

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

Muskegon, MI



Senior Church History Paper
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The history of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church begins in the fall of 1922 when several families from the Muskegon Heights area of western Michigan contacted the District Mission Board to request that services be held in the Muskegon Heights area. In 1923 the Mission Board agreed and from February until September they arranged for a number of local pastors to go to Muskegon and conduct services until a permanent pastor could be installed. These pastors include men such as, Rev. O. Frey (Saginaw), Rev. G. Hoenecke (Saginaw), Rev. G. Leyrer (Lansing), Rev. Wenk (Toledo), and many others. On September 23, 1923, Grace's first permanent pastor, Rev. Adolf A. Zuberbier was installed by Rev. O.J. Peters of Wayne, Michigan. On November 4th, the constitution of Grace was finished and accepted by the congregation.¹

At the beginning of 1925, the Joint Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod provided \$2,681.25 for the purchase of a plot of land on the corner of 5th Street and Hackley Avenue in Muskegon Heights. This grant, and gifts from other members, allowed the congregation to purchase the plot of land and begin planning to build a church building. Construction plans were interrupted when trouble broke out between Rev. Zuberbier and the Mission Board. The Congregational Record Book explains, "On the fourth Sunday in Advent of the year 1925 – Rev. Ad. A. Zuberbier, owing to unchristian practices, upon dealings with the Mission Board of the Michigan District, has been dismissed."² Unfortunately, the congregational records of the issues surrounding Rev. Zuberbier's dismissal have been lost from Grace Congregation, about which Pastor Hoenecke (Zuberbier's successor) said, "The original records were lost when secretary Charles Auspack lost the original secretary's minutes which were never returned to us.

¹ Information taken from the Official Congregational Record Book.

² Ibid.

Am very sad indeed!"³ The Michigan District Proceedings from 1928, which can be found in the Northwestern Lutheran of 1928, had the following information about Zuberbier's dismissal;

We find that the following charges of the Mission Board against Rev. A. Zuberbier were substantiated by the evidence as taken at Lansing, Mich., July 27, 1927 and also by Rev. Zuberbier's own confession.

1. That he in a wrong way sought to deliver the mission at Muskegon Heights into the hands of the Missouri Synod.
2. That he did in a wrong way appropriate rental to his own use that should have been delivered to the congregation.
3. That he slandered the Mission Board in the midst of the congregation at Muskegon Heights and also among the brethren by misrepresenting their actions, statements, and purposes.
4. That he falsely reported that in a meeting subsequent to the garage trouble he had been exonerated of all fault by the Mission Board in his dealings with the congregation, while in fact the Mission Board had demanded his resignation in consequence of these dealings.
5. That on the strength of this false report he demanded an apology of his church council.

In view of this fact, we, the committee,

1. Do not see ourselves free to recommend any changes in the resolution of our District, which read as follows:
Concerning the case of Pastor Zuberbier we must state that, upon examination of the testimony and documents before us, we have come to the conclusion.
 - a) That Pastor Zuberbier's holding of a call within our Synod has been made impossible
 - b) That our officials must give this public acknowledgment.
 - c) That we must give the actions of the Mission Board our full and complete assent.
 - d) That the district should appoint a committee of five men, who will begin and conduct a further conclusive handling of this case and determine a time and place for such a meeting.
 - e) That in the event that Pastor Zuberbier appears at such proceedings or produces unnecessary delays for such a meeting (as since August 1, 1926) the aforementioned committee shall acknowledge that Pastor Zuberbier has made himself unworthy of the pastoral office and is unfit for the pastoral office.
2. Decline any further responsibility for Rev. Zuberbier's remaining in the ministry.

The motion was adopted.⁴

³ Ibid.

Following his dismissal from Muskegon, Rev. Zuberbier accepted a call to Hamburg, Wisconsin. However, his pastorate in Hamburg was also short-lived. The same issue of the Northwestern Lutheran (April 1, 1928) reports that Rev. Zuberbier was suspended from the Synod for being caught up in the Protes'tant Controversy. Instead of joining the Protes'tant Conference, Rev. Zuberbier joined the LCMS.⁵

After such a tumultuous beginning, Grace was in need of strong pastoral leadership, which she found in Rev. A. Hoenecke. The congregation extended several calls after the dismissal of Zuberbier but they were all returned until the Mission Board urged Rev. Hoenecke to accept the call to serve Grace and was installed on December 23, 1925.

Grace church flourished under the leadership of Rev. Hoenecke. On June 6, 1926, the congregation celebrated the dedication of their first permanent church building in three services held that day.

Dedication of Grace Ev. Luth. Church was held of aforementioned date, in the dedicatory services: 10:30 A.M. Rev. O. Peters, Wayne, MI, member of the Mission Board of the Mich. Dist. delivered the main dedicatory sermon: Ps. 26:6-8.⁶ Afternoon dedicatory service, 2:30 P.M. Prof-Dir. O.J.R. Hoenecke, of Mich. Luth. Seminary delivered the sermon. Evening dedicatory service, 7:30 P.M. Rev. C. Lederer, Conclin, Mich. preached the sermon.⁷

In 1929, the Michigan District Mission Board encouraged the congregation to build a parsonage. Previously, the congregation had been renting a house for their pastor at a cost of \$45 per month. The congregation agreed and began building a parsonage, the

⁴ Michigan District Proceedings, notice in the April 1, 1928 NWL. German portions translated by Brian S. Weinkauf.

⁵ Western Wisconsin District Proceedings, notice in the April 1, 1928 NWL. German portions translated by Mark Tiefel.

⁶ Ps. 26:6-8, I wash my hands in innocence, and go about you altar, O LORD, proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. I love the house where you live, O LORD, the place where your glory dwells. (NIV)

⁷ Information taken from the Official Congregational Record Book.

cost of which was not to exceed \$5,000. The Mission Board agreed to devote \$40 per month to the mortgage until the loan could be paid in full. These payments continued until 1944 when the congregation made the Mission Board an offer to pay \$500 and the Synod the remaining \$250 in the liquidation of the parsonage debt. The offer was accepted by the Mission Board and the loan was paid in full before Easter of 1945. "The liquidation of our parsonage debt automatically brought about this circumstance, that Grace Ev. Luth. Congregation had become self-sustaining, an event to which pastor and congregation alike had dedicated their utmost desire and zeal."⁸

In 1946 the total congregation debt was approximately \$2,000. But on December 3, 1946, the congregation was named in the will of August Mauchesky as heir to ½ the Mauchesky estate amounting to \$6,862.05. The treasurer immediately paid all outstanding debts and the congregation was able to celebrate the burning of the mortgage on their church building. This event made Grace debt free for the first time in her history. Then, in 1947, the Ladies Aid resolved to renovate and decorate the interior of the church. They brought their recommendations to the board and voters for approval and the congregation supported their desire to beautify the church. The renovations were completed in early March, 1948.⁹

In July, 1950, after 25 years of service at Grace Rev. A. Hoenecke expressed his desire to resign from the ministry on August 20, 1950. The congregation granted his release and expressed their thanks for his many years of service.¹⁰ The Hoenecke family remained members of Grace and have been involved in the work of the church for much of her 85 years of existence.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Council Meeting minutes, July 15, 1950

In a special council meeting held on February 4, 1951, it was reported that Rev. R.C. Biesmann had accepted the divine call extended to him by the members of Grace. But Rev. Biesmann's ministry at Grace was short-lived. In March, 1952, the church council held a special council meeting with Rev. Westendorf in South Haven, MI.

