

*The*  
**TALE** *of*  
**Two**  
**Churches**



## THE TALE OF TWO CHURCHES

The History of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Chicago Park and Grace  
Lutheran Church, Grass Valley

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Grace Lutheran Church  
1979 Ridge Road  
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## FOREWORD

By Rev. Dr. Paul E. Labrenz

“Remember” is a key word throughout the Holy Scriptures. Again and again God’s people are called upon to remember the mighty acts of God. Remember how God’s gospel call came to Abraham. Remember how God led his people out of slavery in Egypt and ultimately into the promised land. The word echoes throughout the Bible.

Jesus, instituting a new covenant on the night he was betrayed, calls his apostles (and his church) to “do this in remembrance of me.” The church throughout the ages has been faithful in its remembering.

This booklet is a remembering of God’s acts of kindness and grace bestowed on St. Paul & Grace Lutheran Church. Just as God kept his promise to send a Savior to bring us back to Himself, a promise that was wrapped in flesh, so His acts of mercy to the faithful in Chicago Park and Grass Valley are in the flesh. Children, women, men - all remembered by God and accepted by Him in His Son Jesus Christ.

Our remembering what God has done among us in our communities give us even more reason to gather in worship and sing His praise. God has been faithful and continues to share His Word and Sacraments with us as we gather each Lord’s Day.

In this booklet we have the history of God’s remembering. It is personal. It will elicit smiles, tears, perhaps evoke some unpleasant memories. But it is our history of the church in this community. God has been with us throughout all these years and continues on to this day.

Finally, let us remember to thank the committee that worked so diligently on this project: Marianne and Ernie Bierwagen, Arnold Stunkel, Bill and Jan Postell. Through their faithful effort God’s grace becomes even more apparent.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Scrapbook belonging to Mr. & Mrs. Ernst Bierwagen.

Second Scrapbook.

Newspaper clippings from *The Union* newspaper over the years.  
*the Chicago Park CONNECTION* by Pat Jones (the way she has it printed on her book).

Church Bulletins from both churches.

Several "Announcements" notebooks starting on September 7, 1924.

Minutes to Quarterly Congregation meetings at St. Paul.

Information from the Congregation, put in Committee members' mailbox, at church.

Taped conversation between Marianne and Ernie Bierwagen and Arnold Stunkel sitting around the dinner table on April 30, 1998.

Folder and notes from Arnold Stunkel.

## I. CHICAGO PARK GETS ITS NAME.

### IN THE BEGINNING

Our tale of two churches starts with the arrival of the Chicago Colony. The Colony was formed in Chicago (mostly from Cook County, Illinois) in February of 1886. As early as July 1887 Grass Valley heard the rumor that a large tract of land had been purchased by a group of Chicago investors.

The land was divided into 20 and 40 acre plots and 80 acres of land next to the Narrow Gauge railroad station were laid out as a town site. One hundred town lots were sold. On September 6th of that year the name Chicago Park was selected to honor the "Chicago Capitalist."

On September 19, 1887, a drawing for land took place in the city of Chicago and in October the first families of new settlers began arriving. In November the railway station called Storms Station, was changed to Chicago Park Station.

That winter (November 26, 1887) a severe cold wave hit the area and the thermometer dropped to 21 degrees. You can image what a big surprise this was to the new settlers who came expecting a year-round mild climate.

Mr. Charles Stafford, a photographer, was the first colonist to start work on his land. A barn, built in February (1888) was the first building in the colony, located near where the St. Paul Lutheran church would later be built.

The saw mill, already there, was busy turning out lumber for homes. Prize fruit (at the Grass Valley fair) was already being grown by other people in the area, so by March 1889, 25,000 trees had been set out and fences built. However, not one building had gone up in the town site.

The winter of 1889-90 was also extremely severe and the colonists were unprepared for the snow. News of the weather and the hardships it caused traveled east and many of the original colony members, were discouraged and never arrived in Chicago Park. A few more hardy pioneers did arrive in 1891 but the town site





Chicago Park Freight Depot and Post Office  
across from the William and Margaret Ullrich parcel, about 1904.

Left to right: Pastor Martin Kuessner, Mr. Coscadden, Mrs. Minna Merkle, Ida Sonntag,  
Helen Renker Meyer, Elizabeth Bierwagen, Christian Bierwagen, Carl F. Merkle, and  
Paul Sonntag (in front of Carl).

remained undeveloped. People were building homes on their property, not on the town site. The town site was a failure but the area turned into a community that was soon recognized for its wonderful fruit.

The first peaches shipped east from Colfax in the 1891 season came from Chicago Park orchards of Charles Stafford and another Chicago Park resident, Mr. Silig.

The fruit growers learned dry farming, and how to get along with water from a few springs. Pears were planted around 1914 and flourished until February 1960. With the pear blight that year, the trees died and were removed.

In Pat Jones' book "the Chicago Park CONNECTION"<sup>1</sup> (that's the way she had it printed on the front cover) I found a description of the pears: pears were red-cheeked and apple shaped, produced by dry farming methods. They were called Blushing Bartletts. In 1926, NID (Nevada Irrigation District) built local ditches and with water available the blush disappeared. With water livestock also became profitable.

One of the early settlers from Chicago was Dr. Charles A. Pusheck, a doctor and drug manufacturer. Arriving in 1888 he secured 360 acres. In 1894 he built a health resort that later became a hotel.

There was a school (Bear River School, built in 1868) already there when our new settlers arrived, it burned in 1890 but the teacher didn't let that stop her. Monday morning, school was held at the sawmill boarding house.

The residents of Chicago Park went to the Nevada County supervisors in 1898 and asked for a new school district, so the Bear River School District was divided. A school was built on Orchard

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<sup>1</sup>If you want to read about the history of Chicago Park, going back to before it was known as Chicago Park, I highly recommend Pat Jones' book. It was self-published in 1983. She moved to Chicago Park in 1959 and thoroughly researched her material. She died on July 28, 1997.

I particularly like her dedication in the front of her book. "To Buck, and to our children, Jim, Chuck, Patti and Maggie who all grew up to be the kind of people we would have chosen for friends."

Springs Road in Chicago Park. The material (included used lumber, doors and windows) that had been set aside to build a Town Hall was donated for the school. Some believe since it was used material, the Town Hall had been built but when the town site failed to develop, it was dismantled.

In 1947, the attendance reached 26 and a second teacher, Mrs. Agnes Adam (wife of the St. Paul's Pastor) was hired to teach the primary grades. When a third teacher was added, in January of 1966, space was rented in the Parsonage of St. Paul Church for a classroom. Before 1912 the school had included the ninth grade. For high school the children went to Grass Valley.

The present Chicago Park School was built on Mt. Olive Road, when a 1964 school bond was approved by 70 per cent of the district's registered voters. The architect was told to design the new building around a tower for the old school bell. The students, former students, and adults in the community loved this old bell that came in 1930 from the old Banner Mountain School. The new school opened on May 2, 1966 and the old school building became a private home.

As early as 1888 (March 24) the post office had been established at the railroad station. Later, (probably in 1916) the post office was moved to the Chicago Park store. The first postmaster was Joseph H. Hubacheck. So when the first settlers arrived, they already had a school and a post office but no church.

## II. NEW SETTLERS WANT A CHURCH

Early backers of the Chicago Park Colony were Dr. Pusheck and his mother, Anna. Anna dreamed of a Lutheran Colony in the west. Anna Pusheck had been a member of First St. Paul'<sup>1</sup> Church in Chicago.

### THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY....

In 1900, Rev. John William Theiss of St. Luke's would come from Santa Rosa about every two months and hold Lutheran services at the Chicago Park School. The Pastor was popular with all the denominations of the Community. Between his visits "Reading Services" were held and some of the men would be readers.

Since so many of the Colony were Lutherans, they wanted their own church. On March 23, 1902, the congregation was organized. Nine men signed the constitution. They were Friedrich Brandt, D. Wiechman, Herman Sonntag, Dr. Charles Pusheck, George Frederickson, Edward Schultz, Heinrich Frerichs, Martin Wilhelm Frederickson, and Carl Frerichs.

Lay members of the congregation filled in on Sundays when Rev. Theiss was unable to attend. Later that year, the congregation had its first Baptism: Margaretha M. Sonntag on October 26, 1902. Two other first were held in 1903. 1st Marriage was Carl Fredrichs and Grace Rishel on January 11, 1903 and the 1st Confirmation, Paul Sonntag on April 12, 1903.

A ten acre, pine-covered knoll was donated by Dr. Pusheck and his mother, Anna. Plans were made for a church and cemetery. Articles of incorporation of the "German Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul

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<sup>1</sup>Note: The formal organizational meeting of the Missouri Synod took place at what is now First St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago IL, from April 25 to May 6, 1847. Three other meetings had been held previously in Cleveland, 1845, St. Louis, 1846, and Fort Wayne, July 1846, where it was resolved to meet in Chicago the following year. The original voting pastors represented 1 French and 14 German Lutheran congregations. Pastor C.F.W. Walther was elected president.

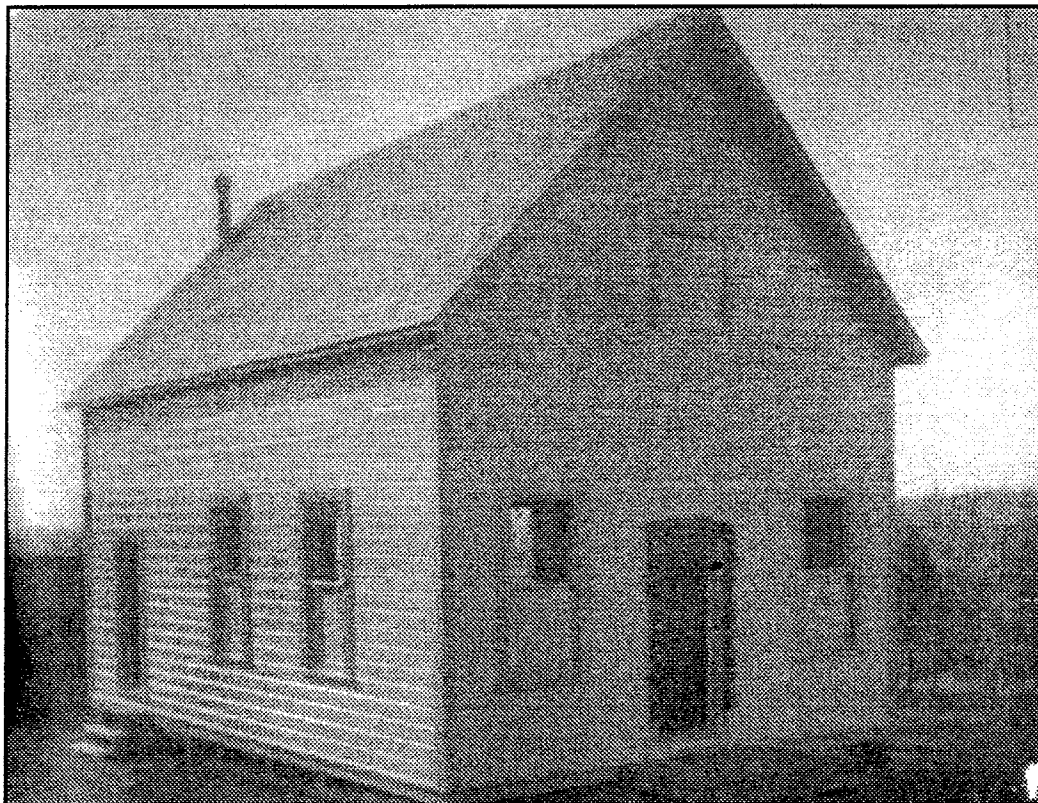
Congregation" were filed with the Secretary of State of California, C.F. Curry, on March 28, 1903. Later the name was simplified and became St. Paul Lutheran Church.

The following year (June 19, 1904) an application for Missouri Synod membership was made. The Synod, "German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States" was legally changed to "Missouri Synod" for brevity and because there was another Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

### ST. PAUL GETS IT'S FIRST PASTOR

A call was made for a resident minister and Rev. Martin Kuessner, a recent graduate of the St. Louis Seminary came. Rev. Kuessner conducted the first funeral for the Congregation. Ludwig Bierwagen was buried at the new cemetery on April 19, 1903. The funeral service was conducted at the family home and his coffin carried to the new cemetery over a muddy, unpaved road. Ludwig and his wife, Anna Elizabeth had arrived in 1902.

