



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



100th Anniversary—December 2020 Issue

## Pastors of Trinity

God's church on earth is His people - the pastors and members of the church who follow Him. The work of planting a church in Norfolk began in 1904. Pastor C.J. Oelschlaeger of Richmond conducted four or five services in Norfolk, but he was called to another assignment and work in "Tidewater" Virginia was discontinued. Not until 1920 did mission work begin again and Trinity was established. Eight Lutheran pastors and several Lutheran chaplains stationed in the area served Trinity over its 100 year history from 1920 to 2020. We thank God for their ministry to us.

### Pastor Frederick Meuschke, 1920-1921

Shortly after the end of World War I several Lutheran families arranged to meet weekly for worship services in Williams Funeral Home in Norfolk. Services were conducted by Baltimore pastors. On May 30, 1920, the church was officially organized by ten men, who signed the original constitution. Since that day happened to be Trinity Sunday in the church calendar, Trinity became the name of the congregation. On December 20, 1920, Pastor Frederick Meuschke, who had done some of the initial canvassing in Norfolk, was installed as the first pastor of Trinity. With help from LCMS's church extension board the church purchased a house and lot next door on 34th & Omohundro Avenue in Norfolk in 1921. The house served as both a parsonage and place of worship. Within a year Pastor Meuschke was called to another congregation.

### Pastor Louis J. Roehm, 1921-1931

Pastor Louis Roehm accepted the call to Trinity and was installed on July 10, 1921. He quickly organized a Sunday School with eight students, a choir, a young people's group, a Ladies Aid Society, and special services in German twice a month. By Feb. 14, 1923, construction began on a small chapel on the lot next to the parsonage. Work was done by contractors who were members of Trinity - Mr. Betz and Mr. Hans Wagner. The church was dedicated on April 7, 1923 at a cost of \$1,800 of which \$1,200 was contributed by members and \$600 from fellow Lutherans, mainly from Bethlehem Church in Richmond. The pulpit and altar (pictured below) were contributed by St. James Church in Overland, MD. In October 1928, Pastor Roehm began work in the growing city of Hopewell, Virginia, which resulted in the birth of Nazareth Lutheran Church. Between 1923 and 1931 there was a decline in membership at Trinity so the Ladies Aid Society and Youth Group were discontinued. Pastor Roehm accepted a call in 1931 from St. Mathews Church in Hudson, New York.



### Pastor Paul A. Plawin, 1931-1966

Pastor Paul Plawin came to Trinity in 1931 straight from Concordia Seminary and was installed on February 28, 1932. He immediately re-established the Ladies Aid Society, youth group and Sunday School and grew the church over his 35 years as pastor to a membership of 853. Pastor Plawin built Trinity from a small congregation to the mother church that started nine mission churches in the area. He also started Trinity's kindergarten and grade school.



Pastor Plawin oversaw the building of the new church on Granby Street and three major additions to Trinity's complex - Belvedere Hall and north church transept, south church transept, two-story educational wing and the parking lot. He also oversaw the purchase and installation of Trinity's pipe organ. Trinity started seven Lutheran churches during Pastor Plawin's tenure at Trinity. Starting as a young pastor he drove to Hopewell every Sunday for seven years to conduct evening services there until 1938 when a pastor was called and a church was built - Nazareth Lutheran Church. That was followed by the establishment of Emmanuel, Redeemer, Faith and Shepherd Lutheran Churches (which later combined to form Unity Lutheran), Christ, Resurrection, and Prince of Peace. Pastor Plawin became a member of the SED Mission Board.



Pastor Plawin, center, with Concordia Seminary professors George Spilman and O.P. Kretzman at his installation



The congregation at the installation of Pastor Plawin



The new church on Granby Street in 1945

Pastor Plawin took an active role in the development of Trinity's School. He got women of the church to teach the first kindergarten classes and he offered religious instruction every morning to the children. The kindergarten/preschool grew quickly and a first grade was added with a teacher from Concordia College.