Our reason for being here was explained and our subject was Pastor Biesmann.

1. Sermon – way of delivery, speaking
 2. Behavior on pulpit – motions
 3. Visiting – A. members, B. sick, C. visitors who may join church, or any new leads on people who are recommended to him to see.
- Pastor to be asked to hold a special council meeting by M. Mathis who will speak for the council.¹¹

In 1953, Pastor Biesmann accepted a call to the congregations in Norwalk and Abrams, Wisconsin. From the complaints of the special council meetings of 1952, and from Pastor Biesmann's short pastorate in Muskegon it appears as though personality conflicts existed between Pastor Biesmann and members of the congregation which strained relationships within the congregation. Also, at the same time as Biesmann's departure from Muskegon, six families from Grace asked to be released to attend St. Marks Lutheran Church in Muskegon. Whether or not these releases have anything to do with the dealings with Rev. Biesmann is not clear.

In the mid 1950s, the congregation of Grace began looking into the possibility of beginning a Christian Day School as part of their ministry and service to the area. At the January 1956 council meeting the church council asked Rev. Thrans to gather information on the subject of parochial school education. Also at that meeting the council decided to set up a building fund to be used for future construction or purchase of

¹¹ Special Council Meeting minutes, March 9, 1952.

land at another site.¹² However, in May, 1957 Rev. Thrans received and accepted a call to a congregation in Janesville, WI. His last Sunday was May 26, 1957. At a special congregational meeting held on May 12, 1957, Rev. Westendorf explained the call process to the members; their options were to attempt to call from the field or to request a graduate from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Motion was made to call a graduate.¹³ Upon graduation, Rev. Daniel Habeck was assigned to Grace. His installation was set for July 14, 1957 at 3:30 P.M.

Rev. Habeck was given some time to get his feet wet and to settle in and learn about his congregation before talks again resumed about locating land for relocation or for founding a daughter congregation.¹⁴ Fruitport Township, an eastern suburb of Muskegon was decided upon as a good area to begin work. At a congregational meeting in January, 1958, "Rev. Habeck asked for permission to begin canvassing the Beech School area for the purpose of starting to hold services in this area. A motion was made and supported to give the church council authority to start looking for property in Beech School area"¹⁵ (the Beech School is approximately ½ mile north of current Shettler St. property in Fruitport Township). Initial canvassing of the area was promising and Rev. Habeck was able to report to the council, "first canvass of Beech School district was satisfactory; on calls made all were in favor of Sunday school and some in favor of both church and Sunday school."¹⁶ Canvassing of the area continued through the first half of 1958 and at the April meeting Rev. Habeck reported that 65 families were canvassed, of those 45 are interested in both church and Sunday school in the area. He also reported

¹² Council Meeting minutes, January 12, 1956.

¹³ Special Congregational meeting, May 12, 1957.

¹⁴ Council Meeting minutes, November 12, 1957.

¹⁵ Congregational Meeting minutes, January 12, 1958

¹⁶ Council Meeting minutes, February 11, 1958.

that there are 80 children in need of Sunday school. At this time the congregation began looking for a temporary location to hold services in Fruitport Township until a permanent building could be constructed. Suggested locations included the Beech School, the Cloverville Grange Hall, and the Cloverville fire barn. The congregation decided on the Grange Hall primarily because the other locations were unavailable.¹⁷ Services began at Grange Hall in mid 1958 and were held there until September when Gerald Krentz offered his basement for use by the church. "This offer was accepted with great joy because of the bad condition experienced in the hall building."¹⁸

Two plots of land were located by members of the council for purchase. The first was located ¼ mile east of Sheridan Road on Shettler Road where five acres of land were available at \$500 per acre. The second was ½ mile north of the outer section of Shettler Road and Sheridan Road on the west side of Sheridan Road where ten acres of land were available. The congregation decided to purchase the five acre plot ¼ mile east of Sheridan Road on Shettler Road.¹⁹

October, 1958, planning for new church building began in earnest. The original plans were to construct a 30 foot by 40 foot sanctuary (later expanded to 30 x 50) after securing a loan for the building. A building committee was formed with the following men selected to the committee; Bob Luetjen, William Burmeister, and Fritz Richart.²⁰

It was decided to apply for a \$9,000 loan to finance the building project. This would result in monthly payments of \$100, however current giving to the building project was only \$50 per month. With this news the council planned for a pledge drive after

¹⁷ Congregational Meeting minutes, April 13, 1958.

¹⁸ Council Meeting minutes, September 9, 1958.

¹⁹ Continuation of recessed April 13, 1958 Congregational meeting, April 20, 1958.

²⁰ Council Meeting minutes, October 7, 1958.

which they would decide on the means of funding the building. The pledge drive lasted through the month of December and at the January, 1959 Congregational meeting it was announced that pledge totals amounted to \$111 per month giving them more than enough money to pay for the loan. A motion was made and supported to go ahead with the proposed building program.²¹ Ground breaking on Grace Chapel (name given to daughter congregation) was held on May 12, 1959 with the bid of the Ajax Co. of \$7665 accepted for finishing the building. Construction progressed smoothly through the second half of 1959 and the congregation celebrated the dedication of Grace Chapel on October 25, 1959.²²

In July, 1960 the topic of Christian education was revisited. Much discussion was had on the topic of beginning a Christian Day School after which a committee was established to look into the feasibility of starting a school. The committee returned to the August Council meeting with information received from the Aid Association for Lutherans stating that Grace would be granted a loan of approximately \$30,000 for the purpose of establishing a school if they would apply for one. At this news it was decided that the committee should visit local Lutheran schools to gather information from their building committees.²³ In November, 1960, a teacher from Redeemer, Muskegon spoke to the council members about building a school. He recommended building a two classroom school at a cost of approximately \$28,000. He also recommended that classroom size should be at least 26 feet by 30 feet to accommodate approximately 30 students per room.²⁴

²¹ Congregational Meeting minutes, January 11, 1959.

