up. Maybe we could get some vans and do this thing on our own. There came a point where the lady had to leave the room. She had left her book open with the names of all the brokers and all the venues. I quickly wrote down all of the names and phone numbers. After we got back to our offices I made the calls to set up the tour and we went with two vans. It was great fun. We repeated that tour again three times.

After those first trips I decided that I needed to try again to do something bigger. One of the biggest touring organizations around this area is Worldwide Country Tours, which is associated with Reiman Publications. With their help, I put together a tour of the Mid-south. It was a very ambitious tour. We went through Elizabethtown and Bardstown, Ky. We visited the Kentucky Horse Park at Lexington. From there we went on down to the Smoky Mountains and back up to Nashville, Tenn. to attend the Grand Ole Opry. It was an eight-day tour and we had 30 people. It was a lot of fun.

The Mid-south tour was encouraging, so I decided to try some of the "shelf tours" the Reiman group was offering. These included a tour of the Amish Settlements in Northern Ohio and a tour to Branson, Mo. Also during that time I led some one-day and two-day tours, including trips to Door County, Washington Island, and Prairie du Chien.

The shelf tours were too long and not flexible enough. So in 2002 I decided to try another approach and contacted Nationwide Transportation from Appleton, Wis. to develop a relationship in which I could plan and direct the trips myself. With this relationship we've done tours up to Mackinac Island, and we've done some in-state tours. In the spring of 2004 we had a very successful tour back

to Kentucky and Tennessee and in September 2004 we went to the Ashland area in Northern Wisconsin to visit the Apostle Islands and then Duluth, Minn. For spring 2005 we scheduled a trip to the Ozarks in Missouri and Arkansas. That trip included Carthage, Mo., the home of the famous "Precious Moments" company, and to Eureka Springs, Ark. to see their famous outdoor Passion Play. From there we went to Branson, Mo., which bills itself as the "Live Music Capital of the World." Since then we've continued to plan tours, including one to Ireland.

Why would a church do tours like this? Many people in our congregation, especially elderly members do not have the ability to travel on their

*"If we walk in the light,
as he is in the light we have
fellowship with one another
and the blood of Jesus, his Son
purifies us from all sin."*

-- I John 1:7

own anymore. They can travel if someone organizes the trip and takes them on a bus. That was one of the things that drove us to do this. People like to travel with like-minded people.

Our tours provide a Christian atmosphere. We have devotions; we have daily times for prayer. If it happens to be on a Sunday, I have a worship service, many times right on the bus. The circle of friends grows and grows and it is a unique circle. Our Grace tours have become a part of our elderly outreach ministry, a fellowship ministry. We've also had people from outside of our congregation take part in our tours. Some of these people were from other churches, and some were un-churched people interested in being a part of what we are doing. It is another way to reach out to them.

The tours have been a great avenue to pursue elderly ministry, a great avenue to fellowship ministry and a lot of fun. Where it will go in the future, I do not know. There are many interesting places to go. To succeed they require a considerable amount of planning and leadership, along with an interest among members who want to go.

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor***X****Following His Lead, From 2004 Forward**

*“Teach me to do your will
for you are my God.
May your good spirit
lead me on level ground.”*

-- Psalm 143:10

The year 2005 began with an accounting of the commitments members of Grace had made to the 2004 “Building to Reach Out” appeal. Six months earlier we had acknowledged a strong desire of our members to move both church and school at the same time to avoid a split campus. To finance that would require about \$3 million for a down payment on site preparation and construction of facilities.

We tried for \$3 million in our campaign. At the same time we were asking members to increase their commitments to our on-going operational costs. We didn’t reach the \$3 million goal, but we were blessed with \$1.5 million. What did that mean? Was it a failure? Absolutely not! In no way was it a failure. What it meant though was that we were not able to do all that we had planned. We would still go on with our ministry full steam, doing the things that God had set before us to do. We could still look forward with enthusiasm to our future. It also meant that our leadership would need to go back to where we started, to the forces that were driving us to make a move to a new site.

The Driving Forces

What were those driving forces? What did we desire to build and why did we want to build it? None of that had changed. Our campaign had started the week of October 10. My sermon that weekend focused on the “Building to Reach Out”

campaign. It was about our plans, and more importantly, the reason for those plans.

The time leading up to October 10 had been a long journey. Now we had reached the point where we were ready to make an appeal for funds. First we had acquired the land. Then we did a lot of planning and a lot of praying, asking God to guide us and lead us forward in the way He would have us go.

We realized that we were facing a huge challenge, a big mountain to climb. Why do it? If all of what we had in mind had been for human purposes, for our own gratification, I would not have supported it. I would have said, “Stop it! We’re going no farther.” But it was not for human purpose. It was for purposes God had put before us.

All through the history of Grace we have made our plans based upon what we believed our God would want us to do. Grace has purchased land, built facilities and operated ministries. God’s purposes have been before us every step of the way. Now, as we looked forward again, His purpose was supreme. All of us needed to keep that in mind. In that October 2004 sermon, I stressed as strongly as I could that, “This is not about us. This is about God’s glory!” It’s about God’s commission to us. It’s about nurturing God’s and growing His church.

In that sermon we were thinking about our appeal theme, “Building to Reach Out.” The word “building” makes one think of bricks and mortar. New buildings with brick and mortar were a common sight in our area. But for us at Grace, “building” has a great deal more significance. We are about “building faith” and “building Christian lives.” We are about building Christ’s church and helping it to grow.

The thought of having a new church was very appealing; to have a new church, to have a bigger church, to be out there where people can see our

church and be attracted to it. But that was only a part of it. As we at Grace were thinking of bricks and mortar we were also thinking about creating a resource, a tool that can be used in our Kingdom work. It would be a resource for ministry.

We were having a lot of baptisms at Grace. What a tremendous blessing. Baptism is a part of the building process. We are building as we see little ones here at the Lord's altar to be baptized, and to go from sin to grace, to have the mark of Christ and Him crucified placed upon them to come into God's Kingdom. That's building.

Our Grace mission statement is all about building. We are proclaiming, we are educating and we're caring. All of this building tends to focus on people's lives. It focuses on your life, it focuses on my life and it's about reaching out to the lives of those in our families, our community and our world.

Stewardship Supports Reaching Out

And yes, building to reach out does require bricks and mortar, and that's why the members of Grace agreed to buy land and to plan a new campus on a new site. It was all a part of our plan to address the ministry of our congregation in years to come, for decades to come. But reaching out does take bricks and mortar—and it takes money. It takes our gifts for the Lord's work.

The text for my October 2004 sermon was from what the Apostle Paul had to say about money in his first letter to the people of Corinth, 2 Corinthians 9:6. Here Paul uses an illustration we all can understand about planting seeds. He says if you "sow sparingly" you are going to "reap sparingly." But then he also says if you "sow generously" you are going to "reap generously."

Throughout the history of this congregation, the people of Grace have sown generously and have reaped generously. They have purchased land and built churches. They have built a school and a Christian Activity Center. Over the years they supported the on-going ministry. In recent years we've had campaigns, such as "Freedom to Serve" and "A Foundation for Faith." The members of Grace have responded to help build a strong and growing ministry, to reach out with the Word of God. With "Building to Reach Out," we were again

asking members to sow generously. I also wanted to remind them of what else Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "*Each one of us must decide in our hearts what to give.*" Then he says something that is very interesting, that our giving should not be done "*reluctantly*" and it should not be under "*compulsion.*"

Our giving should not be done reluctantly, because in faith we know that we are stepping out with the Lord beside us, leading us and guiding us. It should not be under compulsion, but in faith, with trust in God, because, as Paul wrote, "*For God loves a cheerful giver.*" When we give cheerfully, God promises three things, according to Paul. Grace will abound, He will take care of us, and we will be encouraged to do good works—wonderful things beyond ourselves, reaching out to others.

Generous, cheerful, God pleasing gifts can take many forms. I remember a family telling me that their son was planning to collect aluminum cans for our "Building to Reach Out" appeal. All the money from selling the cans would go to our campaign. That's a tremendous thing. We had people with the special skills who can create, build and sew craft items that can be sold. They set up a booth at our picnic and sold crafts. They set up shop again at Christmas to sell hand made Christmas ornaments, decorations and gifts. They were able to generate over \$1,000 for the building fund.

Now you may say, "Pastor, we are talking about millions and here you are talking about someone coming with a few dollars for aluminum cans or a few hundred dollars for some crafts they've sold." That's exactly what I'm talking about. God loves a cheerful giver. It doesn't matter the amount. It is the motivation of the heart that counts. Remember the widow's mite? What a tremendous blessing it is that we have cheerful givers.

Reviewing Our Blessings

By early January 2005 we knew the results of our campaign. We had tried for \$3 million and we didn't get it. But our members did commit to more than \$1.5 million for "Building to Reach Out" in addition to their continued support for on-going ministry. Once again, the people of Grace were generous and cheerful givers. It was the largest

three-year commitment our congregation had ever made. For that we needed to be thankful.

On the second weekend of January 2005 I again found myself in the pulpit addressing our members about the focus of our overall ministries. I needed to talk about our plans, the results of our campaign and what all that would mean for our futures. I thought back to what I was saying three months earlier. All of that was still valid. Our purpose was still the same. God was still with us, leading us, guiding us.

What could I say to put it all into perspective? Recent world news had been grim. The war and killings in Iraq continued. The evening news was still dominated by stories about the aftermath of the “tsunami” that had swept across Southeast Asia. That huge tidal wave killed nearly 300,000 men, women and children and left hundreds of thousands more injured and homeless.