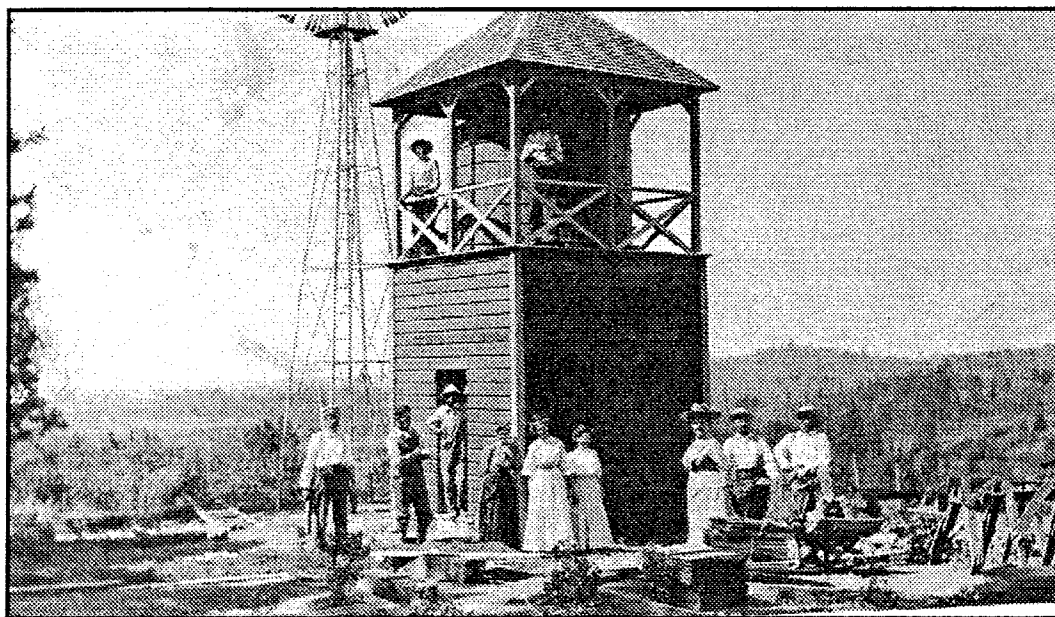
The Chicago Park Church at the time of the 1904 dedication.





Interior of the church in 1904.

Water tower and wind mill.





### III. THE LITTLE CHURCH THAT BECAME A LANDMARK.

There was a resolution to erect the church building on July 31, 1904 and at last, the church would become a reality.

The first lumber pile in place for the church construction burned but this did not discourage the congregation. The church was built by Fred Brandt Sr. and Fred Roper. It was finished just in time for Christmas.

Dedication of the church building took place on December 4, 1904, with Rev. Kuessner officiating. The Church Choir had four men and seven women.



Choir at dedication of St. Paul Lutheran Church, December 4, 1904.

Front row, L to R: Magdaline Sonntag, Christian Bierwagen, Gerhardt Goetze, Paul Sonntag, Carl Merkle (with Annie Bierwagen on lap), Mrs. Minna Merkle (standing).  
Standing in back row, L to R: Mrs. Fredrickson, Hulda Fredrickson, Helen Meyer, Anna Elizabeth Bierwagen, Miss Emma Bierwagen and Miss Ida Sonntag.

Rev. Martin Kuessner, the first pastor, also served Reno as a mission from St. Paul until they got their first resident pastor, Rev. Herman Jonas. When Rev. Kuessner received a call from St. Peters in Lodi, in October 1905, Rev. Jonas (Reno) served St. Paul's, as often as possible. Rev. Kuessner did come back on certain Sundays for a brief time.

In 1906, Rev. Herman Jonas became the first professor called to the new Concordia College in Oakland where he stayed until his retirement. Later, he came to live at the Chicago Park Parsonage, since it was no longer being used as a parsonage. He paid \$25.00 a month rent. Rev. Jonas died there in 1961 and is buried at the cemetery. His wife, Ethel, was buried there in 1954.

#### THE YEARS - 1906 UNTIL 1924

Rev. Frank G. Gundlach from Creston, CA was installed on November 18, 1906, the day the Parsonage was completed. He served until August 1908, when he accepted another call.

The Parsonage was a typical rectangular Chicago Park house. You went from one room into another room. The original had two rooms on the first floor, a living room, stairway and large kitchen. There were two bedrooms upstairs at either end. In the 1920s a bathroom was added to the parsonage, next to the kitchen.

Most of the next four years (1908 - 1912) the church was served by Pastor G. Denninger. In 1912 Pastor August Jacobs helped out with intermittent services until his installation on June 7, 1914 and stayed almost 2 years.

Rev. Elias Hieber served Chicago Park and surrounding area in 1916 until he resigned because of ill health. From 1917 until 1924 Pastor W. Huesemann served St. Pauls and three other congregations, Marysville, Arbuckle, and Woodland, alternating his services.

Circuit ministers were really only part time ministers – they would arrive Friday night, conduct Saturday school and Sunday services and leave on Sunday at noon.

In 25 years the church had eight pastors, two part-time ministers, and a Student Candidate (Carl March) for one year. Carl March, was



ordained on August 31, 1924 and stayed until the fall of 1925.

Up until the 1920s the Congregation sat on chairs. When the Catholic Church in Auburn was remodeled, St. Paul purchased the old pews and Mr. Wroessler remodeled them. There were extra pews and some of people took them home, and some pews still had the brass plates with the names of the Catholic families in Auburn. In Pat Jones' book she tells about later, when the church was remodeled and enlarged in 1951, they had to gather additional pews from the porches and yards of members.

Before Rev. March came, all services were held and records were kept in German. Starting in 1924 (until 1942) both English and German was used in compiling important data. German and English services were alternated. On September 28, 1924, the large English edition of The Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal, containing 200 hymns, was used for the first time. Bertha Bierwagen played the organ.

#### THE YEARS -- 1924 UNTIL 1929

In the church archives I found a notebook. The small black leather-covered, lined notebook had the word, "Announcements" on the cover in gold letters. It was from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. I thought part of the PUBLISHERS' NOTE would be interesting to our readers.

"The announcements made in public services are frequently read from loose slips of paper, or made from memory. This practice does not bear the approval of methodic pastors. The announcements though not in any sense part of the service, are certainly part of the congregational history, and to write them on loose slips of paper, which are or are not, filed, is not a careful practice, to express it mildly. Many pastors have had most disagreeable experiences when asked to verify certain announcements. To refer to a book in which these announcements have been written, and from which they have been read, is, of course, not conclusive evidence of the exact wording of each particular announcement as actually made, but it is a valuable

bit of corroborative testimony, which may save, and in many instances has saved, considerable annoyance, especially when the pastor cultivates the somewhat time-consuming practice of writing out his announcements, particularly the important official announcements, and then reading them exactly as they are written." .... to keep separate request for prayers and supplications, if any from the announcements proper. The space at the left was to list the hymns that were used each Sunday ".....The practice of noting the hymns in the Announcement Book is a very good one. The pastor's unaided memory after two or three weeks will not serve him well in selecting his hymns, so as not to bring the same hymns into too frequent use, and neglect others that deserve to be used more frequently."

At the top in faint pencil marking, the notation was made -- "Installation of Rev. March took place at Chicago Park on August 31, 1924." The first date in the book was September 7, 1924 so this notebook was a gift to the new pastor from Concordia Publishing House.

The pastor wrote the date, abbreviated the church by the town, Ch Pk or GV, a letter G for German or E for English for the language the service was preached in and how many were present. Above the number present he noted the Sundays when it rained or snowed. The announcements were written in both German and English.

#### IV. TWO CONGREGATIONS, ONE MINISTER

An announcement made on Sept. 14, 1924 stated that "This afternoon at 2:30 we will hold our first service in Grass Valley at the Women's Improvement Club. The service will be in the German language and the sermon will be practically the same one preached here in Chicago Park last Sunday." (Note: there were 24 present).

After that English and German were alternated. Small black hymnals supplied by Mission Books were used in Grass Valley for German services. On November 9th the new hymnals in English were introduced at Grass Valley and there were eight people present.

For a children's program on Wednesday, December 24, 1924 at 7:00 p.m., the congregation in Chicago Park was asked to bring both English and German hymnals.

At a service on December 21, 1924 in Grass Valley there were only five people present, a note said it rained. It was also announced there would be no Christmas Day service in Grass Valley that year.

On May 10, 1925, I found the first mention of the Ladies Aid at St. Paul's. There was an announcement that the meeting would be held next Wednesday afternoon at the Sonntag's residence.

Religious instructions (Saturday School) were held at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday mornings. Saturday school was taught in German until the end of the 1920s.

Note: This was true in a lot of Lutheran Churches all over the country. Ernie Bierwagen and Arnold Stunkle both said they were confirmed in both German and English and had to know their Catechism in both languages.

Until Rev. March got his own car, someone would drive him to Grass Valley. Bertha Bierwagen would sometimes go with him to play the piano. Since there were no paved roads, Rev. March said he had

rather ride with Mr. Jaeckle “because he drives fast enough to just hit the tops of the bumps. When I ride with Paul Ullrich we go into the bottom of everyone.” Chicago Park had a narrow, two-lane road (Highway 174) that was graveled in 1923.

In 1925 when only one or two people would show up at Grass Valley, no service would be held. On May 31st the service time was changed and held at 7:30 p.m., instead of 2:30 p.m. That Sunday twenty-three people were present.

After Rev. March left in the Fall of 1925 many calls were issued until Rev. Herman Atrops came from San Benito, Texas. He served the congregations until October 7, 1928.

## V. REV. ADAM STAYS TWENTY YEARS

### THE YEARS -- 1929 UNTIL 1951

In 1929 Rev. William Adam came to St. Paul and stayed 20 years. In addition to his main congregation in Chicago Park, he preached in Grass Valley and did missionary work at Auburn, Weimar, served various hospital institutions and CCC camps. One of the hospitals was the old Grass Valley hospital (W. C. Jones Memorial) at 328 South Church Street. It even had an elevator.

When Rev. Adam would visit the CCC camps on Christmas and Easter, the young folks would go with him and sing. Ernie Bierwagen said they would always try to arrive just before dinner and have bacon and eggs.

Starting in 1931 Grass Valley became a regular Mission Station, served by Rev. William Adam from St. Paul. Services were still held at the Women's Improvement Club on Church Street.

In the early years the church was the center of the Community's activities in Chicago Park. Every Wednesday Rev. Adam would call on people in the community, encouraging them to come to church on Sunday.

The congregation would have summer picnics, Christmas programs, and the Lutheran churches in the area would have Missionfest Sunday (or Mission Festivals) every year and invite other congregations (Woodland, Sacramento, Reno, Gardnerville etc.) to join them; some from as far away as 50 or 100 miles away came to the services.

There would always be a guest speaker from another Lutheran Church or Concordia College in Oakland and he would be paid \$5.00. A separate collection was taken, other than pledges. The largest attendance at St. Paul had a collection of \$56.06.

Lunch would be served by the ladies; outside when the weather was as nice, in the fall. Bertha Bierwagen always had a crock of her home made dill pickles ready for Mission Festival Sunday. The young

people would get together and play games. These were great social events. Services would be canceled when St. Paul's pastor was asked to preach at other church's Missionfests.

The young folks from Chicago Park would get together with the young people from Yuba City and spend the day at Lake Tahoe. Things have changed since those days, some called "the good old days."

We now have better transportation and the roads and highways have improved but congregations don't get together much anymore, most of the time they don't even know each other.

Like many European churches, at St. Paul the original pulpit was raised above the altar, with steps leading up to it. The organ was in front of the congregation. Rev. Adam decided the raised pulpit was uncomfortable because the heat rose, so he took it down and built a back on it.

The congregation at St. Paul's held Quarterly and Special meetings attended by the voting membership. The voting membership were men only, members in good standing, and those men who were conscientious about handling the Church's business. At times there were only eight or nine voting members so some had to serve in several positions.

