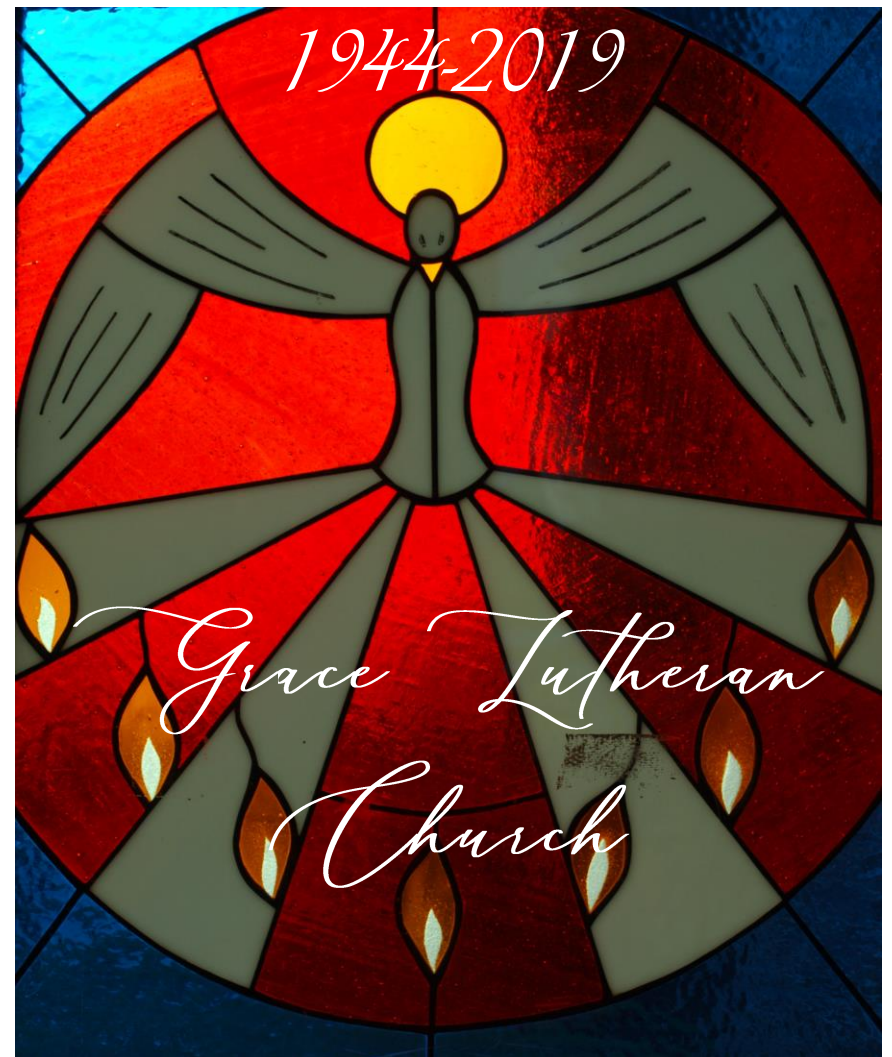


*Love the Lord your God with  
all your heart, and with all your  
soul, and with all your strength,  
and with all your mind; and your  
neighbor as yourself.*



**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
239 East North Street  
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*75 years of  
God's Grace*



*Pastors of  
Grace Lutheran Church*

Past to Present

Pastor Ness 1932 – 1939

Pastor R.W. Mohrhardt 1939 – 1940

Pastor Oswald H. Trinklein 1940 – 1961

Pastor C. David Stuckmeyer 1961 – 1965

Pastor Roger Janke 1965 – 1968

Pastor Edwin Kringel (interim) 1968 – 1969

Pastor Michael Anton 1969 – 2008

Pastor Michael Kemper (interim pastor) 2008 - 2010

Pastor Amy Luckey 2010 - 2015

Pastor Paul Kuhlman (interim pastor) 2015 - 2017

Pastor Kenneth Scheck II 2017 – present

# 75 years of God's Grace

As we reflect on seventy-five years of God's gifts to Grace Lutheran Church, let us be empowered by those with steadfast faith who envisioned a place where God's love is proclaimed, faith is renewed, and community is fashioned by the Holy Spirit. God invites all people to share in the kingdom, as we welcome a diverse population to be part of our Grace family.