Where is God in times like this? Does God care? The Epistle and the Gospel for that weekend had the answer for me, and for our members. Both were about ministry, about reaching out. In the Epistle for that Sunday, Acts 10:34-38 Peter says,

“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”

Then the Gospel message for that Sunday was Matthew 3:13-17, the story of the baptism of Jesus ending with the words spoken by a voice from heaven, *“This is my son whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”* Both the Epistle and the Gospel for that Sunday were about ministry, they were about how God deals with a sinful world and about how He responds to people, especially where we see loss of life.

At times God responds very directly. Remember those “close calls”—the accident that almost happened but didn’t, the person who was sick and

dying but suddenly recovered. You’ve heard the stories. You may have seen or experienced it yourself. But God also responds through His people, through people reaching out to people.

Moving Forward

As I was deciding what to say in that January sermon, I could think back to October as our campaign was just getting started. Three months earlier I had stressed that Grace is about “building faith” and “building Christian lives,” about building Christ’s church and helping it to grow. It is about ministry.

Now in January we were still about reaching out through ministry; and now the members of Grace had committed another \$1.5 million over the next three years to help build and expand that ministry, to reach out with His word and His care.

While we didn’t meet our original goals, we were still planning to go ahead full steam with our ministry, doing the things that God had set before us to do. We still looked forward with enthusiasm to our future.

In January our leadership would also need to look back to where we started, to what was driving us to make a move to the new site. What were those driving forces? They were still there in our mission statement, especially the first part, “Proclaiming the good news.” A major part of that proclamation is worship.

We had realized that so many of our worship services were filled to overflowing. So at the beginning we were looking at building a church. Then our members had expressed a strong desire to move—church, school and gym at the same time. While that would not be possible, we hoped we could build a new church as we had originally planned to do.

Our hope was to build a new church that looks like a church at our new site where everyone driving on County Highway Q could see it and to know that it was built there to “proclaim the good news” of Jesus Christ and to worship Him. It would be a visible sign of Grace Lutheran Church, reaching out all who would now be able to see it as they drove on County Highway Q.

During January, our Facilities Committee was

busy reconsidering our plans in light of the campaign results. The President of our congregation, Dick Laabs wrote a report to the church spelling out the results of the campaign and the new plan recommended by the facilities committee. That report was then published in our weekly service bulletins. In his report, Dick made the following points:

-- By the end of January the official amount pledged by members had reached \$1,543,000. The original plan made based on input from the congregation was to build a worship center rather than a church, a chapel, school and gym. The objective had been to allow Grace to relocate its entire campus at one time.

-- After reviewing the results of the campaign the facilities committee concluded that the plan would need to be modified. The new suggestion was to construct a church at the Highway Q location as the first step in a multi-phase construction project. The new building would include space for Sunday school, meeting rooms and offices. Meanwhile, the school, gym and extended care would remain at our Kenwood campus until we could afford to move them to our new site.

This new plan was a major shift from the direction we thought we were going just a few months earlier. However, the new church would be a step forward and would open new opportunities for growth. In addition, as Dick Laabs explained in his report, while it would require operating two campuses, the objective would be to allow Grace to “live within its financial means.”

Originally the committee believed that construction on a church could still start in 2005. By March, however, it had become clear that the planning process was complex and would take more time than expected earlier. “The basic problem has been trying to reconcile needs with resources,” Dick Laabs explained in a March update of his January report. In addition, he said groundbreaking would likely be delayed at least until early 2006.

A Call to Ministry

As I concluded my January 9 sermon I wanted to shift the focus from bricks, mortar and finances back to the purpose for all of what we were

planning, with a call to ministry: “We are beginning 2005, another year of God’s grace, another year to serve as ministers under Christ. Let me assure you of one thing: We will not be bored. As I look over the weeks and months to come, God is filling our plate again—and that’s good—with opportunities to reach out to people: individuals, families, and community. You have no idea how good it feels to sit down with someone really hurting and to be able to talk about his or her problems in the light of Jesus and what He has done, and how He can make a difference.

“Wow! We have the best news in the world to minister with; and God is filling our plate again. It is wonderful! So what do we do? Let’s go! Let’s

*“God is able to make
all grace abound to you,
so that in all things at all times,
having all that you need,
you will abound
in every good work.”*

-- II Corinthians 9:8

serve together and let’s enjoy every minute of it, every minute of our personal ministries under Christ and of our ministry together as God’s people in this time and this place.”

So where will our God lead us from here? The cheerful givers of Grace have been blessed and I believe they will continue to be blessed and continue to serve. There will be many opportunities. By building the new church we also would be able to expand our school on our property on Kenwood and Hayes. While that would be temporary, it would allow for our growth to continue. It would open opportunities for additional activities.

In the meantime we would continue to minister together, every one of us. We would need to focus on the world as well as our own community. We would need to be sensitive to opportunities for ministry wherever they occur, and be willing to minister wherever we can touch the lives of people. That’s what ministry is all about.

Section IV

*Reminiscences of a Pastor of Grace**By the Rev. Warren A. Granke, Senior Pastor*

XI

Searching For Answers, Considering Options

*“Do not work
for food that spoils,
but for food that endures
to eternal life”*

-- John 6:27

The year 2005 was a difficult time for both Grace congregation and for me in my personal life. We started the year 2005 on an optimistic note. The members of Grace had made a major commitment by pledging \$1.5 million toward our “Building to Reach Out” campaign. While it was only half of the \$3 million goal, we believed it would be enough make a significant start on establishing a new campus on the 80 acres of land we had purchased on County Highway Q.

Through the year our optimism dwindled. We started with the hope that we could still break ground in 2005. Early in the year it became clear that we were far too optimistic. Then planning proceeded toward a 2006 ground breaking. Even that plan had to be scrapped.

Updating Plans

As we started the year, we knew we would need to make modifications in our original plans. We worked on that through much of 2005. We did financial analysis. We worked with Plunkett Raysich Architects to develop a plan that would fit our budget. We were provided with cost estimates from Miron Construction.

As the fall months approached, we had pretty much formulated what we had considered to be an excellent plan. By late October, however, it became increasingly clear that it would be a costly

undertaking that would require a significant sacrifice by our members.

In a letter to members of Grace, Congregational President Dick Laabs spelled out some of the sobering facts. He pointed out that the overall size of the building we need is driven by certain “must haves” such as a sanctuary that seats 500 to 700 for worship. In addition, space would be needed for a narthex, space for children’s ministry, support rooms and offices. Regardless of how it is designed, providing for these “must haves” would require a building of 25,000 square feet or more.

Facing Higher Construction Costs

In the meantime, building costs had been rising. Overall construction costs would be at least \$175 per square foot. In addition, the costs for equipment, furniture, and fixtures would be added. The bottom line was that the entire project would likely cost between \$5 million and \$6 million. These facts were also spelled out in presentations at weekend services on November 12 and 13. The plan would have required a significant amount of new debt. Financing the plan would also have required additional capital campaigns as well as increased operating budgets.

So as we came to the end of 2005 we had a plan in place that we were going to submit to the voters for their approval in a mid January 2006 meeting. We thought we would be ready to break ground in 2006 to build a church and office facility on our Highway Q site.

The planning had been going on for several years, and now we thought we were in the home stretch, but there was yet another hill to climb. All through the years of planning our leaders were aware of the need to proceed with a plan that would be financially sound. President Dick Laabs

expressed this concern very well in his October letter to the congregation. “Rest assured the planning team continues to make every effort to be financially prudent, while remaining faithful to God’s call for our ministry,” he said. “Please pray earnestly that our congregation selects a course of action that is God-pleasing in every respect.”

In the first week of January our leadership completed an in-depth financial analysis of the plan, which we intended to present to the congregation. Their conclusion was that we would not be able to generate enough cash flow from our membership to meet all the requirements for the plan. We would need to continue covering current operating costs as well as the additional interest and principal payments on the new debt our plan would require. We called off the voters’ meeting and put a stop to the project.

Dealing with Health Issues

The year 2005 also proved to be one of the most difficult years in my personal life. While working with the Grace leadership to revise our plans, I faced health issues that I had not anticipated. Going into 2005 I knew that I was going to have a knee replacement. The surgery was scheduled for early March. It was expected to be a normal process and I expected to be back on a normal work schedule in a month.

The first week of February all of those plans began to change. It started during a family gathering. We have a custom in our family in which the adults do not purchase Christmas gifts for each other. Instead we plan a family gathering at Wisconsin Dells on a winter weekend. We rent rooms at the Dells so Sharon and I can spend a winter weekend together with our children and their families.

In 2005 that trip was planned for the first week in February. We headed for the Dells that Friday evening and stayed at a very nice place. It had a big water park for the kids to enjoy. Friday night everyone went swimming and enjoyed the water park. I had purchased an electric train for the grandkids to play with. While they were at the water park I worked on setting up the train so they would have it when they came back. But as I worked on

the train, I had a strange feeling in my abdomen. I didn’t think anything of it, but it was noticeable.

Saturday while we were out enjoying the Dells area, I started to feel increasingly ill. By dinner time that evening I didn’t feel like eating. After dinner, everyone went swimming again, but I just lay down on the bed. I was really sick. At about 8:30 that night I could hardly stand it, so Sharon, Erick and I ventured over to a walk in clinic in Lake Delton.

The doctor took one look at me and said, “We’re ready to close for tonight and I couldn’t do anything for you. This looks like something major so you had better get into a hospital.” The doctor advised going Portage or Baraboo. That didn’t appeal to me, so I asked him if my family could take me straight through to Menomonee Falls. It would take 30 to 45 minutes to go to either Portage or Baraboo. In another 45 minutes I could be home. He said, “Fine, but you can’t drive, you’ll need to lie down in the back seat and you’ve got to go right through.”