²² Congregational Meeting minutes, April 12, 1959; Council Meeting minutes, September 8, 1959.

²³ Council Meeting minutes, August 9, 1960.

²⁴ Council Meeting minutes, November 1, 1960.

The following year excitement was high on the possibility of establishing a school. In the January Congregational meeting, "A motion was made by Walter Leech that we (Congregation) make plans for a school building, take pledges for operation of a school building and also start school as soon as possible."²⁵ The first half of 1961 was a busy year full of planning for the future school. Motions were made and passed to start the school in the fall of 1961, to negotiate a loan for school construction, to contact an architect, and to have plans for the school drawn. All these motions were made in the April Congregational meeting.²⁶ The architect hired, J. Vander Meiden, brought his proposal to a special Council meeting held in May, 1961 which consisted of two classrooms, boys and girls bathrooms, and a boiler room at an approximate cost of \$29,000. It was decided that this plan would not give enough room for storage or a place for the teachers to meet. An additional \$7,000 was given to increase storage space and provide for an office.²⁷ In June, the question was raised about how long it would be before construction could begin. The answer given by the architect was that the first of September would be the approximate starting date for construction providing that finances could be secured by that time. It was then decided to apply for a loan from the Aid Association for Lutherans.²⁸

At a special Council meeting, held on June 6, it was reported that the Aid Association for Lutherans had rejected the congregation's loan application; no reason for the rejected loan was given in the council minutes. The council then decided to look for loans from other sources so they could move forward with construction. At this time two

²⁵ Congregational Meeting minutes, January 8, 1961.

²⁶ Congregational Meeting minutes, April 9, 1961.

²⁷ Special Council Meeting minutes, May 25, 1961.

²⁸ Council Meeting minutes, June 6, 1961.

teachers for the coming school year had accepted calls from the congregation. One teacher, Mrs. Donna Trubiano, was already a member of Grace, the other, Miss. Karla Falck, accepted the call from the field. The current plan was to hold classes in the Shettler Road church until the school building project could be completed.²⁹ Trouble finding loans for school construction and financial problems within the church continued through 1963 delaying building plans. Classes were held in Grace Chapel until the fall of 1964.

In 1962 the congregation entertained much discussion on the advisability of combining onto the Shettler Road site and selling the Muskegon Heights church and parsonage.

A discussion was held on the proximity of colored people to the Heights church; of their rapid buying up of property near here; of the effect this would have on our property values, of the effect of this on the congregation, of the advisability of selling out and relocating the entire complex at the Shettler Street property; of the costs of this project; of the percentage of communicants we would lose. After a lengthy discussion it was resolved that by standing firm at this location that we would merely be delaying the inevitable and would in the final analysis be the possessor of deteriorated property and a stagnant congregation.³⁰

It ought to be remembered that Grace was not the only congregation struggling with this decision. This time in history has commonly been referred to as the, "White Flight," in which the white population was moving out of the inner city and into the suburbs being replaced by the Black population. Many congregations struggled with the decision on whether they should follow their members to the suburbs or remain and do evangelism among the new Black neighborhood. Unfortunately many congregations decided to move with their White members. Grace was no different.

²⁹ Special Council Meeting minutes, June 22, 1961.

³⁰ Council Meeting minutes, July 10, 1962,

It was generally assumed after some debate that more growth here in the Heights location is impossible and that we have no more potential at this location. . . Motion made by Robert Luetjen and supported by Don Hoenecke that the Church Council recommendations to relocate the Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church as soon as possible on land owned by the Congregation on Shettler Road, and to dispose of the properties owned by the Congregation in Muskegon Heights 2204 Fifth St. this being in accord with the desires of the congregation revealed in the November, 1962 member visitations conducted by the Stewardship committee – be accepted. Secret ballot was conducted – results – 27 yes, 1 no.³¹

The appraisal of the Muskegon Heights property was set at \$49,500 in 1963 and the congregation began looking for potential buyers. The funds generated by the sale of the Heights property were to be used to help get the congregation out of debt so they could begin building the school.

These were very trying times for the congregation of Grace, the financial problems led to a negative feeling in the congregation. At this time Rev. Habeck was extended his third call since 1961, and teacher Karla Falck was extended her second call since arriving in 1961. Rumors were circulating around the congregation that these calls were arranged because they were not paying the pastor and teacher enough. To answer these rumors Rev. Habeck called a special Congregational meeting.

Pastor Habeck now read a letter written by himself refuting the claims that such calls are arranged to support desires for salary increase or other items that he had desired that the congregation do. Dates of the issuance of the calls were shown that they were received after his request for a salary increase to the Church Council. Pastor Habeck announced that he has been criticized by his conference superiors for spoiling this congregation, that he is the lowest paid clergyman in this city.³²

Both Rev. Habeck and teacher Falck returned their calls and stayed at Grace.

In October, 1963 it was reported that the State Board of Education would not allow the congregation to continue using the church as a school after June 30, 1964

³¹ Congregational Meeting minutes, December 11, 1962.

³² Special Congregational Meeting minutes, February 27, 1963.

unless construction had begun.³³ In response to this the congregation decided to apply for a loan in the sum of \$50,000 to construct the school building according to the plans drawn in 1961. Of that \$50,000, \$40,000 would be used for construction and the remaining \$10,000 to pay off debt.³⁴

A special Council meeting was called at the end of January, 1964, to address the calls held by Rev. Habeck and teacher Falck. Rev. Habeck asked for, and was granted, a peaceful release to accept the call to Zion Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio. "Pastor Habeck expressed his belief that this congregation has matured enough in spiritual belief so that he can accept this call to a congregation that he feels has greater need." Teacher Falck also accepted her call to St. Matthews in Appleton, Wisconsin.³⁵

Construction on the new school building began in late spring to early summer, by July "footings and part of the walls at the school are in, and some of the plumbing and wiring has been roughed in...the date of November 8 is tentatively set as the date for the dedication of the new school building." Also in July, Rev. Harold Sauer accepted the call to Grace. His farewell sermon in St. Paul was on August 16 and he was moved to Muskegon on August 17, 1964.³⁶

After two years without any serious offers for the Heights property the asking price was lowered from \$49,500 to \$42,000.³⁷ In 1966, following the reduction in the asking price, five parties came forward as interested in the property, two of which made concrete offers to Grace. It was determined that Curtis Jackson's offer was most desirable, that offer being \$150 per month rent for the church building, \$50 down

³³ Congregational Meeting minutes, October 8, 1963.

