



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



100th Anniversary—August 2020 Issue

## Trinity Plants 9 Mission Churches in Hampton Roads Area

Germans and Scandinavians brought the Lutheran church to America as they immigrated to this new country. As the number of churches grew they organized into synods. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) was formed April 26, 1847, in Chicago, IL, at St. Pauls Lutheran Church.

Evangelism was part of the LCMS strategy from the very beginning. Very often, a pastor would determine where there was a group of Lutherans and help them organize a church. Each LCMS district developed a mission board to carry out this work.



## Trinity Itself Started as a Mission and Became the “Mother Church”



Pastor O. J. Oelschlaeger of Richmond, VA., conducted 4 to 5 services in Norfolk in 1904, but he was called to another assignment and the work in Tidewater was discontinued. Then in 1920 Pastor F. Meuschke visited “this port and found 18 of our communicants in Norfolk and Newport News.” The first service was held May 1920 at 2808 Granby Street. Then on Trinity Sunday, May 30, 1920, services were held in a funeral parlor located on the corner of 29th and Granby Streets. Baltimore pastors held services during the Summer and Fall.

Pastor Meuschke accepted the call as pastor of Trinity in December 1920 with 10 charter members. In 1921 with the aid of the LCMS Church Extension Board, a house with a vacant lot adjoining was purchased on the corner of 34th Street and Omohundro Avenue for \$17,000. The house served as both parsonage and place of worship. After only 5 months, Pastor Meuschke accepted a call to Long Island, N.Y. and Pastor Louis Roehm was installed as pastor on July 10, 1921. He served as pastor of Trinity for 10 years. Trinity went on to become the “Mother Church” in the South Hampton Roads area as it established mission congregations. Some of these were established with a core group of Trinity’s own members who lived in those areas.

## 1928 Nazareth Lutheran Church, Hopewell, VA

In October 1928, Pastor Roehm, Trinity’s pastor, began missionary work in the growing city of Hopewell, VA., where there were Lutherans. He began conducting services there on Sunday afternoons. Pastor Roehm left Trinity in 1931 and Pastor Paul Plawin became pastor of Trinity and continued to conduct services in Hopewell for 7 more years. His wife accompanied him most of those years. They would stay over to Monday to make home visits. Trinity’s organist, John Ernst Wunnenberg, assisted with music.



Pastor Roehm



Pastor Plawin

Pastor Plawin oversaw the building of Nazareth’s first church which was completed in 1938, and Frank G. Koehler was installed as pastor. He served there for 40 years. The growth of the congregation in the late '40s and early '50s led to the construction of a larger church building in 1956. An addition was added in 1976. The church also developed a preschool from 1979 to 1994.





## 1939 Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hampton, VA

In 1921 Pastor Roehm began worship services at Wythe Community Chapel in Hampton to accommodate those living on the North side of Hampton Roads. Services continued until the Great Depression of the '30's. Later the economic boom of

World War II brought new people into the area including many Lutherans. Services were revived in 1939 by Pastor Plawin which led to the establishment of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in 1941. By 1944 the congregation moved into their new chapel and the church grew quickly. A kindergarten was started in 1947 which grew into a preschool, elementary and middle school.



## 1942 Redeemer Lutheran Church, Portsmouth, VA

Pastor Roehm began holding services and Sunday School in Portsmouth in 1924, but after six months, services were discontinued. Eighteen years later in 1942, Pastor Plawin began evening services in Snelling's Funeral Chapel every other Sunday. Helen Everett played the hymns. Then in 1943 Pastor Lorenz Blankenbuehler was called to be pastor while still a student at Concordia Seminary. He held his first morning service on Sunday, July 11.

A Sunday School and Adult Bible Class began and a Kindergarten was added in 1944. In 1945 a much needed church building was completed. With the end of WWII, the congregation suffered a setback as members with defense jobs returned to their former hometowns, but by the late 40's and 50's the church started growing again. An educational wing was added in 1966.



## 1952 Unity Lutheran Church, Norfolk, VA

**Faith Lutheran Church (1952) and  
Shepherd Lutheran Church (1965)  
combined to become Unity**



Pastor Plawin helped established Faith Lutheran Church in Norfolk during the era of racial segregation. In 1952 Pastor Walter Hart was assigned to Norfolk to scout the area to see what potential there would be for ministry in the neighborhood surrounding Norfolk State University. That led to the formation of Faith Lutheran Church on Princess Anne Road. A church and Sunday School hall were built in 1954 and a preschool ministry was begun by Pastor Hart's wife. Pastor James Mueller became minister in 1959. He said Trinity and Christ Lutheran were very supportive of Faith's ministry. "In 1960 Trinity provided additional teachers for Faith's VBS with an enrollment of 325 children, even after having to turn away 100 children."