Erick, Sharon and I took off, and by 12:30 a.m. we were at Community Memorial Hospital in Menomonee Falls. They took me right into emergency, started running some tests and soon concluded that my appendix had probably burst and that I would need surgery. The surgeon they called turned out to be Dr. Stewart, a surgeon I had worked with in the past, and really appreciate.

Dr. Stewart came in to see me between 2:30 and 3:00 in the morning. He told me that at 4:00 we would be doing surgery. At 4:00 a.m. they took me into surgery and found that my appendix had burst and it was removed. They kept me in the hospital for about a week for recovery. At that point the doctors still believed that I was on track to have my knee replaced in early March. “Oh this won’t be a problem,” they said.

After the surgery, the healing process went well and the date for my knee surgery was drawing near. But then, after I had gone in for blood tests prior to the surgery, the orthopedic surgeon called and said, “We can’t do this surgery. There is something wrong with your blood. Your white blood count is too high. It may be related to the fact that you just had surgery, but we’ve got to call it off.” That was a real bummer. I went back to see my doctor and the surgeon to find out what we could do next. They

had more bad news for me. They both said this was more than just a follow up from the surgery. There was another problem. Both thought it was either leukemia or lymphoma.

The next step would be to see an oncologist and in early April I was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. There is no cure. It is a chronic illness that I will have the rest of my life. That's just the way it is. That diagnosis was made in April. The leukemia would not prevent me from having the knee surgery. That surgery was then rescheduled for June 2, 2005.

In May of 2005 we had planned a major motor coach trip. That trip took us to us to southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. We went down to Carthage, which is the home of Precious Moments, the place where they make little glass Christian symbols. We also went to Branson, Mo., which bills itself as the "Live Music Capital of the World." One morning while we were in Branson I was really sick again. Sharon went out with our tour group without me and I just lay in bed all day. I didn't think much of it and the next day I felt pretty good. We returned from the trip. I got back into the routine and was feeling fine. On June 2 I had the knee replaced and the surgery went well.

Getting Back to Work

The therapy took a month, so I was back in the office in July. I was still dealing with some issues related to my knee, but for the most part everything was okay. It was good to get back to work after all the time I had missed. I had been out a week in February and had some down time with the diagnosis of the leukemia in late March and April. Then in June, the knee was replaced followed by the therapy. Things went well for me during July. At the end of July we went on a big trip to Tennessee. I went to Red Power, an International Harvester gathering.

After the trip I was back in the office and felt fine until about the third week in August. One morning I woke up with a high temperature. I called my doctor and he told me to come right in to see him. I dropped everything and went over to the clinic. When the doctor saw me he said, "I don't want you to go home. I want you to drive yourself

up to the hospital right away. I want you to admit yourself and I'll be up later to see you." I remember calling Barbara Baas, our church secretary, to tell her that I was on the way to the hospital. I didn't know what this is about.

As it ended up, I was in the hospital for about a week. There was a major problem in my abdomen, a major infection. We thought it might be a lymphoma. That's what they were targeting at first. Later it was diagnosed as a follow up to the appendectomy. Some of the infection had never been eliminated. That was the problem.

To make a long story short, I was in the hospital three times, for a week each time. In addition, I had to spend time in therapy. It was just a nightmare year because I could never get any traction to do what needed to be done. I was laid up so much. Even when I was working I was not at full speed.

Lessons Learned

Often there are lessons to be learned when we face difficulties. I learned about the importance of therapy. I worked with the clinic for therapy on my knee. I religiously did the therapy they requested. In fact, I have continued to do it. It includes leg lifts and several other types of exercise. I purchased a Schwinn Aerodyne bicycle and I do five miles a day on the stationary bike. Then I do some lifting with some small bar bells.

The exercises I learned from the therapy have worked very well for me. I encourage anyone who has had surgery on any part of the body where therapy is a follow up to "do the therapy!" I came to realize how much it had helped me as I reflected on this in July, a year after my knee surgery. On the fourth of July in 2005, I was really not able to do much of anything. A year later I could do everything. In fact I could do things I had not been able to do the past three or four years. Now I could again walk great distances and do other things I had not been able to do for a long time before I had the surgery and did the therapy.

Some good things did come out of it all. Still, I was thankful that the year 2005 was over from the perspective of my medical history.

Looking ahead I know that the events of 2005 have changed my lifestyle and my perspectives on

my life. My daily activities now include exercise therapy. Then there is the chronic lymphocytic leukemia. I'll have that forever. It's something that can be managed. It's not an acute variety that can take your life suddenly. It's a chronic variety that just stays with you. But that's in the Lord's hands and we can't tell what God has in mind for us. I know that it slows me down. I get tired more easily, but overall, I've been able to do quite well. In 2006 I was back to full speed again.

An interesting sidelight on feeling tired is a home remedy I've tried that seems to help. After I was diagnosed with the leukemia, my son Erick came to the house one day to say, "Dad, I just talked with a member of Trinity and he says you've got to get on this special tea right away." The man was Harry Radtke who owned a large nursery on Fond du Lac Avenue in Germantown. Harry had been diagnosed with a major blood disease. It was a very rare type of leukemia. Four years earlier his doctors had told him there was no hope and that he should go home and prepare to die.

Harry wanted to learn more about his disease. While searching the Internet he found some information about an herbal remedy called Essiac. It was discovered in 1922, by Rene Caisse, an Ontario health nurse. Nurse Caisse learned about the remedy from one of her patients who claimed to have recovered from breast cancer by taking an Indian herbal tea developed by an Ojibwa medicine man. The original formula contained burdock root, slippery elm inner bark, sheep sorrel, and Indian rhubarb root. Nurse Caisse got the recipe and treated her aunt's stomach cancer with the tea. In 1924, she opened a clinic and began to offer cancer patients the herbal mixture. She named the tea "Essiac," which is her last name spelled backwards.

The product I use is a concentrate. I drink two ounces every morning with four ounces of distilled water. It has been wonderful for me. Harry was still running his nursery after four years. I saw him a couple of times and we've talked about it. He refers to it as his Pow Wow juice. I told him, "Harry, you are doing great." "Well, like you," he said, "we are never going to cure the cancer," but he explained that the purpose of the tea is to fortify your immune system. One of the issues when you have a blood

disease is that your immune system gets low. You lose the ability to fight off potential infections. From a physical perspective, I had a marvelous year after I started drinking the Essiac Tea. I just appreciate so much that Harry told Erick to tell me about it. It has really been a blessing for me. My energy level is much higher and I have not had to deal with all of the issues related to allergies and other problems I've had in the past.

What's God's Will for Grace?

From our earliest history, God has had plans for this congregation. As I reflected in 2005, I believed that He still had plans for this congregation and that a part of His plan was that we purchase 80 acres on County Highway Q and that eventually He wants us to build our church and our school on that land.

But when does He want us to build? And why have we not been able to move ahead more quickly? What does God have in mind for us?

Sometimes when it comes to understanding God's will, we look at it in such a mystical manner. We want God to give us such dramatic answers that we are going to know His will without a shadow of a doubt. If we are going south and He wants us to go north, He will literally stop us in our tracks and turn us around and send us north. I'm not saying it can't happen. I've seen it happen. But too often the answer is not that dramatic.

When it comes to understanding God's will, we also need to realize that God has blessed us with minds and with the ability to reason. While we totally rely on Him and we pray "Your will be done," we have to look at our options and not just sit on our hands. We need to literally invest some time to see where God would direct us to use our talents.

So often when we are faced with problems in our lives, we ask God why? "*Why me, why now, why this?*" I could ask those questions about my personal life and my illnesses. We can ask them as a congregation. We had been seeing doors opening to us. We were seeing growth. We purchased land. We were planning to build. Suddenly in 2005 we were seeing doors being closed. We couldn't help but wonder why. Was God telling us we should do some rethinking? What was God telling us?

These are times when it is so important for us to look into God's Word to see what instruction He has for us. In late July 2006, I found myself preaching a sermon on the question, "Why Do I Have to be Weak?" The text was 2 Corinthians 12:9. This was the answer the Apostle Paul received after pleading three times with the Lord to remove a "thorn" from his flesh. We can only speculate over what it was that Paul called "a thorn in my flesh." He described it as "my weakness," and as "a messenger of Satan to torment me."

We all have weaknesses, the result of sins that

*"My grace is sufficient
for you, for my power is made
perfect in weakness."*

-- II Corinthians 12:9

haunt us daily. The thorn in the flesh for Grace was that we had not been able to create a vision that translates into enough financial support. Not enough people were convinced that what we were doing as a congregation and what we were planning to do are important.

In the text Paul says the thorn in the flesh was the work of the devil. Today it is the thorn that slows us down. My illness slowed me down. The thorns created doubts about our ability to build a church and to reach out with God's message of love and salvation to more people in our community.

Paul prayed to God for relief from the thorn—or to have the thorn removed—and God had an answer for him. "*My Grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*" For Paul, that answer was enough. He accepted it. He delighted in it. "*Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*" The thorn did not stop Paul from serving his Lord. Against all odds, this man was able to spread salvation of Christ from Jerusalem to Rome.

The letters he wrote have continued to provide faith, hope and strength to generations of Christians for thousands of years. He could do that, and he could overcome the thorn because God was in charge of his life. The thorn was a constant reminder to Paul of his weakness. It reminded him

of his need to call on God daily for strength and grace. Paul was not pleased about his situation. He would have rather been healthy and strong as he went out preaching. He prayed to have the thorn removed. God basically said, "No, it is not about you, Paul. I am in charge and I will make you strong so you can carry out my mission in the world."

The message Paul has given us at Grace is that God can share His power and strength even in the midst of our weakness. He will give us strength regardless of the challenges we face in our lives and in our ministries. He will give us strength for what He would have us do. The thorns I carry in my flesh will not stop me from serving my Lord, as long as I can depend on Him to provide the strength I will need. Likewise the thorns that may plague our congregation will not stop our gracious God from carrying out His "Wonderful Acts of Grace," in this community.

