



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Norfolk, Virginia
Praising the Lord for 100 years of Grace
1920-2020



100th Anniversary—February 2020 Issue

Trinity's German Lutheran Roots

Check the names of the 9 signers of Trinity Lutheran's first constitution in 1920 - Pittroff, Lederer, Woost, Wunnenberg, Bremer, Habighorst, Kohner, Schmidt, Pittroff - as well as those who sat in the pews... Keehn, Voight, Hecht, Wagner, Naas, Sinn, Kilian, Remstedt, Herfurth, Wunnenberg, Tamm, Heitmann.

Most were immigrants or children of immigrants from Germany — Lutherans from the country of Martin Luther. They had learned to read Scripture and Luther's small catechism. Some had gone to church schools. They brought their faith and church discipline to America. This rich heritage was Trinity's beginning.



Descendants of these German Lutheran immigrant families who were part of Trinity's beginning still worship with us today — Helen Keehn Everett and Thelma Voight Scroxton. And until a few years ago, Margaret Hecht Conrad, who is now in her heavenly home. Their parents came to America from Germany and joined Trinity Lutheran Church when it was on 34th St. and Omohundro Ave. That church still stands there today.

Trinity's youth in the mid-40's on the parsonage steps.

Front Row: Richard Remstedt, Helen Keehn Everett, Thelma Voight Scroxton and Margaret Hecht Conrad.

Second Step: Lucille Hecht Conrad (far Left) and next to her - Melvin Simms

Last Row - Brothers Otto Hecht (2nd from left) and John Hecht



LWL back in the '30s - Margaret Hecht Conrad's mother, Tillie Hecht, in light colored coat on right; and "Big Mama" Wagner at top in front of door.



Mr. and Mrs. Carl Woost, Sr., charter members of Trinity.

Lutheran Families brought their faith and church discipline to America



Fred and Martha Keehn with Helen's brother Willie in America.

Helen Keehn Everett's parents arrived in New York and made their way to Norfolk because of work opportunities. Her father, Fred, was a blacksmith by trade and got a job with Norfolk Western Railway where he made tools. Helen remembers taking lunch to her father everyday; her mother took in washing and ironing. The family quickly found their way to Trinity, walking to services every Sunday from their neighborhood off of Hampton Blvd!

On the way home the Keehns would treat themselves to a loaf of bread from the delicatessen on 35th St. Helen recalls one Sunday when they didn't make it to church due to heavy rain, Pastor Roehm gave them a harsh chiding for missing the service. Such was the "German" Lutheran tradition in that day.

Helen's brother Willie collected old newspapers when he was a boy, sold them, and donated the money to Trinity. He was also close to the Luhning family, members of Trinity who owned a religious bookstore on 35th St. that he loved to visit.

Helen became a big part of Trinity, assisting Pastor Plawin. Early on, she played the piano for services in Portsmouth when Pastor Plawin developed a mission church there. Later when Trinity moved to Granby St., she became the official Trinity ambassador to church visitors, making home visits during the week to welcome newcomers. She also taught in the kindergarten and Sunday School, took over leadership of the school when Pastor Plawin was called to his eternal home, and was very active in the LWML.



Helen and Marian Eckert taught many years in Trinity's early kindergarten.



Margaret Conrad, Melvin Simms and Helen at a confirmation reunion at Trinity.



Helen and Pastor Plawin



Helen shares her trip to Germany with the LWML...including some wooden shoes and postcards she bought as souvenirs.

Baptisms, confirmations, marriages were important times at Trinity

Thelma Voight Scroxton's parents were also from Germany and members of Trinity early on. Thelma along with her brother and sisters were raised in the church on 34th & Omohundro. They attended Sunday School and church and were confirmed there. Thelma still remembers the fun she had going on hay rides with the young people.



Three members of the Voight family (to the left) in Pastor Plawin's confirmation class.



Thelma and her husband, John were married by Pastor Plawin.



Margaret Hecht Conrad's parents, Rudolph and Tillie Hecht at their wedding in Ridgeway, N.C. They soon made their way to Norfolk and Trinity.

Margaret Hecht Conrad was the last descendant of the Hecht clan at Trinity. Her parents, Rudolph and Tillie Hecht, had come to America from Germany and settled in Ridgeway, N.C., where there was a large community of German immigrants. They came to Norfolk for jobs and Trinity became their home church. All of the Hecht children - Margaret, Lucille, Johnny and Otto - became the next generation of Trinity families. Their descendants are now scattered.

Margaret was active at Trinity all through the years. She taught Sunday School and was very involved in the LWML.

Other Trinity families came from Ridgeway, N.C. as well. It was called "Germantown" because of its large German population. The Albert Sinn family (Albert, Willie Mae and Barbara) came up to Norfolk in 1939 for work, building officer barracks at the Naval Base. Then they went back to Ridgeway in '43 but returned a second time to Norfolk and Trinity in 1948.



Margaret in VBS skit.



Daughter, Barbara Sinn Bumbalough, who grew up at Trinity, wrote a book about the Ridgeway, N.C. German Lutherans. It includes the pilgrimage of three of those German families - the Sinns, Hechts and Kilians - to the Lutheran congregation in Norfolk.

Leonard Kilian and his family later donated land for one of Trinity's mission churches in Chesapeake.

Barbara Sinn and Pastor Plawin at her confirmation.

Children grew up in the church and became the new generation of Lutherans

The Wagner family was also one of Trinity's German families. "Big Mama," as Mrs. Wagner was known, arrived at Ellis Island, married a merchant seaman and made her way to Norfolk and Trinity. She had six children who were all active members of Trinity - Bernie, Carl, Emil, Annie, Izzy and Herbie. Pastor Plawin and other men of the church would drive to Marne Ave. to pick up the children for Sunday School. Among them was a friend of theirs - Melvin Simms - who became a life-time member of the church, working with the youth... and mc-ing many events, bringing life and humor to our congregation.

And there were the Heitmanns, also of German ancestry. Four generations of their family attended Trinity.

Pastor Plawin was of German descent as well, his mother was from Germany. She was the evangelist in the family and sent her son to Concordia College, Bronxville, NY, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. His daughters, Sharon Plawin and Judy Sykes, still worship at Trinity. Sharon was baptized at the first church and remembers her mother preparing the first floor of the parsonage for Sunday School classes.

Children growing up at Trinity in the early days didn't realize at the time that the people with strange names and foreign accents who surrounded them on Sunday had roots in Germany. These were people who knew the Lord and lived their faith..... they were a cloud of witnesses to many.

There were many others who were the bedrock of Trinity; it was always the people who carried on the ministry.



Confirmation photo shows Erma Heitmann Barco, second from left, at Trinity's 1st Confirmation in the new church on Granby St. in 1946. Notice the altar from 34th St. was still being used.



Old timers of Trinity in this picture...1st row center Martha Keehn, and to her left Mama Wagner, then Tillie Hecht, then Margaret Hecht Conrad, and above her Lucille Hecht Conrad and next to her Willie Keehn...and many others.

Please take a moment and complete the insert— Share your church history with us.

Place in the offering plate. We would love to hear from you.

What brought you to Trinity?