As early as 1932, Louise Leary and a handful of Lutheran Christians made the first efforts to establish a Lutheran Church in Hastings, Michigan. They enlisted pastoral help from Zion Lutheran Church in Woodland, Michigan.

In the beginning, the Lutherans in Hastings met on Sunday afternoons with Pastor Ness in different homes around town. After a short time, it became apparent the faith community needed a public place to meet, to draw others to their gatherings. The group rented the American Legion Hall and worship services began there on Sunday evenings.

Officers were elected and the name that was chosen for the community of faith was St. John's Lutheran Church. During this time two brothers and two sisters, John and Robert Leary, Ardea and Naomi Clum, were given catechetical instruction and confirmed. One house where the first Lutherans in Hastings met is on the northwest corner across from St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church.

This mission effort was of short duration when Pastor Ness was called to another congregation in Ionia, Michigan. Pastor Ness had every intention of continuing to share in ministry with St. John

Lutheran Church, but a hard, severe winter made traveling impossible for him to continue sharing ministry in Hastings. At this point the English District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod became active in Hastings and Pastor R.W. Mohrhardt began to share ministry with God's people.

The first worship service with Pastor Mohrhardt was held in the American Legion Hall, Sunday, July 16, 1939, with an attendance of fourteen persons. In the next several years the meeting place moved to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, back to the American Legion Hall, then to the I.O.O.F. Hall in November 1942.

Dances were held on Saturday nights; on Sunday mornings members had to go early to clean up bottles, etc. before worship!

In 1940 the Rev. Oswald H. Trinklein was called and installed as the first fulltime pastor. His first worship service and sermon was on May 12.

The congregation was organized and incorporated with a new name, Grace Lutheran Church, October 17, 1944.

On April 4, 1948, ground was broken for a new church edifice on the corner of S. Jefferson and Walnut. In 1947 it had been decided to stay within a \$15,000 limit for the church building and its furnishings. The funds were borrowed from the Church Extension Fund of the English District.

Serving on the building committee were Rev. Trinklein, Robert Leary, Boyd Clark, Mr. Comp and Mr. Beilfuss. The contractor was Chester Stowell. The final cost excluding furnishings, was \$17,526.44.

The cornerstone was laid on Sunday, May 23, with the Rev. E.L. Schwan of Hope Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, preaching, and Pastor Trinklein serving as liturgist. Dedication worship was held Sunday, November 21, that same year, both in the morning and the afternoon.

The house behind and to the east of the church was purchased as the parsonage, January 8, 1952; dedication took place on Sunday, March 2.

Pastor Trinklein served Grace Lutheran Church for twenty-one years. Financially, many of those years were lean times. Grace was blessed by his dedication and willingness to serve with meager compensation. Pastor Trinklein retired from the pastoral ministry preaching his farewell sermon on April 30, 1961 to the worshipping community of Grace Lutheran Church.

On June 1, 1961, the Rev. C. David Stuckmeyer accepted the call to be pastor of Grace Lutheran Church and was installed June 25. Under his leadership, the church grew. Many of the practices still in use started while he was here, including the function of an elder assisting the pastor with Communion (now known as assisting ministers) and the organization and work of the Altar Guild (now known as the Table Guild). Pastor Stuckmeyer motivated people to become more involved and help with responsibilities of worship.

Pastor Stuckmeyer was a single young man, and there were women who tried to play matchmaker without success! He was with Grace for four years.

The Reverend Roger Janke came in May 1965 and served until November 1968. With his help Grace Lutheran continued to grow in membership and activities of ministry. A youth group was organized, a first Vacation Bible School was held, and Grace finally became financially self-supporting (having received English District subsidy for over 25 years).

After the Reverend Edwin Kringel, pastor of First Lutheran Church of Charlotte served as our interim during the vacancy, the Reverend Michael Anton was installed June 22, 1969. Grace Lutheran Church was blessed to have him as a partner in ministry for thirty-nine years.