³⁴ Council Meeting minutes, January 7, 1964.

³⁵ Special Council Meeting minutes, January 28, 1964.

³⁶ Council Meeting minutes, July 7, 1964.

³⁷ Special Congregational Meeting minutes, March 1, 1965

payment, pay for utilities, make necessary repairs, option to buy after six months with \$14,000 cast at six months and the balance of \$3,000 to work out later. The offer was only for the church, not the parsonage so the asking price was adjusted to \$17,000.³⁸

In December, 1966, a special congregational meeting was called. The purpose of meeting is to consider the call of Pastor Sauer to St. Luke's of Saginaw. Terms: Salary of \$6,700.00 plus utilities and insurance. Communicant membership of 500. Building a church which will be dedicated in April. No school of their own, but pays tuition to other schools.

Pastor Sauer explained his accomplishments since coming here.

1. Consolidation of congregations
2. Congregation now committed to Christian Day School
3. Closing of Heights church
4. Near certainty of its sale soon, and thus a reduction of the indebtedness.

Pastor Sauer felt that his Call here has been accomplished, and that if he left the Congregation would be better off than when he arrived, he having seen it through a trying period of transition. Several members expressed the need for Pastor Sauer to remain, and after considering these expressions, Pastor Sauer announced that he was accepting the call to St. Luke's of Saginaw.

Rev. Sauer's comments about leaving the church better off than when he arrived were true. The congregation still had debt from the school construction but it was a manageable debt. Grace now enters a period where it appears that the congregation settled into a routine. However, most of the congregational records for 1967-1980 have been lost, so this time in the church's history is not as well known. The pastors who served Grace during this time are; Rev. David Sievert (1967-1973), Rev. Marvin Ahlborn (1973-1975), and Rev. William Hein³⁹ (1976-1989). In 1972 the church building was expanded to add additional seating, at the same time a new organ was added. In 1973

³⁸ Special Congregational Meeting minutes, September 18, 1966.

³⁹ It should be noted that over the 85 years of existence for Grace 14 pastors have served her membership. Excluding the 25 years of Rev. Hoenecke and the 13 years of Rev. Hein the average stay for the remaining pastors is only 3.25 years. This high turnover rate of pastors is a problem that has plagued Grace throughout her existence.

Grace celebrated its golden anniversary with 328 souls. In 1979, a new parsonage was purchased on Shettler Road. School enrolment (40 students in 1980) never grew to the levels the congregation had hoped for even though membership grew steadily.

The decade of the 1980s was also one of routine. The congregation settled into their way of doing things, but at the same time the debt of the congregation was rising. In February, 1983, it was reported, "Treasurer reports that the unpaid bills balance is still growing."⁴⁰ Finally in 1989 the debt reached crisis levels. A special "Financial Crisis" congregational meeting was called in August. The financial situation was that the congregation needed \$13,000 immediately, and the total need was \$22,000. Some solutions were offered at this meeting, "Adopt a bill program, mortgage teacherage, emergency debt relief, close school, cut school programs, the church must grow (new building), close the school until the church grows and can afford it, tuition changes."⁴¹

The early 1990s did not bring any financial relief, but instead brought many tough decisions. A council meeting held in March, 1990, had much debate on the financial situation of the church. Points of discussion included; 1. Why is giving down? 2. If we keep the school open ^{we will} with financial problems tear the church apart? 3. Closing the school is jumping the gun and only a short term solution. 4. February giving is always low, not as far behind as it looks at present. 5. Cuts in programs and teacher number may be all that is needed. 6. God wants us to be wise with our money. 7. What does the Bible say about debt?⁴² The council meeting was recessed for one week to allow council members time to think and pray about the decisions that needed to be made. When the meeting

⁴⁰ Council Meeting minutes, February 8, 1983.

⁴¹ Special "Financial Crisis" Congregational Meeting, August 20, 1989.

⁴² Council Meeting minutes, March 13, 1990.

reconvened the goal was to come up with a letter to the congregation explaining the financial situation and to come up with proposals to deal with the financial problem.

First suggested proposal

1. Drop upper grade teacher, saving approx. \$6500
2. Principal suggestions: Mrs. Dukes K,1,2 (increase salary) \$6000/that is increase of \$2000
3. Sell teacherage – (\$50,000) – would pay of budget deficit, pay off indebtedness – put \$10,000 into escrow – put \$10,000 into maintenance and repairs

Second suggested proposal

Elimination of school program as of end of current school year. Sell teacherage in summer of 1990. Probable impacts – 1990; Potential savings \$24,000, cash injection \$40-45,000. 1991; Potential savings \$49,000. Possible use of cash: -retire specific current debts, -make necessary chapel updates, -make desired parsonage upgrades (repairs), -fund other church programs (i.e. Church advertizing (signage/directory), Sunday school & Bible class program, evangelism program, fellowship functions.

Other options:

1. Mortgage on teacherage – leave other situation as such
2. Just sell teacherage to get us on our feet – leave other situation as such
3. Build a new church.⁴³

The options would be discussed in full and a vote would be taken at the April congregational meeting.

In the meantime, a call meeting was held in March at which a call was extended to Rev. Leroy Dux. Rev. Dux's acceptance letter was read at the April 10 council meeting. The installation service was held on April 22, 1990.

The April congregational meeting convened on April 17, 1990. The entire discussion of this meeting focused on the two proposals that came from the Church Council. Many concerns were voices^d, but at the end of the meeting the congregation chose option 1; eliminate principal and grades 7 and 8, sell the teacherage.⁴⁴ Financial

⁴³ Council Meeting minutes, March 19, 1990.

⁴⁴ Congregational Meeting minutes, April 17, 1990.

problems remained even though they were temporarily masked by the revenue generated from the teacherage sale and faculty cuts.

At the Church Council meeting in January, 1992, three options were presented on what to do with the Christian Day School for the following school year.

Option 1: Basically status quo (call a new Kindergarten teacher to fill vacancy)

Option 2: Close the school at the end of 91/92 school year and begin a study of alternative and expanded Christian Ed. within the congregation. Kathy's (Burmeister) call ends and she is offered a 1 yr. contract to assist in the development and expansion of Christian Ed. programs. Future expansion may involve the calling of a Minister of Education or possibly a Vicar on an interim basis.