To belong to the "voting membership" men had to apply and be accepted by the rest of the voting membership before becoming a voting member. Today, voting members are communicant members 18 years of age and have accepted the constitution and by-laws of the congregation.

The meetings were serious business. Even such discussions were held on "whether the members approved of the statement made by Dr. Walter A. Maier on the Lutheran Hour Program (1-30-39) in regard to

political and civil matters.<sup>1 2</sup>

On Monday evening, April 20, 1936 Rev. Wyncken, Missionary from India, now sojourning at Oakland, (having been given permission) delivered a stereotypical lecture. Subject: Missionaries life in India.

On July 6, 1936, Pastor Adam submitted a map of the cemetery he said it was a complete sketch and listing of all lots and graves as well as the names of owners. Copies of the map were reported as being in possession of the Pastor and Trustees.

At the same meeting Rev. Adam also reported that he found the Deed of the Church property recorded in Book 99, Page 208 in the County Recorder's Office at Nevada City.

Note: In 1936, one gallon of Communion wine cost \$1.25.

In April Pastor Adam mentioned the possibility of holding Sunday morning services at Grass Valley.

At the parsonage there was something new – a telephone line was “stretched and put in good order.”

A Committee on parsonage improvement was appointed at a special meeting and they were authorized to solicit pledges from

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<sup>1</sup>Note: the oldest religious radio station (KFUO-AM) in the country was founded in 1924. Early funding came primarily from The Lutheran Layman's league and The Walther League. The Lutheran Hour began in 1930 and was originally broadcast on Thursday evenings. The Lutheran Hour broadcasts were suspended for over four years because of financial difficulties. Since 1935 they have been a regular weekly feature. The Lutheran Hour has only had five regular speakers since its beginning.

<sup>2</sup>Starting on January 24, 1937, the Lutheran Hour was broadcast over the Don Lee network.

communicant members for financing enlargement of the parsonage.

In 1938, a new kitchen and dining room were attached to the parsonage and the old kitchen was turned into a downstairs bedroom. Rev. Adam and his wife, Agnes, came to St. Paul's with one baby and had five more children while living at the parsonage.

Life centered around the large kitchen – it was where the cooking and eating took place, where visiting, and the children's home work was done, around the table. A kerosene lamp was used in the early days. The living room wasn't opened up and used unless it was a special occasion.

The voters also approved the construction of an outside toilet by means of the Public Work Administration with the cost to be between \$22.50 and \$25.00 complete.

At several Sunday services the congregation was asked to donate stove wood for the parsonage. Funds for various causes were also occasionally solicited. Usually there was a small deficit each quarter. Sometimes a loan from the Church Extension Board was requested for special situations, such as a small amount to finish the parsonage remodeling.

Records show that the first English Communion Service at St. Paul was held on October 23, 1938. The congregation later resolved, on January 11, 1942, to discontinue using the German Language. Some of the congregation said the Good Lord would punish Chicago Park because they dropped their German.

During World War I and II the loyalty of the German residents living in Chicago Park was questioned. Remarks were made because many still spoke German. Later some of the German residents anglicized their name. You will find people in our cemetery belonging to the same family but with different names.



There were many new people in the community, some had come here during the 1930s from the Dust Bowl regions of Oklahoma and Texas. Some of the new residents were not church-going people and they did not understand these German Lutherans because they were different. The young people and kids would make snide remarks about them holding “Bund meetings.”

Many Lutheran churches all over the country changed to English only at this time. In Minnesota the farmers were said to have remarked: Are you sure the Good Lord can understand English? And I’m not sure our organ can play English music.

From time to time the minutes would show that work on the church orchard property would be authorized. The Pear orchards were planted around 1914 and removed in 1960 because of the blight.

Researching the archives for this history of our two churches, I found so many “little bits” of information, on how a church functions and how much help it needs from its members, I thought I would write about some of the interesting inter-workings. St. Paul and Grace both have a wealth of information that make it human, loving, and a caring place to worship.

At a special meeting (December 27, 1939) the young people at St. Paul ask the membership for consent to join the Walther League. The Walther League<sup>3</sup> was discussed and permission was given to join.

At a meeting in 1941 it was resolved to have a special collection taken during the service on Sunday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. A National collection was to be held on that day for the purpose of raising funds to support

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<sup>3</sup> Note: The Walther League had been organized in 1893 at Trinity Church in Buffalo, NY. The purpose of this young people’s organization, named after C.F.W. Walther, was to help young people grow as Christians in worship, education, service, recreation and fellowship. The League involved youth in worship, leadership training schools, camping, writing, and various other training projects.

the introduction of Lutheran centers at training camps remote from Lutheran churches. This would bring religious material and services to Christian boys in the army and navy.

Arnold Stunkel said he first arrived in the area in 1941, and came back in 1943. He joined St. Paul because it was the only Lutheran Church in the area at the time. Arnold pitched right in and did what he could to help both St. Paul and Grace Lutheran Church.

On January 5, 1942, the purchase of a new seal in English was discussed, it was "considered advisable, under present world conditions." It was decided to investigate if a new one must be purchased or the old one recast. There was a vote to procure an American flag for use in the church.

It was decided that St. Paul would again participate in the army-navy collection on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1942. The pastor was asked to make an announcement about the collection on the two previous Sundays.

Members of the congregation were urged to extend the hospitality of their homes to Lutheran boys at Camp Beale.

Congregational (voting members) meetings or special meetings were held often, according to the women at St. Paul. So when the church had a budget surplus, after the debts were all paid, the men voted to send the 1943 Easter collection to the Church Extension Fund. After some discussion a motion was carried to send envelopes for monthly contributions to the boys from the congregation who were in the service.

That year the congregation had a balance on hand of \$244.44 so it was decided due to the size of the treasury, a bank account should be opened in the name of the congregation and a contingency fund of \$150.00 also set up.

There was no District Convention held in 1943 because of the "exigencies" of the war. One member and an alternate were always selected to attend each District Convention and give a report on their return.

Finally, on October 4, 1943 it was voted, after tabling it at a previous meeting, to give the pastor a 10% raise in basic salary.

#### Grass Valley's Mission Church

In 1943, the church records show that even with a loss of population in Grass Valley when the gold mines closed, attendance at the mission church increased. Soldiers with families from Camp Beale started attending and regular services had to be held every Sunday.

A petition to The California - Nevada District of the Lutheran Church to open a permanent mission station in Grass Valley was made.

#### Time Marches On

In 1945 a suggestion was made by the Mission Board that a sum of \$3.50 per month mileage allowance for the Pastor should be included in the church budget.

The Ladies Aid was granted permission to join the Ladies Missionary society.<sup>4</sup>

#### St. Paul is on the Radio.

July 6, 1947, a Vesper service was conducted by St. Paul Church on Station KGfN from 9-9:30 p.m. with members of the congregation singing. Pastor Adam also conducted the devotions over KGfN from 8-8:15 a.m Monday through Friday, that week .

In 1947 the Board of Directors of the Subsidized Congregations gave the pastors a 15% cost of living bonus – “during the present high cost of living.”

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<sup>4</sup> Note: The International Lutheran Women's Missionary League had been organized in 1942 to promote and provide financial support for mission work throughout the world. Monetary gifts from the women's mite boxes are divided 75% for LWML District Mission work and 25% for International LWML Mission goals.

That year's Christmas Eve Service at St. Paul had 61 people in attendance and 38 people at church on Christmas Day. Records show there were 33 communicant members at that time. It was a busy church – choir practice, evening adult Bible class, Ladies Aid Society meetings, Children's Saturday Bible class, Congregational meetings, getting ready for Mission Festival Sunday and the Christmas program.

With the Ladies Aid Picnic that was held on Sunday afternoon, July 18, 1948 it was decided to make it an annual event.

In 1948 the Congregation resolved to join the pension system of the Missouri Synod and pay 4% of its monthly contributions for the pastor.

#### 1949 Was an Eventful Year

After twenty years of faithful serve Rev. Adam was released to serve a larger congregation at Lowell, Indiana.

Rev. Walter C. Rubke of Portland, Oregon was "called" and served St. Paul and "the daughter congregation, Grace at Grass Valley" for less than three years, (1949 - 1951) but they were eventful years.

When Pastor Rubke accepted, the District Secretary of Missions brought him to a meeting of the congregation (voting) at St. Paul's church. They were told he would live in Grass Valley. St. Paul was very disappointed because they had just finished remodeling the parsonage.

Rev. Rubke lived in a rented house on Pleasant St. in Grass Valley, where he helped to organize Grace Lutheran Church. Grace invited St. Paul to join them but they voted it down 8-2. St. Paul was told they would become a Mission Station.

Pastor Rubke worked hard and built-up the congregations of both churches.

## VI. GRASS VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH ORGANIZED

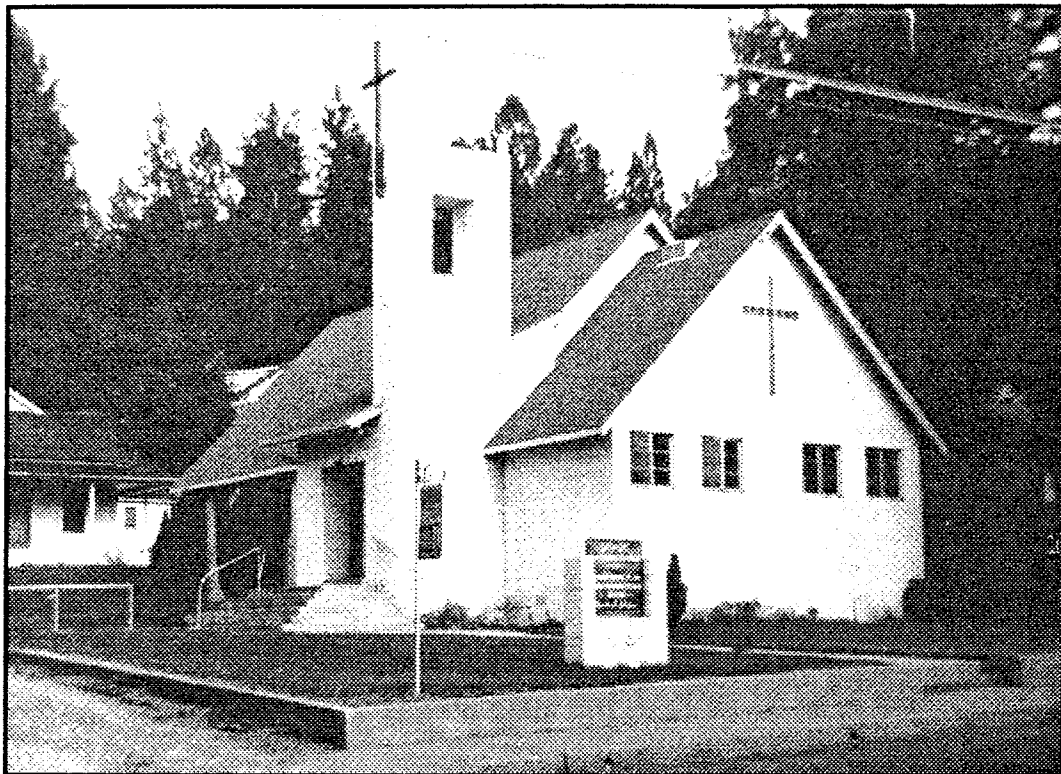
A new church, Grace Lutheran Church, was organized on February 12, 1949 and Rev. Rubke was installed as their pastor.

The same day the church was organized, a building committee was also elected. Arnold Stunkel was one of Grace's Charter Voting members and on the building committee. Another member, Joel Bierwagen was chairman of the building committee. Rev. Rubke wanted a bell so the bell tower was included in the plans.

Grace Lutheran church was built on 453 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley and the house that was sitting on the lot was moved to the rear and used as the parsonage.

In a recent letter (September 3, 1998) to Arnold Stunkel, Pastor Rubke remembers when they built the church. He said Gudrun's (Rubke) father, Alfred Wadenitz, laid the floor and his father, William Rubke, gave the light fixtures. The Gelhaus's (Melvin and Jane) gave a round, stained glass window and that Arnold painted the church.

Grace Lutheran Church



The Congregation started looking for a bell. They thought they found one in Lincoln but it was not for sale. So the church had no bell.

The charter was adopted on March 1950 and approved by the District, May 11, 1952.