So how can we look beyond our thorns and clearly see what God would have us do at Grace and in our personal lives? I believe it is divine guidance if after thorough research and prayer we are led to go in a particular direction. That's how God's will is carried out. There is nothing mystical about that. But yet, it is very, very real. Then, as you look back on your life, you have the consolation of knowing that this is where God wanted you to be and what He wanted you to do.

So, What's Next?

By the middle of 2006, we were still trying to formulate a plan on how we could move out to the land. We had encountered some budget issues. From the perspective of the parish, it was one of those times when we really didn't know what would happen next. It was a time when we needed to carefully consider where God was leading us.

To help find some answers we embarked on some unique planning. Pastor Peterson held a series of listening sessions to hear what our members had to say about our ministries and our future. We appointed a new Strategic Planning Committee to take a fresh look at our mission and our vision for the future of our congregation. In 2007 Grace would reach the 75th Anniversary of its first worship

service, held on September 4, 1932. That would be an appropriate time to reassess our goals and strategic objectives.

As for building a church, we were considering a plan to put in the infrastructure and possibly a pavilion where we could hold some of our outdoor

summer services. At least we could begin to use our land and get our people out there more often. We had decided to start small, rather than committing our congregation to a major debt. Then, God willing, the time will come soon when we will be ready financially to begin building a church.

*“Therefore, I will boast
all the more gladly about my weaknesses,
so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”*
-- II Corinthians 12:9

The Story of the Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson

As you review the history of Grace Lutheran Church it is easy to see that it was God's plan and His blessings that have helped Grace Church to grow and thrive. To carry out His plan, God provided faithful pastors with the unique talents required to lead this congregation in the way He wanted it to go.

One of those pastors was the Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson, who served as Associate Pastor of Grace along with Senior Pastor Warren Granke. Pastor Peterson was the longest serving Associate Pastor in the first 75 years in the history of Grace.

In the summer of 1997, the congregation needed to find another pastor to help Pastor Granke. Pastor Stecker had accepted a call to St. Martini in Milwaukee. It was a very busy time for Pastor Granke. He needed help. The Grace leadership had already given much thought to the need for church staff as well as facilities to serve a growing congregation.

Meanwhile, God had already selected and prepared just the right person to serve with Pastor Granke. A year earlier, Roy Peterson sold his interest in a thriving commodity advisory business in West Bend, Wisconsin to enter the seminary and prepare for a second career in the ministry. Roy's background and life-time experiences were ideal for what Grace would need.

A Life-Changing Decision

Roy Peterson had been the president of the company he had started with his partner 10 years earlier. Roy, his wife Joanie and their four children were active members of St. John's Lutheran Church in West Bend.

During their years in West Bend, Roy and Joanie were extremely busy, managing a successful business and raising their family. At the same time Roy served as a part-time lay minister at St. John's and did part-time class work at Concordia University Wisconsin.

After Roy had completed his degree work at Concordia, he and Joanie made a very big life-changing decision. He sold his business and

enrolled in Concordia Seminary, St. Louis to train for the ministry. By the fall of 1997 Roy was completing his seminary education and was ready to begin his year of vicarage, which he served with Pastor Granke at Grace during 1997-98.

Starting Ministry at Grace

In the fall of 1998, Grace congregation sent a Divine Call to Vicar Peterson. He accepted the call and on November 15, 1998 was ordained into the ministry and installed as Associate Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church.

Pastor Peterson became a very important factor in the ministry of Grace Church. He worked closely with Pastor Granke and took on major leadership responsibilities. He helped with strategic planning and was optimistic about the future for Grace Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls.

Two Innovations in Ministry

Pastor Peterson was instrumental in two important new developments in the recent history of Grace Lutheran Church:

During his first years at Grace, Pastor Peterson completed his graduate work and was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree. As a part of that degree work Pastor Peterson developed the *Men in Christ* and *Women in Christ* discipleship programs.

In this program, small groups of men and small groups of women meet weekly to study and to build relationships with each other. During the initial year, participants do daily Bible study and read seven books on a range of topics including discipleship, Christian disciplines and leadership. Pastor Peterson describes the objective of *Men in Christ* and *Women in Christ* as: "*Together we learn to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.*"

In late August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast of the United States. Many people have called it the most devastating natural disaster in our country's history. Many Christians throughout the United States gave of their time and resources to help provide necessary relief. Pastor Peterson led the effort at Grace Lutheran Church.

He organized and led groups of volunteers who went to New Orleans to help with cleanup efforts. He also helped to organize fund raising to provide relief and finance the travel for volunteer groups.

The response from members of Grace was outstanding. Immediately following the disaster, Grace members contributed nearly \$3,500 to Lutheran World Relief in order to provide prompt assistance. Over the course of the next several months, Grace members and friends contributed another \$13,419 to be used for volunteer support and relief. In February 2006, an additional \$5,532 was contributed to assist the ministry of a Hispanic mission in the New Orleans area. In total, Grace members donated nearly \$22,500 to the effort.

Even more impressive was the sacrifice of time given by members of Grace. With Pastor Peterson's leadership, over 100 men, women, and teens traveled to New Orleans as part of the Grace response effort. Many of them took time away

from work and family to serve in an area where most of them had never been and caring for people they had never met. "But by God's grace, they willingly went and served in His name and have brought glory to His name and His Church," Pastor Peterson said.

A New Challenge

In January 2007 Pastor Peterson received a Divine Call from the Board of Regents of Concordia University Wisconsin. The call offered a big, new challenge for the talented pastor, to serve as Assistant Vice President of Advancement. It was a newly created position that the Board of Regents believed would be very important to the future growth of the university.

Pastor Peterson decided to accept the call. "After prayerful consideration, I now believe that God is calling me to serve Him through the ministry at Concordia," he said.

Pastor Peterson: The story in His Own Words

In the following, Pastor Peterson answers a few questions about how God led him into the ministry and prepared him for the special work God had laid out for him to do. It is an interesting story of how our Lord prepares and calls His servants to carry out His will and do His work in His church.

*When did you first
think about becoming a pastor?*

"The story that I often tell is about a time when I was six years old. My family had just seen a movie and the local radio station was interviewing kids on the way out of the theater. As you

might guess they were asking kids, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' My answer was 'a pastor.' My grandmother heard that on the radio and never let me forget it. Throughout my younger life I continued to receive encouragement from my family to pursue that path."

*What else in your life
drew you toward the ministry?*

"I'm really a product of our Lutheran education system. I attended St. John's Lutheran grade school, and then went to Milwaukee Lutheran High School for a year and a half. While I graduated from Kewaskum High School, I finished my formal education at Concordia University Wisconsin and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Certainly our Lutheran schools helped move me in the direction of ministry. I can still remember many of my teachers along the way who encouraged me toward ministry."

*Was ministry always
a part of your life plans?*

“By the time I graduated from high school it wasn’t really part of my plan. I wasn’t planning to become a pastor or pursue any other work in the church. I had grown up on a farm and was interested in careers related to agriculture and business. Looking back I can really see how God worked to shape and form me for His purposes.

“My years after high school helped to prepare me for the business world. After my partner and I started the Stewart-Peterson advisory services, I learned a great deal about managing a business and working with people.

“As I look back on those years I have come to realize that God had blessed me with a unique set of experiences that have proven very helpful for my years in the ministry. And now as I reflect on my years at Grace I see God’s hand is again at work preparing me for whatever He has planned.”

*What finally prompted you
to go into ministry?*

“During my time at Stewart-Peterson my life became more stable. Church became a bigger part of our family life. One weekend we had a guest preacher from Concordia who talked about the Lay Ministry program at Concordia. That really caught my attention. I thought it sounded like a great way to be able to do many of the things a pastor does without the need to go to the seminary. I pursued the Lay Ministry program at Concordia.

“In 1990, when Pastor Mumm retired at St. John’s, I was able to take an active role in ministry serving as Youth Director. I was also helping lead worship each weekend and taught confirmation classes. That, of course, increased my interest in ministry, to the point that we were finally led to leave the business and go to the seminary.”

*How did you happen to serve
your vicarage at Grace?*

“Second career students at the seminary in St. Louis are placed by district presidents into

churches where they serve their year as a vicar. The Rev. Dr. Ron Meyer was president of the South Wisconsin District at the time. President Meyer was well aware of my personal circumstances.

“My family continued to live near Slinger while I was studying at the seminary. I wanted to remain in this immediate area so that my kids could finish high school at Milwaukee Lutheran.

“At the same time, Grace developed a vacancy for an associate pastor and President Meyer was led to place me at Grace for my vicarage. He also hoped that if things worked out that I could be called to fill that vacancy.”

*Why do you feel God led you to accept
the Divine Call to serve at Grace?*

“During my vicarage year it became clear that Grace was a good fit for me. My experiences and background fit well at Grace and that I was able to bring some needed skills to the overall ministry. I never really considered any other options.

“I think one of the most important things that I have brought to Grace is my personal passion for ministry, specifically enlarging the Kingdom of God. In the Great Commission we are called to make disciples as the Holy Spirit works in and through us. As we do, the Kingdom of God will grow both in numbers of souls and in depth of faith. To that end, my focus at Grace has been on worship and discipleship.”

*What did you see as the most important
developments in the ministry of Grace
during the years you served here?*

“God has blessed Grace in many ways over the past ten years. It is evident that God has gathered together a significant number of people who share a passion for reaching the lost. This evangelical spirit has been blessed and God has added to our numbers consistently. While this is a great blessing, it has also put a real strain on our facilities which simply were not designed for the demands placed upon them by a congregation our size. The vision by our lay leaders and the courage

to buy land and consider expanding our ministry on County Highway Q were an important development in the history of Grace.”