Option 3: Offer Kathy a ½ time position as K-teacher, salary and compensation adjusted correspondingly ½ current rate. Call a principal to teach upper grades and serve as Minister of Ed.⁴⁵

Along with these options the president of the congregation, Mark Dahlke, sent a letter to the congregation demonstrating the importance of the current situation. The letter included the following information:

- The congregation avoided tough decision in 1990 by only cutting back school.
- Cutbacks helped but didn't solve problem.
- School was only serving 12 children from eight families, even though there were approximately 130 family units in the congregation.
- Christian Day School at their current level[†] was not cost effective.⁴⁶

The congregation held an informative meeting at the end of January which came to the conclusion, "The issue isn't, do we want the school? It is, the insufficient giving which has been going on for years, which limits us from doing what we want to do."⁴⁷ After all options had been considered it was decided that the school would close at the end of the 1991-92 school year.

⁴⁵ Council Meeting minutes, January 14, 1992.

⁴⁶ Letter from president, 1992.

⁴⁷ Congregational Informative meeting, January 19, 1992.

A special Congregational meeting was also held in September, 1992, due to the resignation of Rev. Dux. The minutes from that meeting are as follows:

The meeting opened at 7:45 P.M. with a prayer from Pastor Otto. In attendance were Circuit Pastor Otto and Pastor Naumann from Hart. The members of the congregation in attendance signed the attached sheet. Larry Stebbins read Pastor Dux's resignation letter. A copy of that letter is attached.

A motion was made to accept the resignation. The motion had support. Discussion of the motion concerned the reasons for Pastor Dux's resignation from the ministry and the suddenness with which he left the area. The Board of Elders and Pastor Otto stated that Pastor Dux requested that the reason for his resignation not be made public and discussed, but that it was a personal matter; a personal sin, a public offense on the part of Pastor Dux; and the exact nature of that offense would not be presented and discussed.

The motion to accept the resignation was carried unanimously.

A motion was made to recess the meeting until Wednesday, September 23, 7:30 P.M., to select a candidate to call as our new pastor. The motion was supported and carried.

Pastor Naumann gave the closing prayer.⁴⁸

Pastor Dux's resignation letter reads:

Dear Members of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church:

I would ask that you would please accept my resignation from the call to the holy ministry which you extended to me.

This decision is made for deep personal reasons. It grieves me to make this request, but I am no longer able to serve as your shepherd. My prayer is that God would continue to guide you and your faithful leaders through the period until he places a new shepherd in your midst. I ask that your prayer would be for me and my family.

With deepest regret, may God our Savior help us in these perilous times.

Leroy P. Dux⁴⁹

On September 23, 1992, the congregation extended a call to Rev. Richard D. Starr who accepted and was installed later that year.

1992 was a tumultuous year at Grace. The events of that year caused much hurt and pain to the members of the church. These events could have ripped the congregation

⁴⁸ Special Congregational Meeting minutes, September 14, 1992.

⁴⁹ Read at the September 14, 1992 Congregational meeting.

apart but in 1993 the congregation rededicated itself to preaching the gospel in Muskegon.

In 1994, the congregation was still looking for ways to give Christian education to the children of the congregation without a full-time school. The idea was put forward to establish a "Weekday School" using the Synod's Pioneer Clubs curriculum. The Weekday School consisted of two hour sessions of Bible stories, songs, crafts, and fellowship for children ages four through 14. The program was held one day per week with a first year average attendance of 30 children.⁵⁰

In 1996, Rev. Starr accepted a call to Divine Grace Lutheran Church, Lake Orion, Michigan. After a short vacancy Rev. Kurt Uhlenbrauck accepted the call to Grace and was installed on November 17, 1996. However, Rev. Uhlenbrauck's pastorate lasted only until April 15, 1998 when he offered his resignation for the good of the ministry.

On April 15th, Pastor Uhlenbrauck took a leave of absence from his call at Grace and eventually resigned his call. It was recommended by the elders to continue his salary and insurance coverage through the end of June at which time all support ended and the parsonage was to be vacated. Until Pastor Uhlenbrauck's resignation and Pastor Gauger was officially assigned as vacancy pastor, the Elders recommended that all expenses be paid for visiting pastors during pastor's absence in addition to the \$50.00 per service. They also recommended that mileage be paid at \$.31 per mile. The Elders continued working with Pastor Gauger and Pastor Stern on the issues surrounding Pastor Uhlenbrauck's resignation.⁵¹

In May, the congregation decided to go to the assignment committee and request a graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Rev. Geoffrey Kieta was assigned as the next pastor of Grace and was installed on November 11, 1998.

During 1998 the congregation noted that the most pressing need facing Grace was the need for a new church building. In February, 1998 the Voters' assembly approved

⁵⁰ 1994 Annual Report, given at January 1995 Congregational meeting.

⁵¹ 1998 Annual Report, given at January 1999 Congregational meeting.

proceeding toward the building of a new sanctuary. Fund raising and planning for the new building began that year and continued until 2003 when the Building Committee presented their plans for an education wing to connect the existing sanctuary and school building. The plan was approved and was not to exceed \$450,000 and called for the congregation to work with Builders For Christ. Trigger points were established for proceeding. When the congregation had raised an additional \$20,000, an architect would be secured. When \$30,000 was raised a formal contact with Builders For Christ would be made. When \$40,000 was raised they would apply for a mortgage through Lutheran Association for Church Extension.⁵²

Planning continued through 2004 and in January 2005, Builders For Christ informed the members of Grace that their 2005 project scheduled for Dexter, Michigan was cancelled and they would like to begin working with Grace. On January 23, the voters accepted their offer. They also modified the current building plan. Rather than renovating the old sanctuary, they would add a new narthex and sanctuary off the education wing between the two buildings, as well as a main entrance there. The old sanctuary would ultimately become a fellowship hall. This new plan was estimated to cost \$425,000 – less than renovation of the old facility.⁵³

Construction site work began in June, 2005 with Builders For Christ arriving in early August. Construction was completed in October leaving finish work and contractor issues for the congregation to do. Construction was completed at the beginning of 2006 and the dedication service was held on February 12, 2006.⁵⁴

⁵² 2003 Annual Report, given at January 2004 Congregational meeting.

⁵³ 2005 Annual Report, given at January 2006 Congregational meeting.

⁵⁴ 2006 Annual Report, given at January 2007 Congregational meeting.

In 2006, Grace was approached by St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Manistee, Michigan, with the request to become a dual parish. After considering this request it was decided that Grace would not join with St. Paul's. At the same time, Grace participated in planning meetings for a possible Joint Outreach Ministry with Holton Ev. Lutheran Church and Our Savior's Ev. Lutheran Church in Hart. This plan included calling an outreach pastor who would serve the three congregations by leading their outreach programs. The original plan was for this to be a three year call with the congregations supporting the pastor with the help of the Mission Board. Grace agreed to give \$9,000 per year toward the salary of the pastor with Holton and Hart contributing as well.