The church was dedicated on May 6, 1951 and many new members were added to the congregation.

After Grace Lutheran was dedicated Rev. Rubke was the minister for both churches. With a larger attendance, the new church became the focal point of the Missouri Synod in the area.

St. Paul was completely renovated, with rededication service held on May 28, 1951.

On February 10, 1952, Rev. C. A. Baumgartel was installed (at Grace Lutheran Church) and shepherded the two flocks for almost two years. Most of the pastors only stayed two or three years and accepted calls to other churches.

In the early 1950s, the movie "Martin Luther" was made. The old Congregational Church in Grass Valley showed the movie and invited all the Protestants to come and see it. While the movie was playing, Children threw rocks through the windows.

During the time Rev. Baumgartel was the pastor, on November 2, 1952, St. Paul had it's Fiftieth Anniversary with a big celebration at Chicago Park. Reformation Festival Service was held at 9:00 a.m. There was a Hymn Gems of the Reformation Service with organ and violin at 4:15 p.m. and Vesper Festival Services at 4:30 p.m. The Grace - St. Paul choir sang, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

Rev. Carl March (who had been ordained on August 31, 1924 at St. Paul and served until the Fall of 1925) preached the Festival Sermon. Prof. Walter Rubke (who served 1949 -1951) was one of the Liturgists.

The Anniversary Fellowship Meal was held at 6:30 p.m. at the Peardale Farm Center Building.

Note: The oldest person present was Ernie Bierwagen's father

Christian and the youngest was Ernie's son, George Christian, age six months.

The congregation was listed as: Souls: 85, Communicates: 45. Saturday School: 20, Vacation Bible School: 20, and Ladies Aid: 15. During St. Paul's first fifty years the church had recorded 190 baptisms, 27 marriages, 83 confirmations and 73 funerals.

While Rev. Baumgartel was here only a short time both churches grew in attendance and members. Vacation Bible School was a big success. All of the children in the community were invited.

At St. Paul, Ernie B. taught Sunday School and Marianne played the organ. People would attend Christmas Eve Service and then ask the Pastor to call on them. Ernie tells about one family with pre-teen boys that were to be baptized. One of the smaller boys hooked his leg around the pew and had to be carried up to the altar. At this time Rev. Jonas, (retired Professor), was living at the old parsonage at St. Paul, since it was no longer being used.

On Sunday, April 25, 1954 a Farewell Reception was held for Pastor and Mrs. C. A. Baumgartel and family at the Peardale Hall.

During this time it was decided to remodel the parsonage on South Auburn Street in Grass Valley and the congregation all pitched in and did the work.

#### THE YEARS - 1954 UNTIL 1965

The Reverend Karl Neumann was Installed as Pastor for both churches on November 7, 1954 and stayed until 1956.

A combined Church Bulletin from Grace Lutheran Church, 453 S. Auburn, Grass Valley, CA and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Chicago Park, CA dated February 20, 1955 gave the four-digit telephone number as 1484 for Grace.

It listed the attendance for the previous week:

St. Paul's Sunday Service at nine a.m. - 40, Sunday School - 29.  
Grace's Sunday Service at 11 a.m. 58, Sunday School - 64.

It also listed the start of joint Mid-Week Lenten Services at Grace. Confirmation instruction (Grace) on Friday at 3:30 p.m. and St. Paul's Saturday school at 9:00 a.m. The Bulletin was typed, with carbon copies.

The Bulletin also carried this tidbit of information and I quote.

Title: Values. A roving reporter stopped six people on the sidewalks of New York and asked, "what was the most important happening in history?" Five replies from two men and three women were as varied as might be expected. "The settlement of Jamestown by the English." - "The defeat of the Saracens at Tours." - "The splitting of the atom." - "The defeat of the Japanese." - "The invention of the Wheel." - the 6th answer came from a 14-year-old schoolboy: "The birth of Jesus Christ." ---R&R Magazine.

In May 1956 a Couples Club of Grace was formed. It started with six couples at the first meeting and soon grew. They called themselves "Co-Reapers." They invited couples from St. Paul to join.

The couples met at the various homes or the parsonage for socializing and discussion on how they could help the church. They tried to find a bell for the church but when none was found they gave up and tabled the motion.

The club started a nursery to be held during church services, held a carnival to raise money, and received permission from the State Department of Highways to put up signs on the roads with the Church's name and location. During this time a "call" also went out for a new pastor.

The club bought Christmas trees and decorations, and a machine that addressed envelopes for the church office. Finally with what was left in the bank when they disbanded, bought ten hymnals. After two years, the members decided the Couples Club should convert to a monthly Bible class.



Rev. Palmer L. Janke, Sr. came in December 1956 and served the churches until 1960. A Divine Worship Service with Rite of Installation as Pastor of both Grace and St. Paul was held at Grace Lutheran Church in Grass Valley.

Rev. Janke stayed three years. I found a copy of the typed letter of his resignation, dated February 23, 1960 in the Marianne and Ernie Bierwagen's scrap book.

Our sixteenth minister graduated from Concordia Seminary (St. Louis, Mo) on June 1, 1960. Rev. Keith A. Skiles was ordained and installed on August 7, 1960 at 4 p.m. The sermon was given by The Rev. Victor Herrmann from Faith Lutheran Church in Fair Oaks, CA. That Sunday's offering was given to Pastor and Mrs. Skiles (and one son, Jeffery Craid, age two months). Rev. Skiles gave the benediction.

During Rev. Skiles stay, land on Ridge Road was purchased by Grace and plans were made to build a new church.

In 1962 (September 9th), St. Paul held its 60th Anniversary Service. Morning Services were held at 9:00 a.m. and the sermon was preached by The Rev. E. H. Holsten, Circuit Counselor. The Sunday School Choir sang "Onward Christian Soldiers."

At 4:00 p.m. The Order of Vespers was held and The Rev. Carl March, former Pastor of St. Paul, (1924, 1925) preached a sermon, titled "A Great Church." The Organist was: Mrs. Ernst L. Bierwagen.

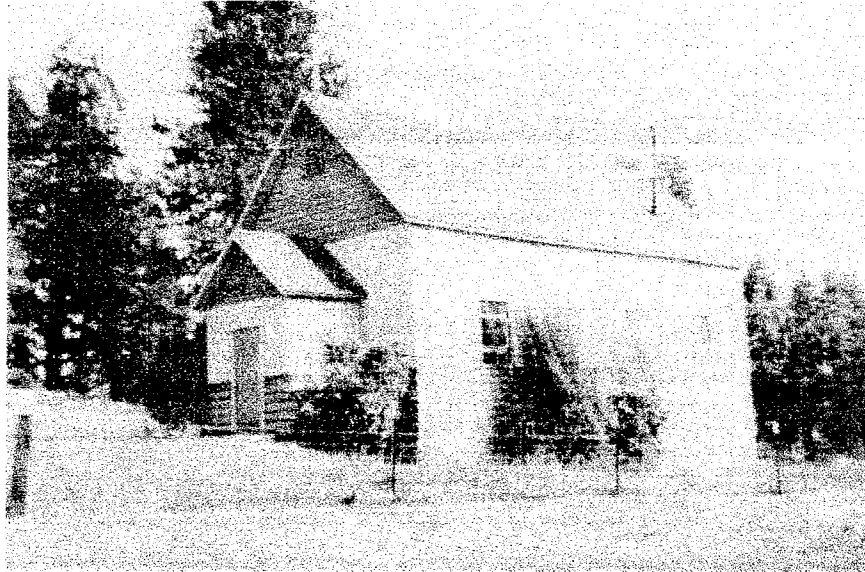
Present Status: St. Paul - Souls: 80, Communicants: 53, Sunday School: 27.

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys  
Transported by the view, I'm lost  
In wonder, love, and praise."

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

1902

1962



## St. Paul Lutheran Church

Chicago Park, California

SEPTEMBER 9, 1962

The Rev. Keith A. Skiles, Pastor  
273-7043

The latter part of 1964 the churches were without a pastor and a call was extended to Rev. A.H. Herkamp. Rev. Herkamp and wife, Irene had two grown children.

Installation Service for Rev. Arthur Herkamp on held on Sunday, December 6, 1964.

On Tuesday, April 13, 1965 Pastor Herkamp wrote a very nice article for the Union Newspaper on "Special Easter Week Services for Lutherans."

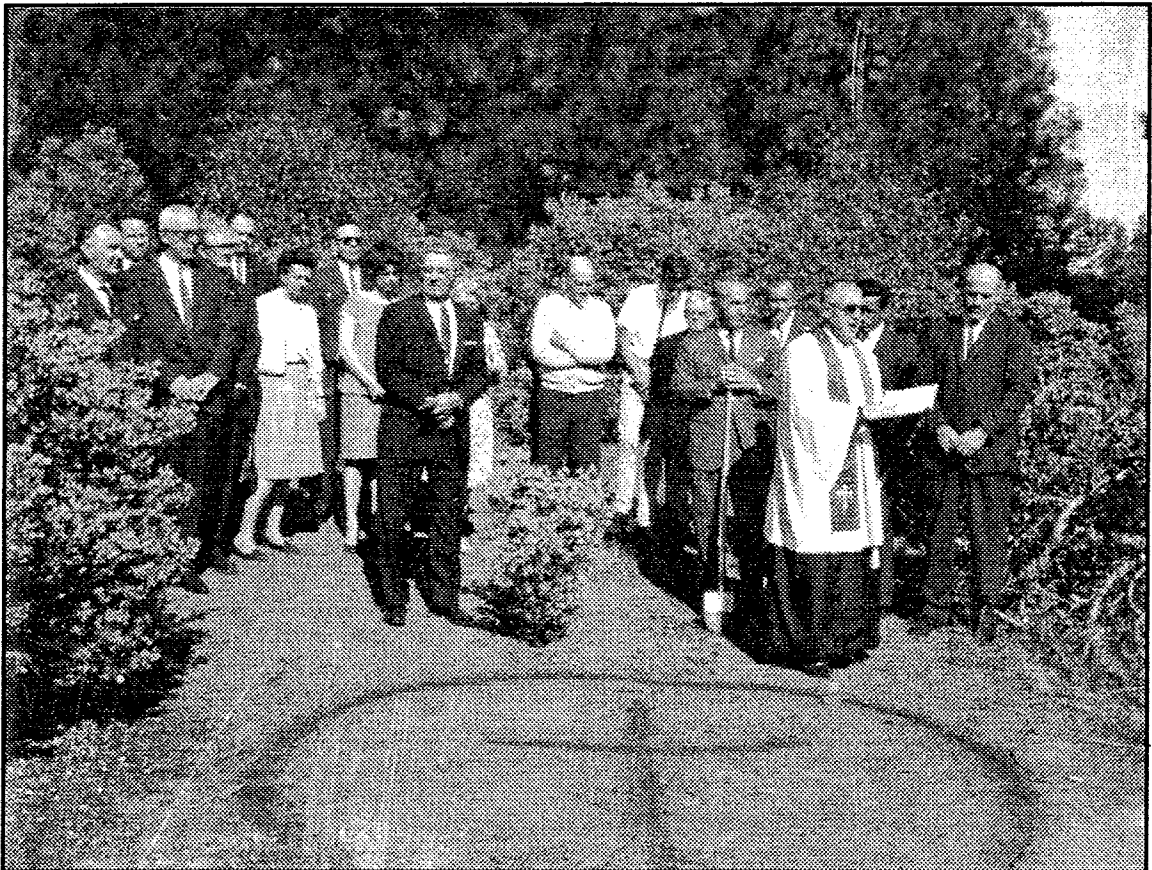
Later that year (September 27, 1965) he wrote a nice letter in the VIEWS OF OTHERS section, thanking the Union for publicizing the church schedules every week and the advertisers "who support the full page Church ad encouraging the populace to make a choice of their church and then attend."

VII. GRACE LUTHERAN BUILDS NEW CHURCH  
ON RIDGE ROAD  
THE YEARS - 1965 UNTIL 1972

After four years of planning and preparation the congregation's dream was about to materialize. Grace sold the church on South Auburn Street to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, to be vacated by November 12 and start to build on (Alta) Ridge Road.