How did you feel about the Grace response to the needs of Hurricane Katrina victims?

“The response to Katrina is one of the proudest moments in the recent history of Grace. The incredible outpouring of support is a clear mark of God working through His people. I believe that everyone who participated in any way, whether actually going, contributing financial or material resources, or providing prayer support, reflected the impact of Christ in their lives.

“This type of compassion ministry is important in our day as it shows the world that Christianity is more than just words, it shows the real heart of Christ for people. I believe that this type of ministry is and will continue to grow as an important part of Grace’s future.”

What has resulted from the Men in Christ, and Women in Christ programs?

“The impact of *Men in Christ* and *Women in Christ* goes well beyond what many people realize at Grace. Not only have participants benefited personally, but they have become a significant blessing to our congregation and to other churches where they have gone. *Men in Christ* participants

now make up the vast majority of the Board of Elders. In addition, *Men in Christ* and *Women in Christ* members serve on almost every other board or committee within the church.

“*The Men in Christ* and *Women in Christ* programs have become the leadership and spiritual development conduit for our church and as such will have a tremendous impact on our ministry for the next generation. Because of the spiritual foundation that is laid through these programs, Grace will continue to grow in the work of the Lord and the furtherance of His Kingdom.”

As you look ahead, what is your vision for Grace for the next 25 years?

“Vision in a church is ultimately God’s and He instills it in His people. From my perspective, I think Grace is at a critical crossroads. There are many ways that good ministry can be done and the leadership of Grace has developed a plan and model for moving forward. Now it will be is up to the congregation as a whole to join in that vision.

“What needs to happen to make any vision a reality? I think the answer is that the church really needs to see itself as the *Body of Christ* and function as such.

“That means that we recognize our uniqueness and differences, but *work together* to do the work for which we are called and lead. Only when the church lives together in this way can it hope to move forward and bring glory to God.”

Section V: A Vision for the Future

Looking Back to See the Way Ahead

Thirty years ago when Pastor Fahl announced that he intended to retire, the Board of Elders responded with a letter that included these words: *“Through your decision, God has brought Grace congregation to a time of soul searching, a time that makes us want to look back and a time that is forcing us to look ahead.”*

The 75th Anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church is again such a time. Grace is looking back and counting the many blessings our Lord has heaped upon this congregation over these many years. At the same time Grace is in a very challenging era of its history, when planning ahead is essential.

Church attendance is growing. The congregation has been expanding its ministry to reach out to more people with a variety of ministries such as the Manna program and Acts of Grace mission trips. Land has been purchased to establish a larger campus for our church and school facilities.

All of this requires a good deal of soul searching and wise decision making on the part of our church members and leaders. Reviewing history can be instructive. Mistakes of the past can be avoided, but perhaps more importantly, the history of a church can provide a review of the founding principles and purposes upon which a church has been built.

The charter members of Grace Lutheran Church put several foundation stones in place that have survived to this day.

-- The founders of Grace wanted a *Lutheran* church where they could worship and follow the *Lutheran* traditions.

-- They promoted their fledgling mission worship center by declaring boldly that, *“We Preach Christ Crucified.”*

-- They named their church *“Grace,”* reflecting their desire to reach out with God’s love and mercy.

-- And finally, they were determined to adhere to the *Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God*, to guide them in teaching, preaching and in all matters.

These foundation stones provided a firm base upon which Grace Lutheran Church grew and

thrived. These same foundation stones can help Grace to build and continue to grow in the work of the Lord. They are an important part of our past and provide a useful guide for our future. It also is good to remember that the church that was built on this firm foundation of faith in *Christ Crucified* has been greatly blessed by the Lord.

With His help, Grace Church has been able to grow and expand its ministries. From the 25 adults and six children who attended that first worship service, the membership of Grace has grown to more than 2,300 baptized members and sponsors a multitude of important ministries.

But what lies ahead for Grace Lutheran Church and School? Grace is celebrating 75 years of blessings, but what does our Lord want us to do now to continue doing His will in the next 25 years and beyond. What would the Lord be pleased to see at the 100th Anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church?

As we celebrate our first 75 years, new strategic

*“All Scripture is God breathed
and is useful for teaching, rebuking,
correcting and training in righteousness,
so that the man of God may be thoroughly
equipped for every good work.”*

-- II Timothy 3:16

plans are being put in place, with a new mission statement and vision of how Grace can move forward to do the work of the Lord. We have some useful advice from the past as these new plans are put in place and as we proceed forward.

Thirty years ago, June 5, 1977 when Pastor Fahl preached his retirement sermon, he encouraged us to look ahead and to continue in the “work of the Lord.” His message and text are just as meaningful today. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* I Corinthians 15:58.

Eighteen years ago, June 25, 1989 when Pastor Dietz was retiring from Grace he advised us to keep tuned in to the “*gentle whisper of our loving God.*” He told the story from I Kings 19 of the prophet Elijah, who was afraid and tried to run away from his responsibilities. But God told him to go to the mountain and listen. There was a wind, and an earthquake and a fire but he did not hear God in the wind, the earthquake or the fire. “*And after the fire came a gentle whisper*” – I Kings 19:12.

The point: “Let God be God,” Pastor Dietz advised. As we look forward we should not run away as Elijah tried to do. We should “let God be God” and listen for “His gentle whisper” to guide our way forward.

Turning Points

Grace has often faced difficult decisions when the future seemed bleak. Still, the congregation has thrived. Many times the members of Grace have prayed for wisdom and waited for answers. While often there seemed to be no solution in sight, the Lord has always blessed this congregation in His own way and provided answers in His good time.

There was the time when the storefront worship center became too crowded. The congregation wanted its own church, but had accumulated only \$400 in their Depression era building fund. Still, the Lord provided a way to move the Gospel Chapel from Milwaukee and place it on the corner of Main and Hayes to provide a church.

Within 10 years, the congregation was outgrowing the white church and needed more space. Funds were raised and with much volunteer help an annex was added, but still more space would be needed. It took another 10 years before Grace could move into its new church.

In 1949 the members of Grace adopted a resolution to start a Christian day school in Menomonee Falls. While the members were determined, their efforts were thwarted by a lack of financial resources. It took another 15 years, until the fall of 1964, before their objective could be met. But the Lord did provide a school, where for 45 years now children have received a Christian education and where they could learn to grow closer to their Savior throughout their daily lives.

Over the years, from the 1960s through the 1980s, Grace accumulated a significant amount of debt. Revenues often fell short of budgeted expenditures, due in part to the high cost of servicing existing debt. The building of the CAC in 1978-79 had added significantly to that debt burden.

Then in 1993, under Pastor Granke’s leadership, the Board of Directors agreed to a debt-reduction fund drive conducted under the theme, “Freedom to Serve.” The Lord blessed that campaign. Debts were reduced. Grace was again free to look forward and outward in doing the work of the Lord.

In January 2006, Grace faced another setback. The Board of Directors decided to delay plans to build a church on the land Grace owns on County Highway Q due to concerns about increasing debt.

In March 2007 we again faced a time of uncertainty. Pastor Peterson announced that he had accepted a call to Concordia University Wisconsin. “This leaves a hole in our ministry,” Pastor Granke

*“Be ye steadfast, unmovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord,
for as much as ye know that your labor
is not in vain in the Lord.”*

-- I Corinthians 15:58

observed. “It has been nearly 10 years that Pastor Peterson and I served together and it was good.” Pastor Peterson had developed the Men in Christ and Women in Christ discipleship programs. He led our Hurricane Katrina relief efforts and was taking part in strategic planning.

Shortly after Pastor Peterson’s announcement, Music Coordinator John Marrs accepted a call to a church in Houston, Texas. John had developed and led the contemporary Rejoice worship services at Grace. He wrote and led the “Passion for Jesus” and “Heaven Rejoices Tonight” musical productions. Both John Marrs and Pastor Peterson had helped to attract more young families to Grace.

Clearly it was a time for the members of Grace to pray to the Lord for answers. Perhaps it was again time to heed Pastor Fahl who advised Grace to be steadfast in the work of the Lord “*for ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*”

Leading the Way Forward

Pastor Granke mapped out the way ahead for Grace Church in a series of three sermons preached the last three Sundays of March, 2007 just before Palm Sunday and Easter. The theme for his messages: “When the going gets tough it’s time to *reflect*, to *plan*, and then *get going*,” Pastor Granke said. Just as Pastors Fahl and Dietz had done in the past, Pastor Granke went to Holy Scripture to find answers. Each sermon drew on the wisdom found in the Word of God to help us find the *will of God* for the future of our church.

A Time to reflect

“It is easy for us to forget that this is His ministry and that all things, yes, our church and our ministry are in the hands of God,” Pastor Granke said. “We are His instruments to carry out His will. He uses us in marvelous ways in our personal Christian lives, our faith life and in our ministry together.”

Pastor Granke referred to the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:12 to set the stage for his series of three sermons on looking forward; where Paul said he would “press on” for the sake of Christ, because Christ had taken hold of him.

*“I press on to take hold
of that for which Christ
took hold of me.”*

-- Philippians 3:12

Paul’s words provide an example of what the members of Grace must do as they face tough times, are uncertain and reflect on how to proceed into the next 25 years and beyond.

“I can’t help but think of the old hymn that keeps going through my mind,” Pastor Granke said. *“Jesus Savior pilot me over life’s tempestuous sea; Unknown waves before me roll, Hiding rock and treacherous shoal. Chart and compass come from Thee; Jesus Savior pilot me.”*

Are we going to be okay? Can Grace continue to move forward through the troubles and setbacks

we’ve seen recently? “Indeed we are,” Pastor Granke said, “if we don’t try to put the ministry on our own backs, but go to the Lord for direction every day.