### Television/Radio Evangelism

Pastor Plawin taught a Bible study - "This is the Life" - on WTAR radio and then on TV. The local newspapers - The Virginian-Pilot and The Ledger-Star - also ran articles about local churches including Trinity.



Trinity today

On October 24, 1966 Pastor Plawin was called to his eternal home. He had served the Lord with gladness.

## Pastor William M. Bliese, 1967-1973

Chaplains in the area served Trinity for a year before a call was extended to Pastor William Bliese to become Trinity's pastor in August 1967. During this time the charismatic movement was taking hold in the U.S. It encouraged evangelism - sharing the gospel with others.



Pastor Bliese taught classes on how to share the gospel and a number of Trinity people participated in the outreach program - going in groups of three to visit people whose names were submitted by members of Trinity. During this time second and third grade classes were added to the school and in 1969 another teacher was called to be a teacher and acting principal. When that teacher left, Pastor Bliese assumed the duties of principal for that year until another teacher/principal was called.



## Pastor Arthur W. Meyer, 1974-1985

Pastor Meyer, a Navy chaplain, served as Trinity's vacancy pastor before becoming Trinity's next pastor. It was an easy fit since many at Trinity came from a military background. During this time the church mortgage was paid off and Hope Lutheran Church in Virginia Beach was sponsored and served by Trinity. There was also a spike in Trinity's school enrollment and a second kindergarten was added. Pastor Meyer also helped establish a new LCMS mission church in Nags Head, NC, which became Grace by the Sea Lutheran Church. Pastor Meyer accepted a call to the International Lutheran School in Seoul, Korea in 1985. Navy Chaplain Al Kirk served as interim pastor.



## Pastor Daniel H. Quiram, 1986-1997, 2013-2014

Pastor Quiram was installed as Trinity's pastor on February 6, 1986. It was a booming time for Trinity with many young families and lots of fellowship activities. The school was growing as well with a 4th and 5th grade added in 1986 and 1987. The first full time Principal-DCE (with no teacher duties) was called and the first school secretary was

hired. In 1989 a playground was added and in 1990 the first extended care program before and after school was offered. Sharon Knorr set up and directed that program along with Christy Sontag.

A full day kindergarten program was added as well as a full day four-year-old program and a part-time librarian was added to the faculty. The Principal/DCE position was renamed Minister of Education. Trinity celebrated its 75th Anniversary with the renovation of the Sanctuary.

Pastor Quiram also served as Intentional Interim pastor for eleven months in 2013/2014 as Trinity was healing after Pastor Smith's resignation. During this time, Pastor Quiram initiated a united ministry with Unity Lutheran and Christ Lutheran churches in Norfolk. There was a combined Christmas Day service with all pastors participating, and the pastors rotated congregations during the Lenten season.

## Pastor James P. O'Connor, 1998-2009

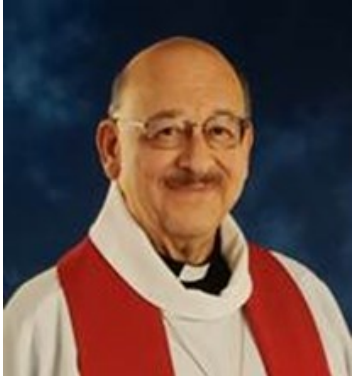
Pastor James O'Connor was a former Navy chaplain. He and his family were members of Trinity and his wife, Karen, was music director at Trinity Lutheran School. It wasn't long after he retired from the military that he became pastor of Trinity.