In October 1965, Nevada Union High School, considered community relations and granted temporary use of their multi purpose room or gymnasium to Grace Lutheran Church during construction of their nearby church. "Rental Space" was granted to hold church services for the winter and spring.

On Sunday, October 31, 1965, Reformation Day the Cross and Circle Ground Breaking for the new church was held.



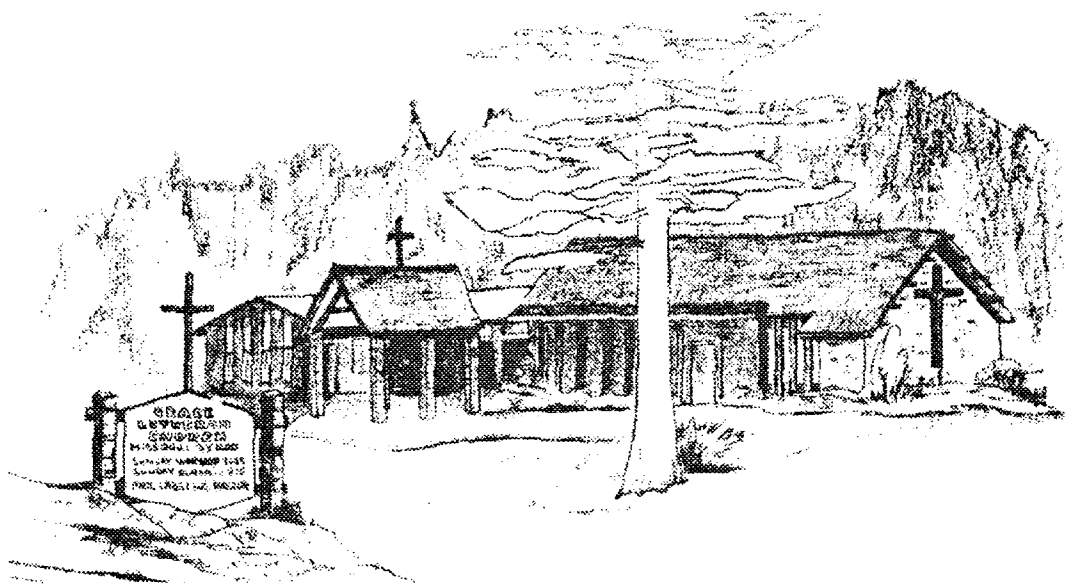
At the church Rev. Herkamp's sermon was on "What Made Luther Great Among His Contemporaries?" After prayers the congregation was urged to go to the new site where the ground breaking ceremony was to be held.

More than 100 worshipers witnessed the outlining of the cross and circle and each participant turned over a spade of dirt. Rev. Herkamp, after reading the ritual, received the spade from Joel Bierwagen, the building committee chairman, and turned over the first spot of ground.

Many people took their turn with the spade, including Rudolph Ruiz, the contractor, other members of the building committee, the church council, representatives of the church organizations and two, Mr. E. Bierwagen and W. Weiss from the mother church, St. Paul of Chicago Park.

That evening, more than 50 people gathered at the parish hall on South Auburn Street for a final social and potluck supper. Hopes were high they would be in their new church the following spring.

After fifteen years on South Auburn Street, and while Rev. Herkamp was the pastor, the new Grace Church on Ridge Road between Grass Valley and Nevada City, was built.



The Dedicatory Service was held on Sunday, May 8, 1966 at 11:00 a.m.

The Invitation read:

"The members of Grace Lutheran Church of Grass Valley, California invites you to the dedication of their new Chapel and Parish Hall - TO THE GLORY OF GOD on Sunday, May 8, 1966.

The Service of Dedication - 11:00 a.m. - Liturgist: Rev. Walter Rubke President of Concordia College, Austin, Texas. Dedicatory Speaker: Rev. A. M Herkamp, Pastor of Grace.

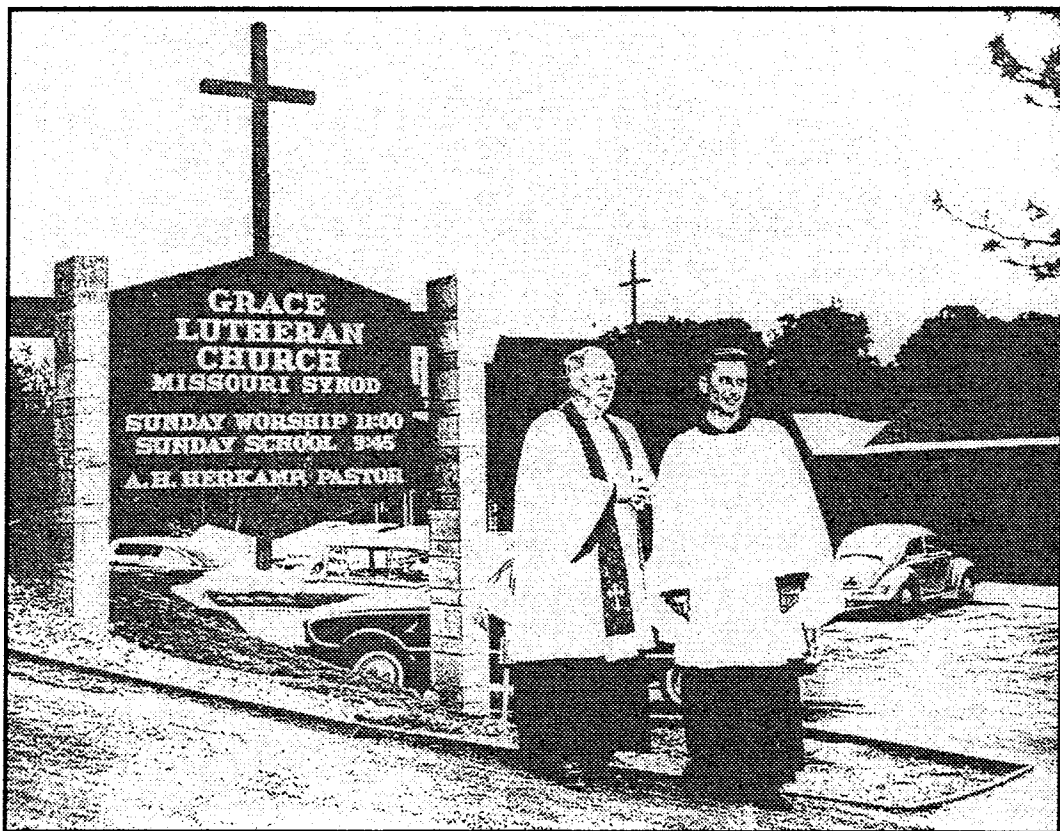
The Service of Praise - 4:00 P.M. - Liturgist: Rev. A. H. Herkamp, Pastor, Speaker: Rev. Walter Rubke, President of Concordia College.

Refreshments will be served by the Ladies of Grace after the service.

Grace Lutheran Chapel is located on Ridge Road next to the Nevada Union High School."

At the front door of the church there was a Ceremony of Acceptance of the Building. The architect, Harold Blewett, and contractor, Rodolfo D. Ruiz delivered the church key to the Building Committee Chairman, Joel Bierwagen. Pastor Herkamp unlocked the door. Chairman of the Congregation opened the door of the church and delivered the key to the Chairman of the Trustees. The congregation lead by the children's choir entered the church.

On the right side of the door is a small boulder with a brass plaque. On it there is a cross and the words: Grace Lutheran Church, Dedicated To The Glory Of God, May 8, 1966. The small boulder was brought from The Biblical Gardens, it (and the plaque) were donated by John Summer.

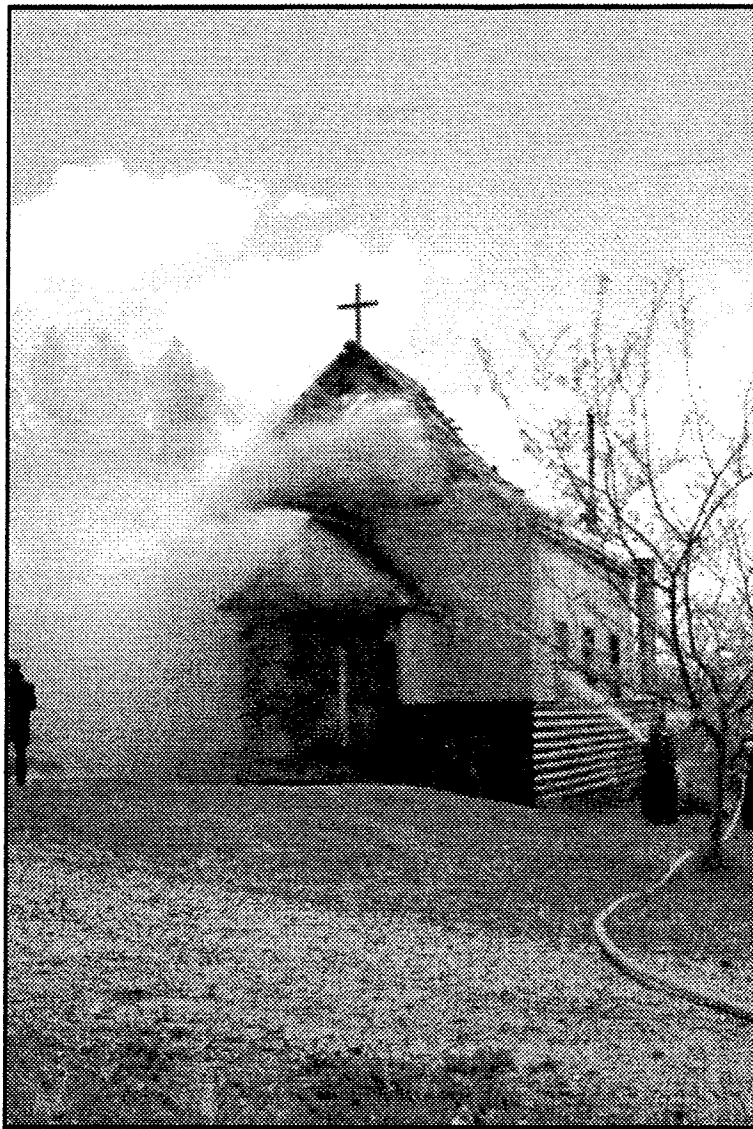


## VIII. LANDMARK CHURCH DESTROYED BY FIRE

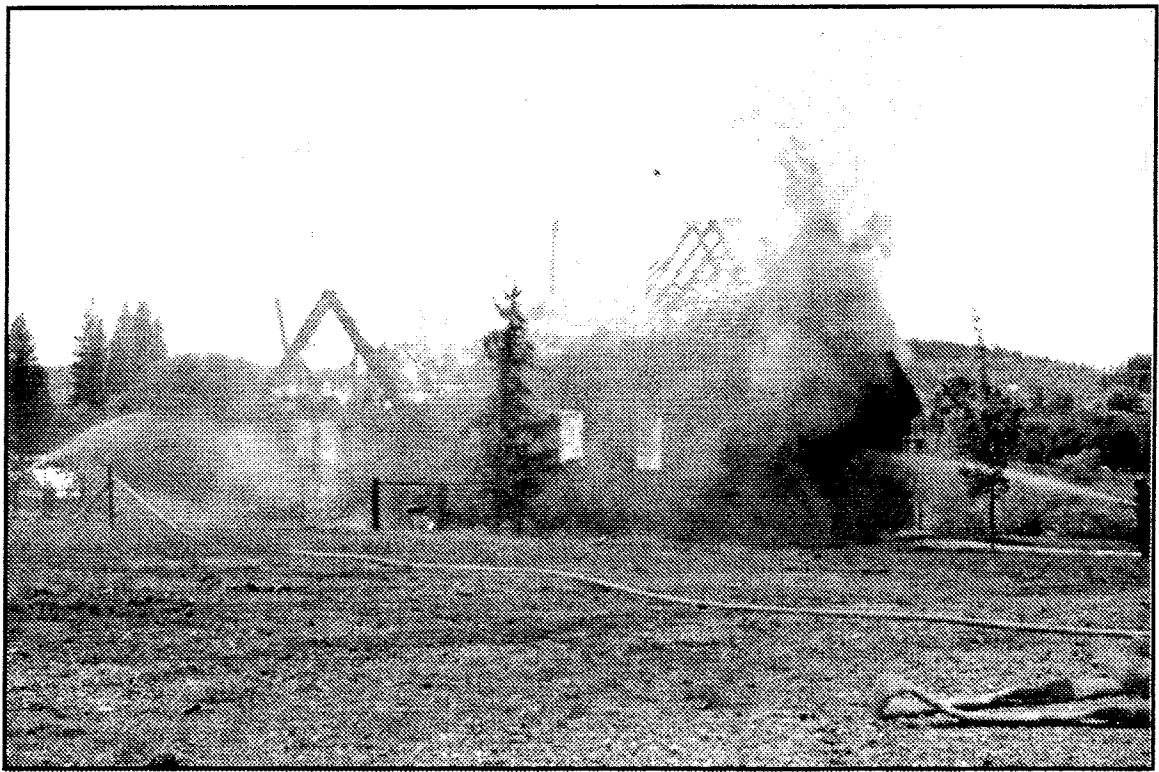
Headlines of "The Union" newspaper on Monday, May 10, 1971 told the tragic story -- "Fire destroys Chicago Park Church." There was a picture of the burning building and a story by Pat Jones on the front page.