“We are going to be okay if we remember that our lives and our ministry are in God’s hands. If we seek to do His will, if we trust Him we are going to be okay. In fact, we are going to be blessed.” God has blessed Grace with dedicated pastors, teachers and a wonderful support staff. He has blessed Grace with lay leaders who have stepped up to the plate and hard-working volunteers who carry out many of our ministries.

“We will continue to be blessed if we remember that what we do together is not about us, it is about Him. It is about remembering His will, His way, His word,” Pastor Granke said. “We can, as Paul says, ‘press on’ together knowing that God has shaped our ministry, and is going to continue to guide us and bless us as we seek to do His will. We press on together knowing that the future of our congregation and our ministry is totally in God’s hands. That’s good. That’s wonderful for us to know that.”

As we press on it is also good to know that we can go to our Lord in prayer and ask him to guide us as we go forward. In the first of his three sermons he offered this challenge:

“Not one member of Grace should let one day go by without talking with the Lord about Grace, about our ministry together and about our future ministry, about the places where God would lead us,” he said. “Lay this at the feet of the Lord and say, ‘Lord show us the way, offer your hand of love when we need it.’”

A Time to Plan

Pastor Granke’s second sermon took us to the next step: “When the going gets tough, the tough plan.” A week earlier as we reflected on our situation, including our blessings, we heard how the Apostle Paul encouraged us to “press on” toward our goal of a new life in Christ and eventually eternal life. Now it is time to plan for how we are

going to “press on” in the future. We often become involved in planning to make good use of our time and our resources in our daily lives. Planning is also important when we are thinking about the Lord’s work. In his sermon, Pastor Granke called our attention to the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 to help determine what Grace should consider as it plans for the future.

“Paul stresses how important it is to bring people to God,” Pastor Granke said. “In these verses Paul tells the believers in Corinth, and therefore us as well, that we are not to be judging people, we are to be reaching them for Christ. Why? Paul answers in verses 17 and 18:

‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.’

“Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. God sent his Son to do this for all people, to make peace with a perfect God for sinful humans, for you and for me,” Pastor Granke explained.

Then in verse 19 Paul adds: *“That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*

In Christ God was offering peace and forgiveness to the whole world. “It is important that you and I know that,” Pastor Granke said. As Christians we do know that, because we’ve been touched by God in our baptism and in the Lord’s Supper. “That peace of God has touched us in our hearts and lives,” Pastor Granke added. “But God doesn’t want that peace to stay right here. He wants it to go out and be shared with others.”

The Apostle Paul makes very clear in verse 20 what a Christian church should be about, what it must have as a high priority in its ministry: *“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

“This is tremendous encouragement to you and to me,” Pastor Granke said, “to be about the Lord’s business, in our personal lives, but also as we think of humanity and of our next door neighbors, our co-workers, and the people we touch as we go about our daily lives. This text reminds us that because of

Jesus Christ, you and I have received the peace of God. And God wants us to share that peace and love with others. Paul says that it is important to God that people listen to this message.

“Paul reminds us that it’s all about Jesus, it is not about us. It is God’s will that blessings come into the lives of people, that peace, that love, that forgiveness and that hope for the daily journey. Finally, Christ has paved the way to relationship with God for humanity, for you and for me.

“So it is important that we grow, that we grow personally in our faith life and that we grow in our families by sharing the love Paul is talking about with our spouse and with our children in our family. It is also important that we each help to grow the church by sharing this love with others.

“When you think about this text it really makes planning a simple thing for us at Grace. But I’d like to take it to a level where we have some handles to grab on to as we think of planning for today and for tomorrow in our personal lives and in our lives together as a congregation.

“I’m going to share five words with you, words you have seen and heard countless times. These five words are the basis for planning in God’s kingdom drawn from His word. The five words are: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism. You may remember them from the 40 Days of Purpose. These five words represent what we need to do as we plan our personal faith walk and as we plan our life together as God’s people in this place,” Pastor Granke said. He then explained each word in more detail as follows:

“**Worship** is honoring God. It is being together as God’s people, praising God together and seeking opportunity to have our faith built up. We are equipped to do the Lord’s work through the Word and the sacrament. As we plan for the future it is imperative that we are in worship at every opportunity.

“**Ministry** can be explained in three words: ‘Compassion for people.’ Compassion shows itself in two ways: Compassion for the physical needs and compassion for the lost, for those who are challenged spiritually, going through tough times. We as God’s people need to seek by the Holy Spirit that compassion and spirit of love for others. We have many ministries that show compassion, but it’s

important that these ministries are given a high priority in our plans for the future.

“**Evangelism** is the mission spirit among us. I’m talking about a mission spirit that shows itself in the first century church. In Acts 1:8 the writer Luke reports Jesus saying, *‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and will be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’* If God were inspiring Luke to write today standing before us, he might say, *‘You will receive power to reach out to Menomonee Falls, and Milwaukee, and Germantown and Sussex and Jackson.’* It is a mission spirit that starts here but spreads to the very ends of the earth.

“I am so thankful for our Acts of Grace Ministry here, where people are literally going out and sharing the Love of Jesus in a mission spirited way wherever we can go, where God leads us. We are thankful for Al and Shirley Piepenbrink that they have been blessed by God to lead this ministry. They inspire us with the mission spirit that is so essential within our congregation. It is one of our purposes. We plan for it today and for tomorrow.

“**Discipleship** is about growing so that we can be like and serve like the disciples of Jesus. It is important that we grow. I can’t stress that enough. It is important that we focus on education in the setting of the church, whether it is for the very young or for all of us. But we can grow only when the Word of God is a priority in our lives every day. We need to read it, study it, and get together and talk about it that we can grow that we may become disciples who can reach out to others.

“**Fellowship** is making sure that we have relationships with God’s people. This includes relationships with one another in small groups and in long-term friendships. It is important that we foster these and that we have relationships that reach to our community.

“So, when you think of those five purposes and think of our text and our plan for today and tomorrow is to grow,” Pastor Granke continued. “Our plan is to grow in our faith lives, to see growth in our congregation, to see spiritual growth in our community, because it is a high priority to reach our greater community.

“Our plan will have implications for staff and

facilities. As our membership and ministries grow, our staff needs will grow. Our facilities are already taxed. We may need to become very intent and focused on asking questions about what we are going to do about facilities for the future. And yes, one of the implications is resources. Will we need more as we look to the future?

When our congregation started 75 years ago it had a purpose, to “Preach Christ Crucified.” What they did as a congregation as they grew reflected the five purposes we are looking at today. They worshiped, they did ministry, they did evangelism and drew in new members, they studied God’s Word to grow as His disciples and they had fellowship with each other.

Our plan now is to renew ourselves in those purposes as we look at today and tomorrow. And to focus on these things, which we believe will be the foundation of a marvelous ministry to continue right here in this congregation and in this place.

Time to Get Going

Pastor Granke’s third sermon was delivered by Vicar Will Miller, because the Pastor Granke was suffering from laryngitis. While the text for the sermon was Colossians 1: 24-29, Vicar Will introduced the topic with the words, “*Git-R-Done*,” words used often by comedian Larry the Cable Guy. These words are often used, not just for completing a project, but to take the first step, to get going!

“As we think about getting going in this transition time some might say that it is time to look for a new paradigm,” Vicar Will said. “But I’m not going to tell you about something new. Instead I’m going to tell you that it is time to look at the ways God has so richly blessed this congregation in the past, and today, and how I believe it is going to continue to carry us forward tomorrow.”

The Vicar said he loved reading about the early history of Grace, when it was a tiny mission group that worshiped in a store front on Main Street. The group was small, but determined. They had a purpose, “We Preach Christ Crucified.” And they must have had that “*Git-R-Done*,” spirit.

They took the first steps to contact the mission board and get the mission started. They continued to support the mission as it grew through many times

of transition when new plans were made and they had to “get going” to carry out God’s will and His plans in this place.

That message of Christ Crucified is at the heart and soul of St. Paul’s ministry to the churches he started. To them he said, I am preaching to you Christ and Him crucified. It was the purpose that “got him up in the morning,” Vicar Will explained. It’s what moved the Apostle Paul to get going and “*Git-R-Done*,” as he walked thousands of miles to spread the Gospel.

“And for so many years, it is what got us up in the morning here at Grace Lutheran Church,” the Vicar added. “We preach Christ and Him crucified. That’s what’s at the heart of the day’s message that Paul had for the Colossians and it also speaks to us here today at Grace Lutheran Church.

“Paul understood that it is not just the preacher who ‘preaches Christ Crucified.’ All of us as Christians preach Christ and Him crucified. We preach Christ crucified as *resurrection people* – that is *people whose lives have been changed by this amazing message of love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ*,” Vicar Will explained.

“Paul knew what it was like to have his life radically changed by that message. So he refused to preach anything different. And we know what it is like to have our lives changed by that message so we continue to preach it.

“As Paul wrote to churches he had started he faced a major question: Is it better for me to die and go to Jesus or is it better to continue living and remain here serving these churches, including the church at Colosse?

“Paul answered that question directly when writing to the Philippians. ‘*For me to live is Christ and to die is gain*’ Philippians 1:21. What he means is that it doesn’t really matter whether we live or die; we are the Lord’s,” Vicar Will explained. “It is not a fatalistic attitude. It is a comforting thing. It means that whatever happens, we are in the Lord’s hands,” Vicar Will added.

“Grace family, you are in the Lord’s hands. So Paul decides that it is good to remain alive and continue ministering. The Church in Colosse needed him. Even more than that, they needed each other as a church family. He encouraged them to

continue to preach Christ Crucified and to hold up that message to the world. And as they spread the joy of Christ, Paul says that three things were going to happen to them. 1) They were going to grow spiritually. When you have to own it in public you grow spiritually. 2) They were going to find joy in their own faith. 3). Other believers were going to be strengthened in their faith, and those who are not yet a part of the kingdom are going to come into the kingdom,” Vicar Will continued.