Grace Church continued to grow and expand under Pastor Anton's leadership. The church building moved from South Jefferson into the present church location on E. North Street, with dedication on September 29, 1974. Frank Rothfuss and Gene Wagester served as co-chairs of the building committee.

In 1993, work began on renovation of the former wing and construction of a new wing, with dedication February 13, 1994. Bart Richardson chaired the planning committee for the project and Dick Cole was the chair during the building process.

Grace kept its membership in the English District, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, until 1976, when it became a member of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). In 1988, as a result of the merger of that body with the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and American Lutheran Church (ALC), Grace Lutheran Church, Hastings, Michigan became part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Under Pastor Anton's leadership Grace Lutheran Church became involved in many new programs and ministries. The Youth Group was reorganized in 1969 as a high school group; in the 1980's it expanded to include middle school youth. The Stephen Ministry was started in 1987. Young Spirits, a weekday ministry, was begun in 1991 for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders; in 1992 DK- grade 2 was added.

In 1971 Grace started the practice of having a silent cross walk on Good Friday morning. The church continues the practice to this day. The walk is for Christians across all denominations throughout the Hastings community.

Sunday Church School has been our practice from the earliest beginnings. Grace continues to offer classes between worship services for adults, while children are offered Christian education during the 10:45 worship time. Children participate in worship until our Children's Time and then go to their educational experience and return to worship for communion.

Grace has had both Children's and Adult Choirs, while the congregation now experiences an occasional vocal choir, along with children singing just before Children's Church each week. Groups for men have been organized several times. The women of the church had two circles: the Ruth Circle, which met in the afternoons and the Sarah Circle meeting in the evenings. A study group, Women of Faith, continues to meet supporting Christian fellowship and the learning of God's word.

Weekday adult education opportunities were offered through Wordwatchers, a morning group, and Adventurers, an evening class. Vacation Bible School continued for many years; with the emergence of Day Camp, through our synod's outdoor ministry. Grace has returned to offering a week-long Vacation Bible School.

Through the years Grace has developed multiple forms of worship, including a folk mass, mid-week vesper worship services during Advent and Lent, and the involvement of more worship servers. The congregation grew to having two worship services each Sunday with Holy Communion at each Sunday liturgy. These changes were initiated by a stronger sense of mission and a concern for having Word and Sacrament each week.

After Pastor Michael Anton retired in 2008, the Reverend Michael Kemper came and served Grace Lutheran Church as interim pastor. During this time the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted to allow gay clergy to serve the church. Grace Lutheran Church struggled with accepting this change, yet Pastor Kemper was able to lead the congregation through this difficult time. Pastor Mike Kemper served Grace Lutheran Church for two years and is now a member here at Grace.

The church continued to grow in its ability to include all people, as it called the first woman to serve as pastor. The Reverend Amy Luckey came to Grace Lutheran Church in 2010. Under Pastor Luckey's leadership the congregation grew in its understanding that all people are welcome. Pastor Luckey served Grace Lutheran Church for five years continuing to expand our worship, outreach, witness of inclusion and love for all people.

After Pastor Luckey left Grace, another member of the church, the Reverend Paul Kuhlman, became the interim pastor for the congregation. Pastor Kuhlman's ministry at Grace began in 2015. During his time there were many changes made to our worship style, the building began to be renovated once again and the congregation was renewed. Pastor Kuhlman was a very different pastor, as he swung hammers to take down walls and began changing the footprint of the building to its current configuration. During his time the balcony came down, the church office and pastor's office were relocated, a coat room was put in, an overflow was created for the worship space and a gathering space was created outside the sanctuary. As you can tell Pastor Kuhlman did a lot in two years.