The church had burned to the ground in the early afternoon on Mother's day. The fire was reported at 12:42 p.m. and the Peardale-Chicago Park volunteer fire department responded. Inability to get sufficient water plus high winds hampered the efforts of the fire fighters. Pat Jones' article ended with, "Will the little church be rebuilt? If God is willing."

Note: In 1971, The Union newspaper cost 10 cents.







The Chicago Park Church fire in 1971.



Pastor Herkamp had preached the Mother's Day sermon for both congregations. Morning services at St. Paul's were over shortly after 10:00 a.m. Sunday School, held at the parsonage, was over at 11:00 a.m.

It was believed that children playing with matches set the fire in the church. The fire started in the Chancel area and hadn't burned the entrance when people started arriving at the fire.

Lost were the original altar, pulpit, baptismal font and pews. They were all priceless antiques. All had been purchased from other churches. The altar, pulpit and font were from San Francisco churches and the pews from a Catholic Church in Auburn.

Saved were the electric organ that had been given to the church by the Albert Leuteneker family in 1950, a few smaller pieces including the Offering Plates, the hymnals and the original St. Paul Charter.

Note: Marianne said she rounded up four young men, standing around watching the fire, and they rushed in and carried the organ, out of the church.

The double Bulletin that Sunday gave the attendance for the previous week: 65 at Grace and 19 at St. Paul. An announcement was asking the congregation to renew their subscription to the "Lutheran Witness Reporter." The price was \$2.00.

Another announcement was that the following Sunday at 11:00 a.m. would be the 5th anniversary of the Dedication of Grace. An Anniversary Dinner would be at 12:30 p.m and an afternoon program at 2:00 p.m.

Insurance funds were inadequate to finance the rebuilding of the church so the decision was made to remodel the parsonage. The pastor (of both congregations) lived in Grass Valley and the Chicago Park parsonage was unoccupied.

Remodeling the parsonage -- removing the wall and a stairway between the living room and master bed room made a 16 by 27 foot sanctuary with the pulpit on the west end. The little chapel held 50 people.

## IX. THE YEAR 1972 - NEW CHAPEL FOR ST. PAUL AND PASTOR LABRENZ ARRIVES

Rev. Herkamp resigned, due to poor health, on April 30, 1972, just one month before St. Paul's 70th Anniversary, held on May 28, 1972. At this time the new house of worship was also dedicated. Pastor Theodor Siek, a retired minister from Sacramento was serving as an interim pastor.

Regular Services were held at 9:00 a.m., Sunday School at 10:15 a.m. and a potluck luncheon was held at 12:30 p.m.

The Dedication service took place at 2:00 p.m. with Rev. Fred Rutkowski officiating. The public was invited to attend services, the potluck luncheon and open house following the dedication service until 5:00 p.m. Many Memorial and monetary gifts were given by the congregation. The Altar Bible was given by the Sunday School Children at West Portal Lutheran Church, San Francisco, CA.

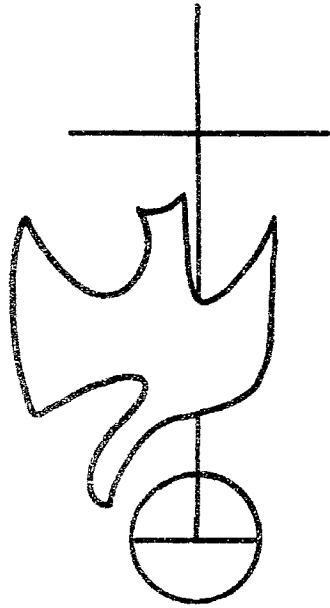
St. Paul and Grace gets a new Pastor that stays 25 years

December 3, 1972 Service of Installation for The Reverend Paul E. Labrenz.- Grace Lutheran Church, Grass Valley and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Chicago Park. He was installed by Rev. Walter Tietjen, Counselor Circuit 4. The Liturgists were Rev. Theodore Siek and Rev. Carl Sandbeck and the Preacher was Rev. Paul Janke. The Trinity Lutheran Choir, from Stockton, sang several songs.

Rev. Paul Edward Labrenz was born and raised in the Bay Area. His farther was also a Lutheran minister. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois in 1964, after spending one year (1962-63) as Vicar of Trinity Lutheran Church, Stockton, CA.

While serving at Trinity he met and married Anita Bangert, a teacher at Trinity Lutheran School. Pastor Paul was ordained at his home congregation, St. Peter, San Leandro.

Before answering the call to be Pastor for our two churches, he served at St. Paul, Jacksonville, Florida and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Oakland, CA.



A SERVICE OF INSTALLATION  
FOR  
THE REVEREND PAUL E. LABRENZ

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, GRASS VALLEY  
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, CHICAGO PARK

## ROSTER OF MINISTERS 1900 - 1998

1900 - 1903 - Pastor John William Theiss would come to Chicago Park from his Church in Santa Rosa as often as he could and hold services at the public school.

1903 - October 1905 - Rev. Martin Kuessner arrived in 1903 and conducted St. Paul's first funeral (April 1903) and the dedication of the new church building on December 4, 1904.

1905 - 1906 - Pastor Hermann Jonas served part time from Reno.

1906 - 1908 - Pastor Frank G. Gundlach. Pastor Gundlach was Installed 11-18-1906 and left on 8-11-1908.

1908 - 1912 - (June 16) Pastor G. Denninger.

1912 - 1914 - Pastor August Jacobs of Thalheim, CA. (part time).

1914 - 1916 - Pastor August Jacobs (Installed June 7, 1914).

1916 - 1917 - Pastor Elias Hieber.

1917 - 1924 - (July) - Pastor W. Huesemann

1924 - 1925 - Pastor Carl March (Student March was ordained on August 31, 1924).

1926 - 1928 - (October 7) Pastor Herman Atrops

1929 - 1949 - Pastor William Adam. Pastor Adam stayed 20 years.

1949 - 1951 - Pastor Walter C. Rubke.

1952 - 1954 - Pastor C. A. Baumgartel (2-10-52 until April 54).

1954 - 1956 - Pastor Karl Neumann (11-7-54 until 1956).

1956 - 1960 - Pastor Palmer L. Janke, Sr. (12-21-56 until 1960).

1960 - 1964 - Pastor Keith A. Skiles

1964 - 1972 - Pastor Arthur H. Herkamp

1972 - 1998 - Pastor Paul E. Labrenz (12-3-72 until 12-31-98). Pastor Labrenz stayed 26 years.



The Reverend Palmer L. Janke, Sr.



The Reverend Karl Neumann



The Reverend A. Herkamp



The Reverend Keith Skiles

With the arrival of Pastor Labrenz, Grace Lutheran Church became more community oriented. Pastor Labrenz looked around and decided there were no programs for the senior citizens in the area. He felt there was a real need and the idea of Gold Country Meals was born.

In 1974, after State Funds didn't materialize for a five-day a week nutrition program Pastor Labrenz and the church secretary, Dorothy Jones, came up with the idea of a one-day-a-week volunteer program. He took the idea to the Ministerial Association. The project to be administered by Grace Lutheran Church would be community-wide effort.

They would use the Grace Lutheran Social Hall and each Tuesday a different church would take turns with preparation of the meal and social activities. Girls from Nevada Union High School would help serve the meals. Nine area churches agreed to help. People who came contributed whatever they wished for a donation. What kept the program afloat were the donations from service clubs, individuals, local businesses, and various organizations in the community.

Each church group, serving that week, received a kitty of \$60.00. If they went over that amount the church group would make up the difference. Grace Lutheran Church would receive \$125.00 per month for use depreciation and utilities.

Dorothy Jones became the director and ran the Gold County Meals for Grace Church and later Telecare. Telecare was an information and referral service, headquartered at Grace Church, that grew out of the need to take telephone calls for dinner reservations and help with medical appointments.

The church did receive a Federal grant for the Telecare Program which grew out of the need of transportation for seniors, not only for the weekly nutritious meal but for doctor's appointments. It provided the availability of taxi service for those unable to use public transportation due to physical limitations. The Gold Country bus and 15 volunteer drivers furnished transportation to the church.

Every phone call and ride was logged in. Later on, due to insurance troubles the county decided to take over the transportation of the elderly and handicapped in Western Nevada County on a 40-hour week (Monday through Friday) with two one-way trips a week allowed.

Gold Country Meals started on Tuesday, June 11, 1974, serving 33 seniors, and during the 11½ years of operations only had to cancel one meal -- because of a blizzard. The average attendance was 75 seniors, and with the staff, and the crew of helpers (close to 100 people) were fed every

Tuesday.

The first home-delivered meals for elderly people with short-term medical needs started in 1978. The meals were delivered from the Golden Empire Convalescent Hospital. Volunteer drivers from the overall community, not just the churches, delivered the first meals on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Starting in a small way, a hot meal that could be augmented by ordering an evening snack (sandwich and fruit) was delivered to seven people.

When a 5-day a week nutrition program was provided at the Senior Center (at the Fairgrounds), the Gold Country Meals Board of Directors agreed it was time to phase out their special meal, which was now serving as many as 100 guest each Tuesday. It was a duplication of service and no longer needed.

Dorothy Jones had already retired. Jean Irely (Sierra United Presbyterian Church) and Jeanne Steffen (Grace Lutheran Church), the Co-Directors, mailed everyone a letter informing them of the decision and that December 17, 1985, a Christmas party would be the last meal and gave them the telephone numbers for the Senior Center for reservations and transportation.

The congregation had become an "older" congregation so the Sunday School program had become non-existent. In 1973, with the Labrenz children and a few other families there was a great need to re-establish a Sunday School. With the help of Jeanne Steffen Sunday School again became an active part of the church.

The Grace Lutheran Church Library was started in April 1975. A tall book shelf was built in the Fireside Room and the first books were purchased from funds given as a memorial fund to Marvin Leitzel, Jr. A smaller set of vertical display shelves (donated by a lady in the congregation) set on a table in the social hall. Everyone could view these books as they stood in line for coffee, juice and cookies on Sunday after worship services.

Martha Mueller was the Librarian. She and Pastor Labrenz convinced me (Jan Postell) to become Church Librarian on May 24, 1988. The first, "OUR CHURCH LIBRARY" page appeared in the July 1988 Newsletter.



Getting ready to move into our new building – December 1990, we started cleaning and repairing the books as well as putting Dewey Decimal Classification numbers on them. We had outgrown our “subject matter” classification.

Our new church gave the Library a nice room, many shelves, and a bulletin board we could all share. Colorful Library posters are a good addition to the bulletin board. We now had a cabinet to keep Library supplies in. There was room in one corner by the window for a small desk. The Library keeps growing and a cabinet for videos and tapes has been added.