He introduced Trinity's Reformation Festival and Bach Concert in an effort to publicize Luther's Reformation - the important truth that we are saved by God's Grace - not by our own works. Both events were big successes. The Bach Concert opened Trinity's doors to the community and the Reformation Festival with German food and Reformation songs and games for children was very popular with Trinity's school families. He also initiated a college science series at Christopher Newport College to help students see the role of God in creation. It was called the Convergence Project and presented both sides of an issue without judgement. Pastor O'Connor also oversaw the renovation of the church kitchen and formed a young adult group that met there for Sunday supper and fellowship. He was also very supportive of Trinity's participation in the Downtown Norfolk Christmas parade. When Hurricane Isabel took down the two huge trees that hovered over the front walkway at Trinity, he had wood from the tree trunks made into angel sculptures and hung in the church as a reminder of God's protection.



## Pastor David W. Smith, 2010-2013

Pastor Smith became Trinity's pastor in November 2010. He was very involved in the school and spearheaded the idea of a Community Garden where the children could learn about God's creation and the importance of sharing food with our neighbors. Bill Sontag developed the garden and instructed children on how food is grown. Pastor Smith also initiated college ministry at ODU and explored mission outreach in neighborhoods near the church. It was a shock and challenging time for the congregation when Pastor Smith was arrested in March 2013. He resigned as pastor.



## Pastor Jonanthan Meraz, 2016 - present

Pastor Meraz was installed as pastor of Trinity on Jan. 31, 2016. He brought a new gift to Trinity - chanting. It was well received. He has a beautifully trained tenor voice and has introduced new hymns as well. He has re-established student ministry at Old Dominion University and shared the celebration of the Passover during Lent by serving a Seder meal and inviting a representative from *Jews for Jesus* to explain the tradition. Pastor Meraz has

led Trinity congregation during the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020, which happened to be Trinity's 100th Anniversary year. Live services were canceled in March but online services were conducted. Then church opened with live services with the congregation wearing masks and social distancing in every other pew. Pastor Meraz became the first pastor to conduct services LIVE on YouTube.

## Secretaries/Administrative Assistants at Trinity

There have been many who have served in this position over the last 100 years. In this issue we honor four women from the congregation who served for the longest time frame as Secretaries/Administrative Assistants serving not only the Pastors of Trinity but the congregation — Gladys Plawin, Wanda Remstedt, Lynn Hubert and Anne Combes.



**Gladys Plawin** served as her husband's volunteer secretary during his years at Trinity. Pastor Plawin always had a working office in his home as well as an office in the church for official business. Gladys answered the phone, kept church records updated and wrote the congregation's history. Pastor Plawin typed his own bulletin and printed it on a mimeograph machine in his home study. Initially the bulletins were hand-folded until he got a folding machine

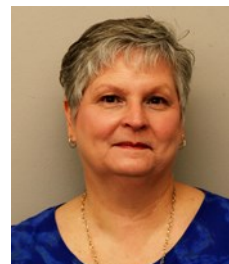
**Wanda Remstedt** served as secretary for Pastor Bliese, Pastor Meyer, and a few years for Pastor Quiram. She basically organized the secretarial position and was lovingly referred to as "Mother Wanda" - THE source of information about anything concerning Trinity. She was also very active in the LWML and Trinity Lutheran School. Wanda was married to Ed Remstedt, son of Fred Remstedt, a charter member of Trinity.



**Lynn Hubert** and her family came to Trinity through the school. Lynn was quickly brought under the Wanda's wing learning the ropes of Church Secretary as well as Trinity's LWML. Lynn served with Pastor Quiram and through Pastor O'Connor's call process. She helped establish the computer system and new church software. She has been very active at Trinity wearing many different hats including holding many positions on Church Council and within the LWML. She currently serves as Trinity's Bookkeeper, Recording Secretary and LWML Treasurer.