In October, 2006 Rev. Kieta gave this report on the status of the Joint Outreach Ministry;

District Mission Board response to our proposal was fairly positive, they want to fund no more than 3 years. They are concerned about the financial contribution and want to see more about how it will continue after 3 years. The earliest funding is unlikely before July 1, 2007, any funds we can collect before that would be a great start.⁵⁵

In April, 2007, Rev. Kieta accepted a call to Peace Lutheran Church, Livonia, Michigan. He remained at Grace through June during which time he continued working on the proposed Joint Outreach Ministry. However in 2007 the District Mission Board rejected the Joint Outreach Ministry plan. Also in April, a call was extended to Rev. Timothy Winkel who was serving at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Westminster, Colorado. Rev. Winkel accepted the call and was installed as pastor of Grace in August, 2007.

⁵⁵ Quarterly Voters Meeting minutes, October 22, 2006.

Addenda

Contents:

- Grace constitution and bylaws, updated and accepted in 2006
- Pastors and teachers of Grace
- Map of Muskegon, MI. indicating Heights church and Shettler Rd. church
- 2005 Building plan
- Pictures of the sanctuaries of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the church shall be done “in a fitting and orderly way,” and

WHEREAS, the history of the Christian church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful properly to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians at Muskegon, Michigan, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.

CONSTITUTION

Article I

Name

The name of this congregation shall be Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Muskegon, Michigan.

Article II

Articles of Faith

Section 1.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Section 2.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolic books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the *Book of Concord* of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are:

A. The three ecumenical Creeds

- 1) The Apostles'
- 2) The Nicene
- 3) The Athanasian

B. The six Lutheran Confessions

- 1) Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
- 2) Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism
- 3) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
- 4) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- 5) The Smalcald Articles
- 6) The Formula of Concord

Section 3.

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Section 4.

Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

Section 5.

Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

Article III

Purpose and Objectives

Section 1.

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20).

Section 2.

The primary objectives of this congregation shall be:

To proclaim the law and the gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:46-48).

To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace (Romans 10:17).

To equip believers as disciples, stewards and witnesses for sharing the gospel of Jesus with our fellow human beings (Ephesians 4:11,12).

Article IV

Church Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a church body that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a church body exists.

Article V

Church Membership

Section 1. Classification

- A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16).
- B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
- C. Voting members are those male communicant members (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution and Bylaws by their signatures and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation.

Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (1 John 4:8), and his love ever moves him to bless the members of his church with physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we ought to love him with the works that we do. The exercise of such love we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us his Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Consequently, members of his church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to

- 1) Hear and receive the Word of God diligently.
- 2) Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education.
- 3) Bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

B. Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring his grace to us. Consequently, members of his church will

- 1) Have their children baptized early in life, for “baptism now saves you also” (1 Peter 3:21).
- 2) Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if they are recognized as such who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11-28). Only those in the confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (Close Communion--2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17).

C. Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of his estate and assures us he will graciously bless such faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of his church will under grace

- 1) Continually remember that all their possessions, time and abilities are really a trust from God.
- 2) Cheerfully decide in their hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions and time and abilities which they will regularly devote to the Lord for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work and the synod (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10).
- 3) If eligible, become voting members and regularly attend the voters’ meeting and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.

D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of his church will

- 1) Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
- 2) When they have erred, permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-18.
- 3) Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges). (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section 3. Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brothers. Those members who become evident as impenitent sinners and finally must be excommunicated, and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-18 lose all their rights in the congregation and in its property. For excommunication a unanimous vote of the voters' assembly is required.

Section 4. Reinstatement

When an excommunicated member by the grace of God repents of his sin, he is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Article VI

Powers and Rights of the Congregation

Section 1.

In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).

Section 2.

In all matters not decided by the Word of God the congregation, represented by the voters' assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).

Section 3.

The church council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the church council in an emergency may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next voters' meeting.

Section 4.

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).

Article VII

The Ministry

Section 1.

The congregation represented by the voter's assembly has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers.

Section 2.

The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call of vocation extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6).

Section 3.

The teachers called by the congregation shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Section 4

In case of a vacancy in the office of pastor or teacher the congregation shall notify the president of the district that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new pastor or teacher.

Article VIII

Officers of the Congregation

Section 1.

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose officers and committee members with like qualifications to aid the pastor in administering its affairs (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.

Section 3.

The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Article IX

Removal from Office

Section 1.

If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or a teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of his office (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district officer shall be sought.

Article X

Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the Bylaws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church-at-large.

Article XI

Separation or Dissolution

Section 1.

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation--may God graciously prevent it--the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

Section 2.

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the church council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the voters' assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501 (c.) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

Article XII

Repeals and Alterations

Section 1.

Articles II, III, IV, V, VI, Sections 1, 2 and 4, VII, Sections 1-3, IX and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrevocable, inasmuch as they express clear, scriptural teachings.

Section 2.

Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable and repealable article of this Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the church council, and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the voters' assembly and posted in the church during that period.

Section 3.

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the voters' assembly.

Section 4.

A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any alterable and repealable article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.

Section 5.

Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly voters' meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation and a copy mailed to all communicant members at least two weeks prior to that quarterly meeting. The church mailboxes may be used for the mail notification, as long as those announcements which are not picked up are sent through the regular mail at least one week prior to the meeting.

BYLAWS

Meetings of the Congregation

Article I

Section 1.

Congregational meetings shall be held quarterly, normally on the third Sunday of January, April, July and October. The January meeting shall be designated as the annual meeting.

Section 2.

The church council shall set the exact date, time and place of the meetings, unless otherwise specified by the congregation. Announcements of the meetings shall be given to the congregation in print and/or orally on at least two different dates prior to the time of the meeting.

Section 3.

Special meetings of the voters' assembly may be called by the church council, or the pastor, or upon written request of three voting members. Announcements of the meetings shall be given to the congregation in print and/or orally on at least two different **Sundays** prior to the time of the meeting.

Section 4.

A special meeting of the voters' assembly shall be held in December for the purpose of electing officers and adoption of the proposed budget. The council shall determine the date of the December meeting at its regular November meeting. Notice of the December congregational meeting shall be sent by mail to all voting members immediately following the November council meeting and shall be given on two Sundays prior to the meeting. The church mailboxes may be used for the mail notification, as long as those announcements which are not picked up are sent through the regular mail at least one week prior to the meeting.

Section 5.