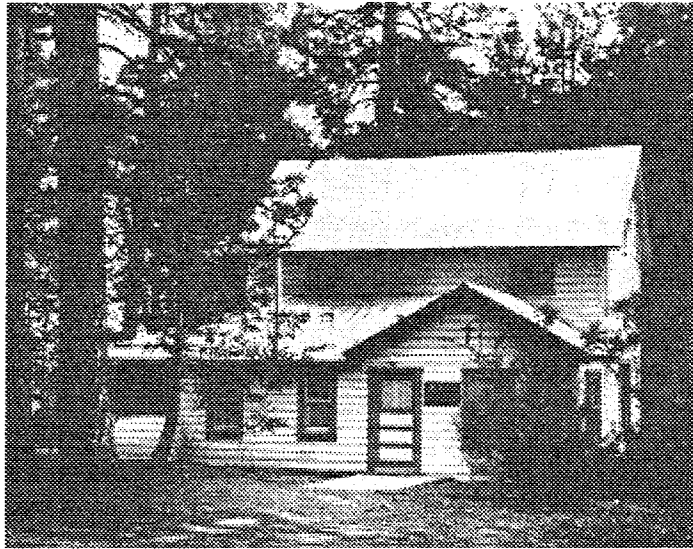
### St. Paul celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

On Sunday, May 15, 1983, at 4:00 p.m. St. Paul's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was held. Rev. Walter Rubke (Pastor 1949-51) preached the sermon. Lector: Rev. Arthur Herkamp (Pastor 1964 - 72). Liturgist: Rev. Paul Labrenz. Organist: Marianne Bierwagen. Choir: Grace Lutheran Church, Director: Jean Poff, Accompanist: Delta Carr. An outdoor buffet supper was served after the service.

EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

1903

1983



***St. Paul Lutheran Church***

***Chicago Park , California***

MAY 15, 1983

The Rev. Paul Labrenz, Pastor

## X. GRACE CHURCH OUT GROWS IT'S SANCTUARY

1983 was the first full year Grace had operated without a subsidy from the District and had become financially self-sufficient. April 1983 statistics for an average Sunday attendance at Grace was 144 and St. Paul 20. Communicant Members at Grace were 171 and St. Paul 21. Through increasing contributions to the District's mission program Grace had begun to help other struggling congregations.

Worship attendance at Grace Lutheran Church grew over 60% from 1980 to 1986. The church only seated 125 people and even with two Sunday worship services, it was approaching capacity. More Sunday school classrooms were needed.

In 1984, worship services at St. Paul came to an end and a Bible class was held in Chicago Park once a week. The two congregations became one congregation with two services held at Grace.

However, we were out growing our present church in Grass Valley. The following actions took place:

January 1984 – Planning Committee to study growth patterns of congregation.

November 1984 – A Planning questionnaire gathered ideas from the congregation.

November - December 1984 meetings held to discuss the questionnaire - preliminary recommendations.

December - January 1985 Analysis of Data from questionnaire and preliminary recommendations. The committee members used the questionnaire, statistics, comparison chart, average attendance (1978 - 1985) with projections through 1987, local builders and real estate brokers' comments, architectural standards, and Synodical statistics.

January 1985 - Presentation of results - opportunity for discussion and comment. Many objectives were established and each was discussed as to the pros and cons of each objective in detail.

February 1985 - Final recommendation to the church council.

July 1985 - Congregation approved appointment of a committee to research all available options to handle growth.

Formation of building committee, August 1985 -- Nominees to the building committee were Don and Pat McCage, Bob and Jennifer Krogman, Bill and Ann Platz, Bob and Melody Meiers, and Ernie and Marianne Bierwagen. They all accepted.

At a Organization Meeting held on October 8, 1985 -- the Building committee was approved and ask to develop a set of alternative approaches to providing increased opportunities for Sunday worship. They were asked to complete the report by March 1986. There was a broad range of alternative to work with and Planning Guidelines and Objectives were given for the committee to follow.

The five couples chosen for the committee started their work. Bob Krogman was Chairman and Jennifer Krogman was Secretary.

March 1986 the committee's report was ready. A copy of the report was mailed to all members of the congregation prior to meeting in April 1986 for discussion.

Recommendations of the committee were, "Build a New Chapel on our present property with interior changes to our present facility to accommodate needed Sunday School space and a larger social hall."

The present location is good and as centrally located as a church site can be. Building a new chapel on the present site is a positive statement to our community we are growing. Our present property can support a new building and will meet the parking requirements as we grow. The seating of 300 worshipers was recommended. That it was not feasible to make additions or to remodel present building.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to "Build a new church on our present property." A method of funding was also voted on and it was decided to retain a consultant to direct our efforts.

May-June 1986 five architects were interviewed. David Wright of Nevada City was selected.

July 86 Congregational meeting to introduce David Wright. He presented a proposed site plan.

Congregation voted to have Mr. Rolf Hough direct fund raising.

August 1986 congregation meeting -- David Wright presented schematic design for discussion.

September 1986 - meeting to hear more information ----- and beginning of funding.

On January 18, 1987, a 10-week fund-raising drive begins – ends March 22, 1987.

It was later decided on an excavation under the new chapel (17 x 72 feet) would be available and divided into Sunday School rooms. They would not be below ground but would face the lower parking lot.

Features of the Building Program :

- seating for 300 worshipers
- space for organ and choir
- increased number of classrooms
- facilities for fellowship after worship
- nursery
- Pastor's office
- secretary's office with workroom
- library and conference room
- clergy sacristy and working sacristy
- janitor's workroom and storage

The building committee - construction supervision: Bob Treiberg and Lloyd Loetterle.

The General Contractor: John Schugren, Nevada City, CA.

Interior Design and Memorials: Iona Bechthold, Anita Labrenz, Betty Nelson, and Majil Steiner.

## XI. NEW CHURCH ON RIDGE ROAD DEDICATED

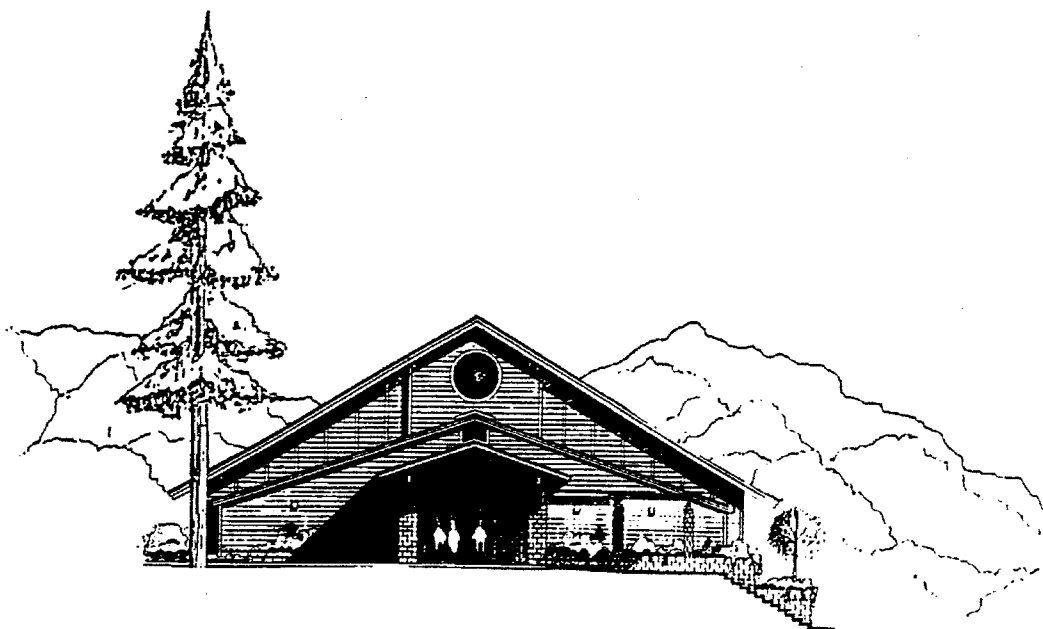
The Grace Lutheran Congregation held a "The Day of Dedication for their new 9400-square-foot building on May 5, 1991" at 9:00 a.m., conducted by Rev. Paul Labrenz. The congregation and minister gathered at the front door of the new church. The Chairman of the Building Committee gave the keys to the President of the Congregation and the door was unlocked and opened. The Procession moves into the church for the service. Chris Nelson was the organist and Jean Poff, the music director.

During the service were the Prayer of Dedication for The Building, The Baptismal Font, The Altar, The Pulpit, the Reredos, The Processional Cross, The Credence Table, The Altar Book and Its Stand, The Paschal Candle and The Torches, The Offering Plates and The Flower Stand.

The reredos are used to give the altar a proper setting. They are called "reredos" when the setting is carved stone or wood behind the altar. The wood carving theme of the reredos at Grace is the "Mountains of the Lord." There are many mountains mentioned in Scripture and the reredos illustrates a few that tell the story of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments.

Facing the altar, on the left, the first panel recounts the story of the Flood and Mt. Ararat with the dove and the olive branch.. Mt. Sinai, with the burning bush and giving the law. Mt. Tabor with the crown is on the left of the figure of Jesus as the Christ and Mt. Hermon, with the monogram for the name of Christ carved in the sunburst is on the right. These two mountains reflect the belief that Jesus was indeed both God and man - the God of both Testaments. The next panel is Mt. Calvary, the meaning and importance of what happened there being the center of our religion. The processional cross is part of this panel and a reminder of its part in our salvation. The last panel is the Mt. of Olives, the mountain from which our Lord ascended. with the promise that He will come again.

The altar has reference to Mt. Pisgah and the seven altars is the focal point in the church. The carvings on the pulpit give Scriptural reference to the Sermon on the Mount. The Narthex woodcarving is a call to Worship and introduces the worshiper to the narration of the sanctuary.



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Grass Valley, California

THE DAY OF DEDICATION  
THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
MAY 5, 1991

SERVICE OF DEDICATION 9:00 A.M.

FESTIVAL SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE 3:00 P.M.

NOTE: The narthex woodcarving was dedicated on September 22 at the same time the architectural glass windows were.

The wood carvings were designed by Ernst Schwidder, Professor of Art, Pacific Lutheran University at Tacoma, Washington and executed by Ernst Schwidder/Associates.

The design of the octagon baptismal font dates back to the fifth century and symbolizes three concepts: 1. The resurrection life in Christ – Christ died on the sixth day of the week and rose on the first day of the next week, or on the eighth day. 2. Being named into the People of God .... Jesus was named eight days after his birth. 3. Heir of eternity .... God created the world in seven days. The eighth day begins the next week and symbolizes the time when God will create a new heaven and earth for His sons and daughters.

The large narthex (an entrance hall) encourages fellowship time after church services. Each family in the congregation has its own mail box in the library.

A Festival Service of Thanksgiving and Praise was conducted at 3:00 p. m. by Rev. Dr. Walter Rubke, former pastor of both Grace and St. Paul Lutheran churches. Following the 3:00 p.m. service, a light supper was served by the Ladies Guild.

After the dedication of the new church, one worship service, with Holy Communion was conducted each Sunday at 9 a.m.. Sunday School and Bible study were held at 10:30 a.m..

### Eleven Architectural Glass Windows Dedicated

Later that year, on Sunday, September 22, 1991, the eleven architectural glass windows and narthex woodcarving that had been installed the week before, were dedicated. Marc Eric Gulsrud of Tacoma, WA was the artist that designed the windows. He created a vision of color and design to enhance and provoke a personal and inspirational response.



A quote from one of our bulletins — The viewing of the windows should be “ ... .like cloud watching.” The intent is to evoke an emotional response from the viewer.

Each of the 11 artistic glasswork displays an individual theme. In the front windows the theme is “Creation of the Cosmos/the Heavens” with “Creation” on the left and “Communion” on the right. In darkness when all the windows are dark, small pieces of “space glass” remains shining within the interior windows, like little stars, reflecting available light.

At the rear of the sanctuary, the center round glasswork displays “Rejoicing” with the “Holy Spirit/Baptism” and “God the Creator/Man and Animals” on the left and right.

At the entrance to the church there are five panels of artistic glass works — “Rebirth”, “Pentecost”, “Unifying” (center), “Tree of Life”, and the “Great Commission.” Within the side windows and the entrance doors are more specific symbols in crystal medallions. The medallions with the pear and the apple remind the congregation of its roots in Chicago Park.

Dedication of the new Organ - Sunday May 24, 1992

The Opus 21 pipe organ was dedicated in loving memory of Thomas F. Leuteneker and Dorothy Anne Jones. Both were loving, caring members of the congregation. Their generosity to the congregation in their wills made this wonderful organ possible and is evidence of the love they shared for their Lord. It was Nevada County’s first custom-designed organ. Built by Michael Bigelow of American Fork, Utah, it took two years to build and almost one month to install at the church.