“So joy increases for all people. It just spreads. So for spreading that message of Jesus Christ, Paul gives some very simple instructions to the Colossians, as well as to the members of Grace Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls.

“In verse 27 Paul is encouraging the Christians in the Colossian church to live publicly in a way that honors God. ‘*To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of his mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*’

“Notice what he is saying to them, meaning the saints, He has chosen to make known this mystery among the Gentiles, that is those who are not yet a part of the kingdom.

“The church is the only organization that exists primarily for the *sake of those who are not yet members*. And so as we live and share that love and joy of Jesus Christ and we share that witness publicly and live in a way that honors God, as we work together, as we struggle side by side, and as we share each other’s burdens, other people will see our works and our love and they will give glory to God in heaven. They will see that the Gospel has changed not only you as an individual but all of us as a family. Live in a way that honors God.

“In verse 28 Paul reminds them to be brave, to know that their salvation is secure. ‘*We proclaim him admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*’ Nothing we do earns our salvation; it is free because Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins. That’s why we preach Christ and Him crucified.” Vicar Will said.

“Our salvation is secure and that’s important because it makes us free to live in the light of that life and salvation. So it is God that is going to make things happen among us. We serve the living Christ,

the Christ who died and the Christ who rose from the dead. So He is the one who will make things happen in the future at Grace church.

“Who took you all from a little store front to where you are today? Was it your talented people? Good leadership? Who started your church? Was it your first pastor? Be careful how you answer.

“God started this church and He sent you your first pastor! He has sent you every talented person you have ever had on your staff. He has provided for you so you may be a blessing for each other and to the outside wider community. It is God the Holy Spirit who will make things happen and will carry you forward in the future.

“In verse 29 Paul reminds them that they may have to suffer for their faith. It is not always easy. Sometimes there are going to be sacrifices. *‘To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.’* What I like about verse 29 is that Paul says he struggles with His energy which so powerfully worked in him.

“No person on his own could have done what Paul did to spread the Gospel,” Vicar Will explained. “St. Paul was compelled, he was pushed by the love of Jesus Christ that drove him on and it was His energy that he struggled with. It is that same Spirit, that same energy that works in us as a people of Grace. We struggle with His energy. And that’s important.

“So if we continue to proclaim Christ Crucified as resurrection people, there are five areas here at Grace that guide us in that. You’ve heard about them: They are worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism.

“So as we move on through this period of transition at Grace, ‘getting going’ means worshiping. In Acts chapter 2, the early Church is characterized by worship; they met together daily, they broke bread together; they sang together, they studied scripture together. We meet once a week for the same purpose. Worshiping builds us up in the faith. We build each other up in the faith. We come here to receive God’s grace in baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It’s important that we continue in our worship.

“It is important the people have a good time together in fellowship. It’s important to make disciples with Bible study, the Men in Christ and

Women in Christ programs as well as the Sunday School JAM for the kids.

“We must continue ministering. Ministering happens when God opens the door so we continue to minister to people in need. We have the economy store and the Manna program. We work with individual families in the inner city, and we work with people right here in our own midst.

“A part of our great commission is evangelizing, telling that story over and over of Jesus Christ and His love for us. With our Acts of Grace missions we are reaching out, not only in this area and Milwaukee, but also to other areas including Idaho, New Orleans, Mexico, Guatemala, and Brazil.

“These five areas guide us in our mission of proclaiming Christ Crucified. Getting going is not about reinventing the wheel. It is not about doing something really new, it is about being faithful. These five purposes serve as a guide for us to remain faithful.

“So to under gird this whole ministry, this whole mission that we have, our Grace church needs two things,” Vicar Will said.

“1) We need to be coming before our God in prayer.

“2) We also need to continue to provide our generous financial support of His work here at Grace church.

“In a time of transition it can be a temptation to think about what we may be missing,” the Vicar added. “We had Pastor Peterson for 10 years and now he is gone. We had a music director, John Marrs who brightened our worship with his music and we will miss him. These men were a blessing from God and we wish them the best and pray for them in their new positions.

“Now we want to encourage you to look at what we have, to count our blessings and be thankful as we move forward,” Vicar Will continued. “Here at Grace we have God’s people. We are a church in this place. We have people with needs amongst us and in our greater community. We have a message that is for all people and we have the Spirit of God who still is here with us.

“Now it is time to move forward. It is time to get going. It is time to *‘Git-R-Done.’* When taking that first step of faith you are already halfway there,” Vicar Will concluded.

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.” -- Acts 1:8*

Grace is a witness for Christ to the hungry and the needy through our Manna program. Manna volunteers distribute food, used furniture, appliances, and household items donated by members.



Pastor Granke has spearheaded programs to provide Christmas for needy inner city families.



Grace witnesses in Menomonee Falls and Germantown by taking part in community parades on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and at Christmas time.



Several Acts of Grace mission groups totaling over 100 volunteers helped clean up homes in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina devastated that area in 2005.



A 14-member Acts of Grace mission team including Vicar Will Miller and his wife Ana went to Brazil to be His witnesses in June 2007. Ana is a native of Brazil. Grace groups have also traveled to Russia, Guatemala and Mexico.

Our Mission, Our Vision

Preparing for the Future of Grace Lutheran Church

During the weeks when Pastor Granke's three sermons were being delivered, Grace was already taking action. The Voters' Assembly approved extending the request for placement of a second career seminary graduate to serve at Grace with Pastor Granke.

Our preference was for a graduate who had experience in management and in working with people. We needed someone like Pastor Peterson who would be well equipped to step in and take responsibilities to manage ministries. Pastor Peterson had been very effective due to his work ethic as well as his experience in starting, growing and managing his own business.

Meanwhile, the Strategic Planning Committee was formulating a new Statement of Mission and clear Vision Statement to guide planning for the future of Grace church.

Pastoral Vacancy Filled

In April, Robert Goodwin was selected to fill the vacancy at Grace. Like Pastor Peterson, he comes to Grace with a good deal of business experience. He has held several positions with major responsibility including services as a senior vice president of sales and as chief operating officer.

While training for the ministry, Goodwin served as a vicar at Christ Victorious Lutheran Church in Chaska, Minnesota with Pastor Thomas Braun, who provided a report on his performance.

"Rob displays an outstanding servant attitude at all times," Pastor Braun observed. "His love for sharing Christ with his gifts is second to none." Pastor Braun also made an observation that may be especially important for Grace at this time in its history when reaching out is a high priority. "Since Rob was unchurched until age 23, he has a profound interest in reaching out to the unchurched."

Robert Goodwin is 43 years old, is married and has two children. His wife Sherrill has worked as an elementary school teacher and is working toward her MA degree in Early Childhood Education. Of

all the things we know about Robert Goodwin, *one thing can be said with complete certainty*. Robert Goodwin was prepared and called by Almighty God to be in this place and to serve this congregation at this time in its history.

New Vicar Assigned

On April 25, Grace also learned that Jacob (Jack) Gilbert will begin serving Grace as our Vicar for 2007-08. Gilbert replaced Vicar Will Miller who served at Grace from July 2006 through July 2007. Vicar Will was the first in an on-going vicarage program. Under this arrangement with Concordia University, St. Louis, Grace will have a vicar on staff here every year. After finishing his service at Grace, Vicar Will returned to Concordia Seminary to finish studying for the ministry. We wish him well. His year of service at Grace was greatly appreciated.

The purpose of the Concordia vicarage program is to provide students in their Master of Divinity program with working experience in parish ministry. The minimum of one year of vicarage is served after two thirds of the student's classroom work has been completed.

Both the vicar and the congregation can benefit from this arrangement. The vicar is expected to participate in or observe all facets of the parish ministry. Normally a vicar will preach for regular services at least once a month. Vicars participate in evangelism programs and youth ministries, teach confirmation and Bible classes, visit the sick and shut-ins, assist in administration, conduct liturgies, attend meetings and acquaint themselves with grief and crisis counseling procedures and principles.

Making a Strategic Plan

Grace began using a strategic planning process in the early 1990's after the new constitution was approved that provided Grace with a Board of Directors. The first Board initiated strategic planning and it has proven itself to be a useful tool

in making decisions that have implications for the future of the congregation. While strategic planning is used widely as a business management tool, it has its roots in the Bible. Jesus thought strategically as He gave us the Great Commission: *“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”* -- Matthew 28:19.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus commanded His church to spread the Gospel widely, to start in our home areas and to spread His love and message of salvation outward to all nations. In addition, He promised that He would send His Holy Spirit to give His church the power to succeed in its efforts.

*“You will receive power
when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my witnesses in
Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”*
-- Acts 1:8

Paul's missionary journeys were strategically planned. Each city where he visited and planted a church was at a strategic location. He located his ministry in Ephesus—the gateway to Asia Minor. All who traveled to that area went through Ephesus.

Recent history of Grace Church shows clearly how God is challenging this congregation to move forward. God has blessed Grace with continuous growth in worship attendance. Weekly worship attendance grew from 750 in 1996 to 1,000 in 2006. Grace expanded the number of worship services and strengthened the “Rejoice” contemporary worship format. People responded and the number attending worship services has grown.

The rate of growth, however, slowed as pews began to fill. A crowded church tends to discourage new members from attending and joining a congregation. Seating capacity has limited the attendance at the most popular Sunday morning worship services. Research on church attendance indicates that worship style and time, along with the message and worship experience, are the prime factors that influence church attendance.