The order of business for the regular meetings shall be as follows:

- A. Opening with a devotion
- B. Reading and approval of minutes of previous regular and special meetings.
- C. Roll call or written attendance sheet
- D. Reception of new members; transfer, release or removal from membership
- E. Reports of officers, committees and pastor
- F. Unfinished business
- G. Recommendations of the church council and new business
- H. Elections
- I. Adjournment with prayer or benediction

Section 6.

The meetings shall be conducted according to good Christian order. *Robert's Rules of Order* may be followed for parliamentary procedure.

Section 7.

No one shall bring to any meeting a charge or complaint against any member or against the pastor or a teacher unless he has first admonished him in a Christian manner according to the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20.

Section 8.

Only voting members present at the meeting shall have the right to vote.

Section 9.

Voting members shall be restricted to male communicant members 18 years of age or more (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12-14). Request to become a voting member shall be made to the pastor or a church officer and be submitted for action at the next congregational meeting. All voting members shall sign the Constitution and Bylaws, indicating that they have read and do accept them.

Article II

Quorum

The voting members present at a properly announced meeting of the congregation shall constitute a quorum.

Article III

Officers, Terms and Requirements

Section 1. Officers

The officers of this congregation elected at the annual election meeting and their terms shall be:

President	two years
Vice-President	two years
Secretary	two years
Treasurer	two years
Financial Secretary	two years
Board of Education	two years, consisting of at least three members, at least one member elected each year.
Board of Elders	two years, consisting of at least four members, at least one member elected each year.
Board of Outreach	two years, consisting of at least three members, at least one member elected each year.
Board of Trustees	two years, consisting of at least three members, at least one member elected each year.
Lay Delegate	one year
Alternate Lay Delegate	one year

It shall be the policy of the congregation that any officer or board member serve no more than a maximum of three consecutive full terms on the same board and then be eligible for re-election to that board one year after expiration of his term of office. However, the offices of Lay Delegate and Alternate Lay Delegate shall not have term limitations. No voting member shall hold more than one elective office at one time except when also elected by the voters to represent the congregation as its Lay Delegate or Alternate Lay Delegate.

Section 2. Requirements

To be nominated for an elective office, a member must have been accepted as a voting member at or prior to the previous October voters' meeting.

Section 3. Installation

As soon as possible, newly-elected officers and board members shall be installed in office at a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

Section 4. Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy, the vacancy shall be filled at the next meeting of the voters' assembly by ballot from a list of candidates proposed by the last acting nominating committee.

Article IV

The Church Council

Section 1. Organization

The voting members of the church council shall consist of the following eight men: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, financial secretary, chairman of the Board of Education, chairman of the Board of Elders, chairman of the Board of Trustees and chairman of the Board of Outreach.

Section 2. Responsibilities

The church officers shall adorn their high office with an honest way of life and be good examples to the congregation (1 Timothy 3:8-12). They shall aid the pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church. They shall particularly care in love for the poor, the sick, the widows, and the orphans (Galatians 6:9-10). The members of the church council shall consult together concerning the total spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation, giving due attention also to the work of the Lord in the church at large. They shall implement resolutions of the congregation and carry out such assignments as are directed to them by the congregation.

Section 3. Meetings

The church council shall meet regularly, normally the second Tuesday of each month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president or by the written request of three council members. The church council shall never convene to transact business without the knowledge of the pastor.

Article V

Duties of Officers and Committees

Section 1. *President*

The president shall preside as chairman of all business sessions of the congregation and church council and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him. He shall have general supervision of the affairs of the corporation and conduct all its business affairs according to established good order. He shall sign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or all legal documents directed to be executed by the corporation. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation. The president is an *ex officio* member of all boards and committees.

Section 2. *Vice-President*

The vice-president, in the absence of the president, shall preside at all meetings and perform all other duties required of the president. In case the office of the president becomes vacant, the vice-president will fill the office until the next December officer election meeting, at which time the vacancy shall be filled by the congregation. In the absence of the president or secretary, he shall have the authority to countersign legal documents. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation.

Section 3. *Secretary*

The secretary shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the congregation and the church council. He shall be responsible for the legal records of the congregation. He shall have the authority to countersign all deed, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or legal documents executed by the corporation, and assist in the orderly conduct of its business affairs according to established good order. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation.

Section 4. *Treasurer*

The treasurer shall be responsible for keeping an accurate account of all the financial records of the congregation. He shall receive from the financial secretary a report of all monies received and credit the same to proper accounts. He shall make all disbursements, as ordered and approved by the various Boards. He shall make monthly written reports to the church council, quarterly written financial reports to the voters' assembly, and special reports when ever the church council shall so request. All cancelled checks, receipts, invoices, statements, etc., shall be preserved by the treasurer for four (4) years. He shall submit the financial books to the Audit Committee for an annual audit following the close of the fiscal year business, or at any time the voters' assembly so desires. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation. In the event that the treasurer is unable to carry out these duties, the president or secretary have authority to carry out these obligations.

Section 5. *Financial Secretary*

The financial secretary shall be responsible for recording all receipts for the congregation. He shall receive and deposit all contributions for the congregation. He shall keep an accurate account of the contributions of the members of the congregation by purchasing and assigning offering envelopes to each communicant member. Quarterly he shall supply to each of these members a record of their individual offerings. He shall deliver a written report of all receipts to the treasurer, indication the proper amounts to be credited. He shall make monthly written reports to the church council, quarterly written financial reports to the voters' assembly, and special reports whenever the church council shall so request. He shall record all memorials in a memorials record book and on a memorial notification sheet, which shall be given to the family of the deceased. The financial secretary shall submit the financial books to the Audit Committee for an annual audit following the close of the fiscal year business, or at any time the voters' assembly so desires. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation.

Section 6. *Board of Education*

The Board of Education shall, in general, promote and concern itself with Christian education in the congregation. It shall formulate all policies to be followed in the educational phases of the congregation's work such as the Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Weekday School, Bible Classes, Instruction Classes, and the like. All policy, curriculum, and educational material recommendations shall be presented by way of the church council to the voters' assembly for ratification. The Board of Education may appoint superintendents and/or committees to assist it in purchasing, planning and promoting educational programs and enlisting and training teachers for such programs. The Board of Education shall prepare annual budget recommendations for those items of the congregation's business for which it has oversight responsibilities. The Board of Education shall organize itself by annually appointing a chairman, who shall serve as a member of the church council, and a secretary, who shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the Board of Education.