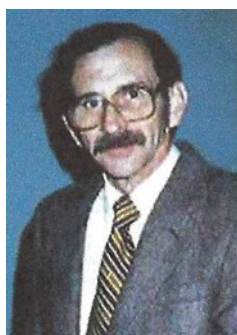
**Anne Combes** became secretary to Pastor O'Connor in March of 2002 and has been here since - serving Pastor Smith, Pastor Meraz and a number of vacancy pastors. She has been a Lutheran Parish Secretary for over 28 years and has been our Church Secretary for almost 19 years. Anne continues to keep the Parish Register up to date and was instrumental in procuring the latest computer software for maintaining online church records. Over the years she has not only been the Church Secretary and Financial Secretary, but also the school's Lunch Coordinator and Office Manager until the school closed in June 2015. Anne is extremely knowledgeable on all aspects of Trinity and is very willing to answer any questions you may have.



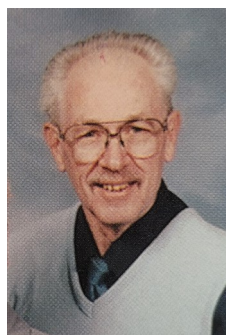
## Custodians and Sextons



Richard Alex



Carl Schank



Hank Gram



Gary Tutt



Ron Jones



Antonio Tutt



Bill Sontag

Many men have served as custodians and sextons at Trinity over the years. In recent years - Richard Alex, Carl Schank, Hank Gram, Gary Tutt, Ron Jones, Antonio Tutt and Bill Sontag. Keeping God's House in order was and still is their mission. Many others assist in the upkeep of the building and yard as well. All working to the glory of God.

## Senior Ministry At Trinity

Every member of our congregation is important to Trinity's history. We especially honor our senior members and have held many functions including a short communion service and luncheon afterwards. TLS students would entertain on occasion. It was a popular outing for Trinity seniors.



## Sons of Trinity in the Ministry

Three sons of Trinity went into LCMS ministry - Ronald Johnson, Ernest Knoche and Terrell Davis. The Johnsons were one of the families who came into area during WWII. Their son, Ron became a Lutheran pastor. Ernie Knoche was from one of Trinity's military families. He also became a Lutheran pastor and married a Trinity girl, Donna Tackenberg. Another Trinity girl Nancy Freeman married a Lutheran pastor as well - Ray Kirk. Terrell Davis, a former member of Trinity, has recently completed his studies at Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne.



Ernie Knoche (left) returned to Trinity as a young Pastor when Pastor Meyer was here



Pastor Knoche visited Trinity in later years, with his wife, Donna



Terrell Davis will soon become an LCMS Pastor

## Melvin Simms, life-long member of Trinity and Sunday School teacher!

Melvin Simms was one of the kids who got picked up for Sunday School in Trinity's early days. He never left. He had a quick wit and delightful personality and was actually headed into the ministry - but WWII came along and he was called into military service.

When the war was over and he left the U.S. Navy, he was needed in his father's business so his dreams of becoming a Lutheran pastor never materialized, but he ministered to many over the years in Trinity's Sunday School and youth programs

Right—Melvin Simms serving as Master Of Ceremony at Trinity's Talent Show



## The Pandemic of 2020

The Pandemic of 2020 (Covid 19 Virus) enveloped the United States and the whole world. It was the first time most witnessed the shutdown of schools and even churches. A sign was placed on Trinity's door stating that the church was closed. Even thru this closure a church service was recorded each week and emailed to members, bringing God's Word to the congregation. All of our 100th Anniversary events had to be postponed. It was a challenging time indeed, but with God's help we continue to endure as we close out 2020 and Trinity's 100th Anniversary year.



## God's People are His Church on Earth

Over the past 100 years the pastors and people of Trinity have been God's Church on Earth in this particular space and time in Norfolk, Virginia. God has blessed this congregation mightily. Trinity has always presented God's Word in truth and purity and reached out to the community and those in need.

Final note from Lynn Hubert and Sharon Plawin: It has been a privilege and a blessing to bring you a new 100th Anniversary newsletter each month thru 2020. We are proud to be a part of Trinity's history. What a witness of God's Love and Grace the people of Trinity have been.

We are God's people...His church.