In 1965 Pastor Plawin saw the potential for ministry and a kindergarten in Norfolk's Park Place neighborhood. That led to the purchase of a church with a large wing for a Youth Center on Llewelyn and 29th Street. Pastor Gary Fisher became pastor of Shepherd Lutheran Church in 1968 and put emphasis on the Youth Center to reach out and give adult supervision to children and teenagers in need.

Faith was renamed Unity Lutheran Church in 1978 when Shepherd Lutheran closed and the two congregations combined as one.



## 1953 Christ Lutheran Church, Norfolk, VA



Early in 1953 Pastor Plawin assisted in establishing Christ Lutheran Church on Military Highway in Norfolk, which at the time was a rural area with open fields. An LCMS vicar began mission work that summer and property was purchased for the new church. Worship services were held in a seven-room house located on the five-acres site with about 45 people present. Sunday School also began at the time. Dick Runyan from Trinity became the first President of the Congregation. By December, the congregation was officially organized and the name Christ Lutheran Church was adopted. Pastor Edward C. Muhly was ordained and installed on July 18, 1954.



A pre-fab A-frame church structure was completed in March 1955 and a church kindergarten was started which expanded to include pre-school. Chaplain Dan Berteau and Chaplain Matt Prince became interim pastors at Christ Lutheran in recent years. A member of Christ, Sean Tieze, is in LCMS's Specific Ministry Program and is now serving as pastor.

## 1956 Resurrection Lutheran Church, Newport News, VA

In 1956 five families from Emmanuel Lutheran in Hampton who lived in Warwick County (now Newport News - a 30 minute drive away) decided they wanted a Lutheran church closer to home. Pastor Blakenbuehler of Redeemer, Portsmouth, agreed to start services there at the Moose Hall on Sunday mornings at 8:30 a.m. In 1956 services moved to the American Legion building and they became Resurrection Lutheran Church. Pastor Ferdinand Noske from Concordia Seminary was installed as pastor that Summer.

In 1959 they moved into their new church and fellowship hall. Trinity invested \$11,000 in certificates of participation - SED Church Extension Fund - to aid Resurrection to erect its first chapel. They now have a preschool as well.



## 1961 Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach, VA

Pastor Plawin began Sunday afternoon services at the Community House in Virginia Beach in 1954 to sew seeds for a mission church in Virginia Beach. The services were later transferred to a kindergarten building near Laskin Road. That mission church would eventually become Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. In 1961 a number of Trinity families who lived in Virginia Beach became the founding members of Prince of Peace. Pastor Elmer Medley was the first pastor.

A church was erected in 1964 and the congregation grew quickly, it was the era of the Vietnam War and many military families were coming into the area. The church has continued to thrive and has a pre-school.





## 1976 Hope Lutheran Church, Virginia Beach, VA

In 1963 five acres of land in the Great Bridge area was donated by the Killian family, members of Trinity, to the Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod as a site for opening a new Lutheran Church. In 1964 services were begun at B. M. Williams Elementary School in Chesapeake by Pastor James Mueller of Faith Lutheran Church and LCMS chaplains in the area. It was called Holy Cross Lutheran Church. But growth was slow and the Mission Board closed the mission in the latter part of 1967.



Trinity's Pastor Arthur Meyer was mission minded and spearheaded the effort to plant a mission church on Providence Road in Virginia Beach which could serve those living in both Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. Bill Baskett of Trinity helped organize the effort which was financed by the sale of the Killian property when the Holy Cross mission effort was closed. A large number of Trinity families who lived in that area left Trinity to start the new mission congregation. They held services at Fairfield Elementary School. Pastor Paul Kettner was called to shepherd the new church and by 1980 the congregation was flourishing and a church was built. In 1988, a small number of church members came together to begin Christian Education at Hope Lutheran Church. The school offered morning pre-school and kindergarten classes to anyone who desired to attend.



## 1981 – Grace by the Sea Lutheran Church, Nags Head, N.C.



With the assistance of Pastor Arthur Meyer of Trinity, and the Lutheran Council of Tidewater, which was looking for a place to offer services on the Outer Banks, Grace by the Sea Lutheran Church in Nags Head, N.C., was founded in the Summer of 1981 by a small group of dedicated Lutherans living there.

The first service was held on June 14. Various pastors and chaplains from the Tidewater area conducted services in a circus tent put up for that purpose. In September services were moved to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. On April 30

1982 Grace by the Sea became part of the Southeastern District of the LCMS. Four years later the church building was erected. It's a familiar landmark now in the area.

## LCMS Congregations in the Area Remain Close



**ABOVE:** Trinity and Unity joined forces to show their churches' appreciation for those who serve the community - police, firemen, doctors & nurses - by visiting and taking them treats.

**RIGHT:** Pastor Miller of Unity, Pastor Quiram of Trinity, and Pastor Gehrke of Christ combined their Christmas services for a few years.