In 2017, Grace Lutheran Church called the Reverend Doctor Kenneth David Scheck II as pastor. During the beginning days of Pastor Scheck's ministry, he continued to work on the necessary building renovation, pulling up all the carpet in the sanctuary. Pastor Ken depends on the skills and handiwork of masonry, plumbing, electrical, carpet laying, painting, drywall, shelf building and hammering to those who are skilled. Even though we know a building cannot adequately express all of what God has been doing, we see evidence of God's activity in this building. We witness the lives of the faithful who advance God's action in human hearts and lives. One expression of God's grace and love that we witness is when lay people take the body and blood of Christ directly from the sanctuary table and share it with homebound members beyond the walls of the church's current building. Pastor Ken is in awe of the ministry done here at Grace Lutheran Church in the name of Jesus Christ.

For several decades Grace Lutheran Church has served as a mission partner in several mission areas with prayer and financial support. The congregation wanted to ensure that mission ministry would continue, so a mission endowment fund was created. This fund has increased the congregation's ability to give to ministry needs. i.e. sending youth to camp, food pantries, supporting local schools and providing shelter for the homeless (to name a few). Grace has become involved in ministry in the community through membership in LOVE, Inc. (now Barry County Cares) supporting

a weekly Food Box, Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas baskets and gifts. At one time, Grace participated in Forgotten Man Ministries at the county jail and provided meeting space for Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholic Anonymous and Bereaved Parents. Grace now hosts an anger management ministry and has a Girl Scout troop meeting at the church, participates in Crop Walk, Holly Trolley, Trunk or Treat, has two bells choirs, supports a local school classroom by providing a free book each month and has reimagined our fellowship opportunities with game night, movie night, watching plays and musicals, going out to eat, enjoying a progressive dinner and having a church picnic.

In 1944 average worship attendance was twenty-eight in 2018 it was ninety-nine. This increase in attendance represents a 351% growth in the worshipping community. In 1940 the total yearly financial offering was \$409.61. At the end of our fiscal year for 2019 it was \$205,669.04. This increase in financial offering represents a 502% expansion in our offerings to God's mission. Grace has truly been blessed with generous hearts and faithful supporters who have been planted by God here in Hastings, Michigan.

Grace is blessed with a lot of people who have contributed to this current history. Here are a few that we could like to acknowledge. In no way is this a complete list of contributors: Robert and Barbara Leary, John and Barbara Schultz, Ardea Carr, Howard and Greta Greiner, Pastor Michael Anton, David and Ruby Bolton, Ann Stavros (North/West Lower Michigan Synod Administrator), Wendy Kimble (Parish Administrator) and Pastor Ken Scheck II.

Seventy-five years have come and gone. Grace Lutheran Church has struggled and flourished. Grace continues to reveal God's love, grace and acceptance through many mission opportunities, services to people and organizations, baptisms, first communions, affirmation of baptisms, worship and educational opportunities. During this diamond year, let's envision where God is leading Grace and follow where God will take each and every one of us. After all, God's gifts of love, faith and invitation will fashion us into the people of God the Holy Spirit intends us to be in this world. Let us follow where God is leading.

November 24, 2019

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the love of our Creator and power of the Holy Spirit:

It is with joy that we gather to celebrate Grace Lutheran Church's diamond year. Celebrating an anniversary allows each of us to recognize the many ways that God has enriched us in our shared ministry here at Grace. As we reflect on seventy-five years as a congregation of Lutheran Christians, each of us can see the various blessings given us by the Holy Spirit.

On this final Sunday of the church year, Christ the King Sunday, it is fitting that we gather to celebrate the history of the faithful who have served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick or estranged here in Hastings, Michigan and throughout the world. We could simply look at our rich past and revel in all that we have accomplished. Yet God is asking for more from the community of faith.

As we move beyond today's celebration, we *receive God's call* to continue serving. We, in turn, ask God to give us wisdom to know what is right and the strength that Grace Church needs to help spread God's love to others. God has empowered us with a firm foundation (the love and grace of God), a treasure to share (the salvation given by Christ Jesus dying on the cross), and a place to share the resurrection (Grace Lutheran Church).

God has led us for the last seventy-five years, and with the Holy Spirit's guidance will lead us to continue sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by worshipping, giving, serving, learning and witnessing the grace of God.

Let us be empowered by God's grace and love,

Pastor Ken Scheck II +