Grace has become a regional congregation with a tremendous potential for future growth. While

Menomonee Falls and Germantown account for a majority of Grace's members, our members are scattered throughout Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties. The region served by Grace has a population of over 100,000 souls. Thirty-six percent of this population is unchurched. The area is expected to grow by approximately one percent per year during the next five years. Grace is strategically located to participate in this growth.

Grace is underrepresented in the young adult (25 to 34) and young family (35 to 44) age categories, compared with the overall population of the area. Grace already has many members in these age categories, but there is more that we could do to reach these souls. In addition, we have a smaller percentage of minorities among our membership than in the general population. There is much we can do to be more effective in an area that has a desperate need for God's Word.

The Planning Process

A church that wants to have an impact on today's world must think and act strategically, as well as being grounded in God's Word. In addition, the Biblical strategy is general. It must be adapted to today's culture for it to be relevant and effective. To do this the Grace Board followed a four-step strategic planning process that included discovering *core values*, developing a *statement of mission*, writing a *vision for the future* and establishing *strategic objectives* required to achieve the vision.

1. Discovering Core Values: The strategic planning team gathered information and did an analysis to determine the core values of our congregation. This work included congregational listening sessions conducted in July 2006. Over 200 members attended these sessions. In October 2006 an interactive planning meeting was held with 75 members participating. The pastors, school staff and lay leaders of Grace consolidated the information from these meetings during December 2006 and January 2007.

Their conclusion: The core values present at Grace are similar to the core values of the New Testament congregation in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 2:41-47. They also are similar to the five

purposes author Rick Warren outlined in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, which many members of Grace read during the “40 Days of Purpose” Bible study sessions. As a result, the Strategic Planning Committee evaluated Grace’s current situation and incorporated each of the five purposes that were present in the New Testament church into the mission and vision for Grace Lutheran Church.

2. Developing a Mission Statement: From the start, Grace has been a church with a purpose. The founders made it clear that “*We Preach Christ Crucified.*” In the early 1990’s the Grace Board of Directors developed the first formal mission statement based upon a strategic planning process. It was a three-part statement but did not include a statement of vision or strategic objectives.

The new mission statement was introduced to members in May 2007, along with a statement of vision and strategic objectives. The new statement says the mission of Grace Lutheran Church is to:

***“Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ
to our members, to our community
and to the ends of the earth.”***

While mission statements change from time to time, the basic purpose, to preach Christ and Him Crucified has remained central to our purpose. We preach Christ and all that He taught. We are His church and we are determined to do His will in our lives together.

3. Articulating a Clear Vision: Our statement of vision defines how we view God’s purpose for our ministry in the future. It is a vision that is built around the five purposes developed from the example of the early New Testament church. The vision for Grace Church is to glorify God through:

- **Worship** that honors God, builds faith and equips the saints
- **Fellowship** that builds significant community relationships
- **Discipleship** that transforms lives
- **Ministry** that compassionately serves and cares for others
- **Evangelism** that lovingly extends the Gospel message.

These five purposes represent what we believe God can accomplish through our congregation.

Strategic objectives were then developed as a guide to what needs to happen at Grace to achieve our mission and the vision of our future.

4. Developing Strategic Objectives: The final step in the strategic planning process is to lay out benchmarks for what we intend to accomplish to carry out the will of God and do the work of the Lord. The strategic objectives listed below further define how we see God’s plan for us to help build His kingdom in Menomonee Falls and beyond.

Worship Objectives:

- Double weekly worship attendance
- Provide a relevant and meaningful worship experience
- Develop worship venues to support growth in attendance

Ministry Objectives:

- Elevate and grow the spirit of compassion within the congregation
- Develop new means of providing care such as support groups, care for the elderly, mentoring, and pastoral care

Evangelism Objectives:

- Strengthen a mission-mindedness within the congregation through communication and education
- Develop a local, US and foreign mission presence
- Work to involve every member in a mission project

Discipleship / Education Objectives:

- Continue to develop the men and women’s ministry programs
- Provide small group Bible studies
- Strive toward including all worship attendees in a weekly Bible study
- Continue to provide a high quality grade school education program
- Develop Grace as a school with a reputation for high quality education

Multi-site Ministry Objectives:

- Reach out to other communities or neighborhoods within our region
- Offer both traditional and non-traditional worship

and Bible study where they can be successful in locations other than a church

- Bring together spiritual resources with people who need the Good News in locations closer to their homes and in settings that are less formal and more inviting than the typical church setting

Facilities Objectives:

- Establish a physical presence on Hwy Q to serve as an administrative and community worship site
- Pursue lower capital or no capital approaches to facility needs in support of the multi-site ministry

Professional and Lay Leadership Objectives:

- Create strategic plans to address future pastoral leadership requirements and to develop a pastoral staff needed to support a multi-site ministry
- Implement an administrative and leadership model that includes intentional and systematic staff recruitment and development, emphasizing pastoral care, leadership, accountability, and ethnic diversity to support the long-term multi-site vision

Looking Forward

The new “Mission” and “Vision” have much in common with the bold statement made by the first members of Grace 75 years ago: *“Welcome in Christ’s Name. We Preach Christ Crucified.”* Today the Mission and Vision include all of what is required to preach Christ Crucified effectively in the 21st Century.

Pastor Granke introduced the new Mission Statement, Vision and Strategic objectives to the congregation in his sermon on the weekend of Sunday May 20, 2007. He challenged the members of Grace to look back to how Jesus prayed and to go forward in the mission He laid out for us.

The text for his sermon was John 17:20-26. In this text, Pastor Granke pointed out, Jesus is praying for His church, which is made up of all true believers. This is the church that is known only to Christ, because only He can look into our hearts and know where faith is found. He is praying that His church would show itself and be united and be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father. In His prayer Jesus reminds us that it is through Him and the sacrifice He made that we can be united. In this

text, Jesus is also praying for those who will become believers in the future. He is praying for those who are not yet born, for those who will become a part of the Holy Christian Church.

“This final point is especially important for you and me,” Pastor Granke said. Jesus is praying for the ministry of the church to continue. “As part of the church of Jesus Christ, we know Christ as our Lord and Savior and we realize that it is up to you and me to be a part of sharing that love of the Father as is shown in Jesus Christ.”

*“I pray also for those who will believe
in me through their message
that all of them may be one, Father,
just you are in me and I am in you.”*

-- John 17: 20-21

It is easy to forget that there are so many people around us who don’t know Jesus and don’t have that certainty of faith that we have. “Are we motivated to share that, to minister and get that word out?” Pastor Granke asked the members of Grace. “Does our community know we are doing that? *Are we known in our community as a church that reaches out with good news in every way possible to touch the hearts and lives of the people to meet the needs of all people?*”

“In many ways we are losing the battle,” Pastor Granke added. “The raging nature of sin is making inroads that shock me, touching all parts of people’s lives, tearing down the very fiber of that message that God has presented in His Word, a message that has been a part of our society in so many ways.”

“The bottom line is that you and I have a mission right here at Grace Lutheran Church, a mission to serve the Lord. That’s why we need to have a vision and a strategic plan to do that,” he added.

The leaders of Grace have set some worthwhile objectives for our congregation. They are similar to objectives the Holy Spirit used to compel the New Testament church to reach out and grow. The Grace leadership believes that the number worshipping at Grace can double. *God willing*, that objective will be reached, for we know that *“With God, all things are possible.”* Matthew 19:26. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

May 1, 2002 Grace Lutheran Church became the owner of 80 acres of land along County Highway Q west of Maple Road. The former owners, Ken and Barb Dreger had hoped that one day a church would be built on the land they had farmed for so many years.



Final papers were signed May 1, 2002 for the purchase of 80 acres. Grace was represented by Pastor Granke, Pastor Peterson and William Meyer, an elected representative of the congregation.



Pastors Granke and Peterson out on the Lord's 80 acres to film a video for the Building to Reach Out capital fund campaign.



Children, the future of Grace Lutheran Church, singing praises to their Lord at an Ablaze! campfire service on the land where one day, God willing, their new church will be built.



While there is no church building there yet, members of Grace have gone to worship at outdoor services on the 80 acres Grace has owned since May 1, 2002.



*Where corn once grew, God willing, a church will be built on a hill with a cross lifted high declaring boldly that
"We Preach Christ Crucified!"*

Epilogue

The end of our book is the beginning of another story. We have told you about 75 years of the *Wonderful Acts of a Gracious God*. While the story of these years has been completed, the story of God's Grace goes on and on. In this book pastors Fahl, Dietz and Granke gave you their reflections on the acts and events that shaped the history of Grace church through these years. At the same time, each of them also focused on what is yet to come.

Pastor Fahl was especially eloquent in his June 5, 1977 retirement sermon. While he reminisced over the past, his text and central message encouraged us to look forward. "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" I Corinthians 15:58. His text and words of encouragement are as appropriate today and they were 30 years ago.

Likewise Pastor Dietz focused on looking forward as he preached his final sermon as our Senior Pastor. He told the story of Elijah, who heard the gentle whisper of God nudging him forwards. "Grace can never sit back and say 'there is nothing more we can do.' There is so much that we can do. There are so many challenges for each and every one of us as God's children here in this world, particularly as members of Grace. Hear the gentle whisper of your God, as he urges you to keep on the march, to keep on going."

Now Pastor Granke is again encouraging us to look forward. In a *Together in Grace* article he tells of the farmer who sows seeds and hopes for a harvest, but must depend on God who created the seed and sends rain to help it grow.

"Like the farmer, we at Grace also sow with optimism and pray that the Lord will produce a crop. Our sowing is done through our ministry as we sow the powerful message of the Word of God concerning Jesus Christ." Our theme as we celebrate 75 years is *Sowing the Fields for Another 75 years*. "While we rejoice in our past, we pray that the Lord will bless the ministry of our congregation for another 75 years and beyond," Pastor Granke concludes.