The organ committee, Chris Nelson, Consultant, Jean Poff, Chairperson, Marianne Bierwagen, and Delta Carr tried out a Bigelow Organ, Opus 12, in Oroville, CA in the summer 1986. The decision was made. Mr. Bigelow agreed to build the organ, whose case would match the wonderful architectural space, with the central round window overhead that our architect, David Wright had designed for it. The contractor, John Schugren, donated a double-strength laminated girder to go directly under the organ.

Chris Nelson visited the Bigelow organ builder in Utah in July 1991. American Fork is located at the foot of Timpanogos near Provo. The organ company was housed in what had been an old, historic (1903) Mormon church building. The Bigelow’s bought the building and converted it into the

shop, design room and a home.

Michael Bigelow is one of the new generation of organ builders. He has returned to the old method of building one-of-a-kind, handcrafted, mechanical action instruments, the kind built in the days of J. S. Bach.

It takes two-years to build three organs, with all the overwhelming details that go into building historic, hand-crafted, custom-designed instruments. This keeps his workers busy as they progress in the various stages of the three organs. When Chris was there they were building their 21<sup>st</sup> (for Grace), 22<sup>nd</sup> (a Lutheran church in Iowa) and 23<sup>rd</sup> (a Lutheran church in Wisconsin) instruments. All three organs were the same design (a Lutheran-style organ) -simple, basic and elegant. They are relatively inexpensive, designed to support congregation singing and play the Lutheran repertory in concert, and to last literally for centuries with minimal upkeep.

The solid oak organ case stands 20 feet high, containing 14 ranks of pipes. These ranks are flanked by a 13-foot wide facade of tin alloy pipes made in Holland.

A quote from Chris Nelson: "The organ is designed to accompany congregational singing with ideal support and clarity. It will play the literature of all periods, baroque through modern."

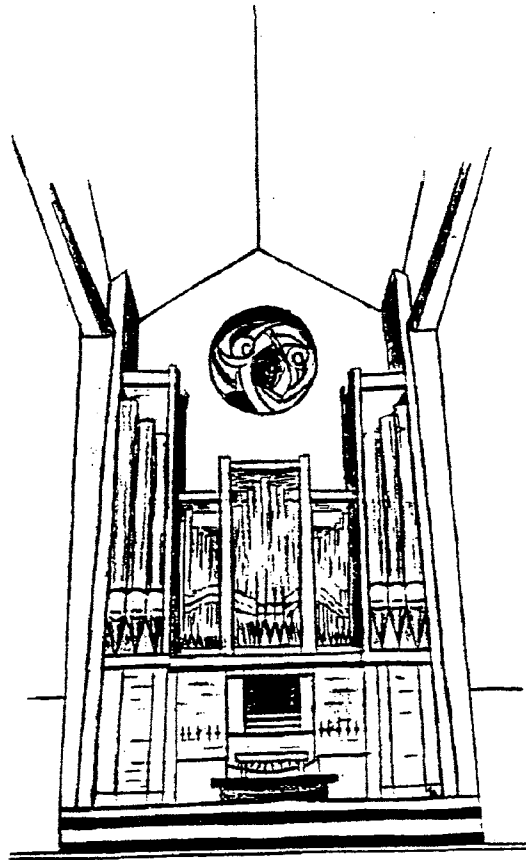
The day finally arrived when Michael Bigelow and his two helpers arrived. Men from the congregation helped unload the many parts that took three weeks to install. Marianne and Ernie Bierwagen housed and fed the three men from Utah. The heart of the organ, the heavy pipe chest was lifted eight feet and put on the lower case on April 30, 1992, one year after the dedication of the new church.

The organ was dedicated on May 24, 1992. On the cover of the bulletin that Sunday was a pencil drawing of the organ done by Grace's artist/member Majil Steiner. The drawing also appeared on the cover of the program for the Dedicatory Organ Concert by Chris Nelson, on June 7, 1992 held at 3:00 p.m. Technical information describing the Opus 21 Organ was also printed on the back of this program.

Hymns, representing the Church Year, played at the concert were composed by hymn-writers ranging from J. S. Bach (1715) to Charles Ore (1991). Following the concert a reception was held in the Narthex.

# GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Grass Valley, California



DEDICATORY ORGAN CONCERT

M. L. Bigelow Opus 21

In Memory of Thomas F. Leuteneker & Dorothy Anne Jones

Pentecost, June 7, 1992 at 3:00 P.M.

Organist, Chris Nelson

## XII LUTHERANS LOVE THEIR MUSIC

By Arnold Stunkel

In keeping with the tradition of the worship services of the Lutheran Church, a whole chapter will be devoted to the music that led the services through the years.

In Chicago Park, St. Paul's music was provided by a small pump organ. Even in worship services provided by Pastor Adam to his mission stations, he brought a small portable hand organ for singing liturgy and songs.

Albert Leuteneker donated the first electric organ, a Hammond, to St. Paul, that was used for their church services. Some of the first organists and pianists at St. Paul were Mrs. Gertrude Blum and daughter Elaine, Mrs. Agnes Adam, Mrs. Bertha Bierwagen, Mrs. Marianne Bierwagen, Miss Louise Janke, and Mrs. Florence Baumgartel.

This is the record of instruments used at Grace, Grass Valley. The Women's Improvement Club furnished the piano at the services. Pianists there were Mrs. Bertha Bierwagen, Mrs. Agnes Adam (Pastor's wife), and Mrs. Gudrun (Gudie) Rubke (Pastor's wife).

When Grace moved to their first church at 453 South Auburn Street, Grass Valley, Tom and Marie McGuire donated a used piano. It had been acquired from a defunct entertainment organization in Grass Valley on East Main Street. Tom and some helpers carried it down a steep stairway and moved it to the new church.

This piano served Grace for services until we had a donation day to purchase a small electric Baldwin organ. The organists that played this unit were Gudie Rubke, Louise Janke, Pat Schwartz, Kathy (Heyne) Wook, Mrs. Baumgartel, Marianne Bierwagen, and Irene Herkamp.

This little electric Baldwin organ was replaced with a larger Baldwin electric organ that was placed in our church on Ridge Road. After several years of service there was another change in organs and Bob and Delta Carr donated a Conn Artist Organ, as Delta was the present organist, and the Baldwin was beginning to use too many tubes, not always available. This organ was a great improvement, it was all electronic with no tubes.

Jean Poff was the Choir Director from February 1981 until June 19, 1991. Jean Poff, Delta Carr and a committee took over the project of getting a new piano (October 1984) and Jean recommended a new Tadashi, as the old faithful finally could no longer be tuned. The new piano is a fine instrument and continues to be used in the church.

The Choir would sing every Sunday. On Palm Sunday 1984, Grace Lutheran started having two services each Sunday and the Choir would alternate. One Sunday they would sing at the early service and the next Sunday at the late service. This continued until we moved into the new church and once again had one service.

Delta Carr retired as organist in September 1987 and in October of that year Chris Nelson was engaged as the organist. He was the former organist at the Episcopal Church in Nevada City.

When it was decided to build our present church, space was planned for a new organ. Chris Nelson and the organ committee took a year planning for a Pipe Organ. They choose the Bigelow Pipe Organ builders in Utah to build our pride and joy. This wonderful Bigelow Organ was made possible by the bequests made by Dorothy Jones and Thomas Leuteneker. It was placed in the church and dedicated on May 24, 1992. The former organ, the Conn donated by the Carr's, was placed in the new Rocklin Church.

Chris Nelson, who had become both organist and Choir Director, left Grace Lutheran Church on February 19, 1996, and the search was on for a new organist. After many organist in the area came each Sunday to play, the selection was made. Mrs. Judy Hiscock became our organist, Mrs Lael Skeffington became the Choir Director and Gerald Tappe started playing his violin. The Hiscock family also joins us many Sundays with their musical talents.

Yes, our Gracious Lord granted to Grace an ultimate gift to enhance our worship services – to sing praises to Him.

### XIII TIME MARCHES ON, THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The years 1993 -1998

On August 15, 1993 a "Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving" for St. Paul Lutheran Church of Chicago Park -- 1903 - 1993. A short service was held at 11:30 a.m. at St. Paul Cemetery to announce the disbanding of the congregation. Remarks were given by Pastor Walter Rubke (served 1949-51) and Pastor Paul Labrenz (served 1972 - present). The Rev. Walter Tietjen, President of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District gave a prayer and the benediction. A plaque was placed on a large granite stone (and dedicated) in the southwest corner of the cemetery.

The plaque reads:

ON THIS SITE DONATED BY  
ANNA PUSHECK  
THE GERMAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
ST. PAUL CONGREGATION WAS ESTABLISHED  
IN 1902 FOR WORSHIP  
AND PRAISE TO GOD CONTINUING UNTIL 1984

A wooden sign that says "St. Paul Lutheran Cemetery" has the date of 1903. Ludwig Bierwagen, the first person to be buried in the cemetery, was buried there on April 19, 1903.

St. Paul Church Corporation was dissolved in 1996 and the property liquidated. One plus acres were deeded to Chicago Park and Peardale Fire Department. Three plus acres, including the cemetery was deeded to Grace Lutheran Church in Grass Valley. Five acres were sold and proceeds distributed -- to a Grace Lutheran Church Fund . A smaller sum was given to the general fund for any ongoing maintenance needs that might arise. A larger amount , a gift of \$125,000 was presented to the California-Nevada-Hawaii District to set up a mission annuity. The District may use the interest from the fund at its discretion. This was a way for the members of St. Paul to thank the district for its many years of financial support. District President, Dr. Walter Tietjen was presented with the check after worship services on February 4, 1996.

In July 1996, after a five month search, Mrs. Judith M. Hiscock of Nevada City was selected by our Organist Search Committee as our new organist. She was selected after several auditions and guest appearances by other candidates.

Sunday, April 27, 1997, Grace celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod with a special worship service and brunch served afterwards by the young people.

A letter dated November 3, 1997 was mailed to everyone in the congregation. It was Pastor Paul's way of letting all the members of Grace know he was retiring on December 31, 1998. That he and Anita planned to return to the Bay Area and live in Alameda so they would be closer to Anita's elderly mother.

On Sunday, December 7, 1997 we celebrated Pastor Paul Labrenz's Twenty-five years of service (to the two congregations). The morning service was preached by Rev. Dr. Walter C. Tietjen, a high school classmate, who installed Pastor Paul at Grace 25 years ago. Rev. Dr. Paul Janke was the Guest speaker for the afternoon reception and dinner. Pastor Janke was also a high school classmate at Concordia High School in Oakland. He is now the Area Director (Sacramento) of Lutheran Social Services.

The Anniversary Dinner was held at 4:00 p.m. in the Social Hall. Church secretary and choir director, Lael Skeffington sang an original version of "Thanks for the Memories" co-written with Jeanne Steffen. Sixteen people who were members of Grace and St. Paul when the Pastor came were introduced.

In 1998, the older building, still part of Grace Lutheran Church had the outside repaired and painted. The inside, the former sanctuary, fireside room and social hall were painted and carpeted.

After 96 years the two Congregations have seen many changes.

The first part of 1999 the church will have an interim minister and later on a "call" will go out for a new Pastor to come and be a part of a "great congregation."

THE REV. DR. PAUL E. LABRENZ

25 YEARS  
1972 - 1997

THANKS FOR  
THE MEMORIES

Grace Lutheran Church





## THE EPILOGUE

It was not easy to write a history that covers over 96 years, a history that was written and spoken in two languages, English and German. Where some of the dates and the spelling of some of the people's names varied according to who was doing the writing. Some of the information by this time is very dusty and papers are turning yellow.

We are sorry if we left anyone out or any event that our readers feel should have been put in this story. Churches are busy places. Things don't just go on one day a week, 52 weeks a year. It takes a lot of people, working many hours a day, every day to make a congregation function smoothly. It takes many groups and committees that work behind the scenes and never get in the spotlight, to make a truly great church.

If anyone has any information about either St. Paul or Grace Lutheran Church that you think is interesting, important or even just an amusing event please write it down and give it to one of the committee members. Who knows – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary is only four years away and someone might get talked into revising and adding to this great tale.