Section 7. *Board of Elders*

The Board of Elders shall, in general, be responsible for the spiritual well-being of the congregation. These responsibilities include the following: doctrine and practice in the church shall conform to all the provisions of the Constitution; regular worship services shall be conducted in good order; assistance shall be given to the pastor in administering the spiritual affairs of the congregation and in maintaining appropriate policies and procedures regarding weddings and funerals. The Board of Elders shall annually appoint the Head Usher and the Pastoral Care Committee. The Board of Elders shall prepare annual budget recommendations for those items of the congregation's business for which it has oversight responsibilities. The Board of Elders shall organize itself by annually appointing a chairman, who shall serve as a member of the church council, and a secretary, who shall record accurately the proceedings of all meeting of the Board of Elders.

A. *Head Usher*

The Head Usher shall be a voting member appointed annually by the Board of Elders. The Head Usher shall enlist, train and oversee the ushers and acolytes.

B. *Pastoral Care Committee*

The Pastoral Care Committee shall consist of at least two communicant members at least eighteen years of age appointed annually by the Board of Elders. The Pastoral Care Committee shall be concerned with the physical and emotional well-being of the pastor and his family and may serve as liaison between the congregation and the pastor.

Section 8. *Board of Outreach*

The Board of Outreach shall establish and maintain an active program for the congregation to reach out to the neighborhood and the community with the gospel. It shall also promote the work that the congregation does together with its fellow congregations as a synod. It shall prepare annual budget recommendations for those items of the congregation's business for which it is responsible. The Board of Outreach shall organize itself by annually appointing a chairman, who shall serve as a member of the church council, and a secretary, who shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the Board of Outreach.

Section 9. *Board of Trustees*

The Board of Trustees shall oversee, manage, insure and maintain the corporate property of the congregation according to the direction given by the voters' assembly. The Board of Trustees shall prepare annual budget recommendations for those items of the congregation's business for which it has oversight responsibilities. The Board of Trustees shall organize itself by annually appointing a chairman, who shall serve as a member of the church council, and a secretary, who shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the Board of Trustees.

Section 10. *Audit Committee*

The president shall annually appoint a committee consisting of three (3) voting members to conduct an annual audit of all the financial records of the congregation and report its findings at the annual meeting.

Section 11. *Other Committees*

As needed, the president shall appoint other committees to be ratified by the church council for carrying out church business, e.g. nominating, stewardship, evangelism, budgeting and compensation review.

Section 12. *Ex Officio Committee Members*

The pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the church council, all boards and all committees. The president shall be an *ex officio* member of all boards and committees.

Section 13. *Lay Delegate and Alternate Lay Delegate*

The Lay Delegate shall represent the congregation at Pastor-Teacher-Delegate Conferences, District Conferences and Conventions, and Synodical Conferences and Conventions, and shall submit a written report of his activities to the Church Council and the Voters. The Alternate Lay Delegate will serve when the Lay Delegate is unable or unavailable to serve.

Article VI

Election of the Church Officers

Section 1.

The church council shall present to the October meeting of the voters' assembly for ratification a committee of three voting member to serve as a nominating committee.

Section 2.

Having received from the secretary a list of expired terms of office, the nominating committee shall proceed to select a slate of candidates from the voting members with the primary goal of having two (2) nominations for each vacancy. If however this goal cannot be fulfilled, the nomination of one candidate may be accepted. All candidates shall be informed in regard to the responsibilities of the respective church office. The consent for such candidacy shall be gained.

Section 3.

The nominating committee shall report to the November meeting of the church council the status of selecting the slate of candidates for the December election meeting. The candidates' names shall be published and also posted (with the nominating committee members' names) three Sundays before the election. Additional recommendations for nominations may be made in writing through any voting member to the nominating committee. The committee shall consider such written nominations and take appropriate action, posting any revisions.

Section 4.

At its December election meeting the voters' assembly shall hear the recommendations of the nomination committee. Nominations shall be accepted from the floor prior to the election of each office, providing consent from the nominee has been gained. A majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election.

Article VII

Reception into Membership

Section 1.

Persons who wish to be received into membership in this congregation other than through the sacrament of holy baptism or rite of confirmation shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor, the elders or the church council. The council shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer, a recommendation from a sister congregation or a profession of faith, providing qualifications for membership, as specified in Article V of this Constitution, have been met. Such action of the council shall be ratified at a regular or special meeting of the voters' assembly and notice of such receptions reported to the entire congregation.

Section 2.

Since reception into membership signifies acceptance of and submission to this Constitution and Bylaws, each family shall be given a copy of the same prior to their reception so that they may become familiar with its provisions.

Article VIII

Transfer or Release from Membership

Section 1.

Those desiring a transfer or release from membership shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor, the elders or the church council for action to be ratified at the next meeting of the voters' assembly.

Section 2.

Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which is in agreement with this one in doctrine and practice. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with those denominations not in agreement with our congregation in doctrine and practice.

Section 3.

Members released or transferred relinquish all rights in this congregation.

Article IX

Repeals and Amendments of the Bylaws

Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly voters' meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation and a copy mailed to all communicant members at least two weeks prior to that quarterly meeting. The church mailboxes may be used for the mail notification, as long as those announcements which are not picked up are sent through the regular mail least one week prior to the meeting.

Proposed Constitution and Bylaws adopted: 10-2006

Pastors and Teachers of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastors of Grace (1923-Present)

A Zuberbier	1923-1925
A. E. Hoenecke	1925-1950
R.C. Biesmann	1950-1953
James Thrans	1953-1957
Daniel Habeck	1957-1964
Harold Sauer	1964-1967
David Sievert	1967-1973
Marvin Ahlborn	1973-1975
William Hein	1976-1989
Leroy Dux	1990-1992
Richard D. Starr	1992-1996
Kurt Uhlenbrauck	1996-1998
Geoffrey A. Kieta	1998-2007
Timothy Winkel	2007-Present

Average stay of pastor (excluding Hoenecke and Hein) is 3.25 years

Teachers of Grace (1961-1992)

Karla Falck	1961-1964
Donna Trubiano	1961-1965
Carol Zweig	1964-1965
Connie Luetzow	1965-1967
Carroll Berndt	1965-1970
Kathryn Lawrenz	1967-1972
Nancy Dukes	1970-1971
Carroll Schotty	1970-1972 1977-1979
Diane Calbaum	1971-1975
Janet Hahn	1972-1974
Douglas Fillner	1974-1981
Sara Fillner	1975-1977 1979-1980
Hedy Haar	1977-1978
Dora Wiese	1978-1979
Kathy Fillner	1979-1981
Ruth Hein	1980-1982
Joel Welke	1981-1982
Kathy Burmeister	1981-1992
James Schneck	1982-1988
Helen Wright	1985-1988
Joseph Pitonak	? - 1991
Mrs. William Dukes	?-?

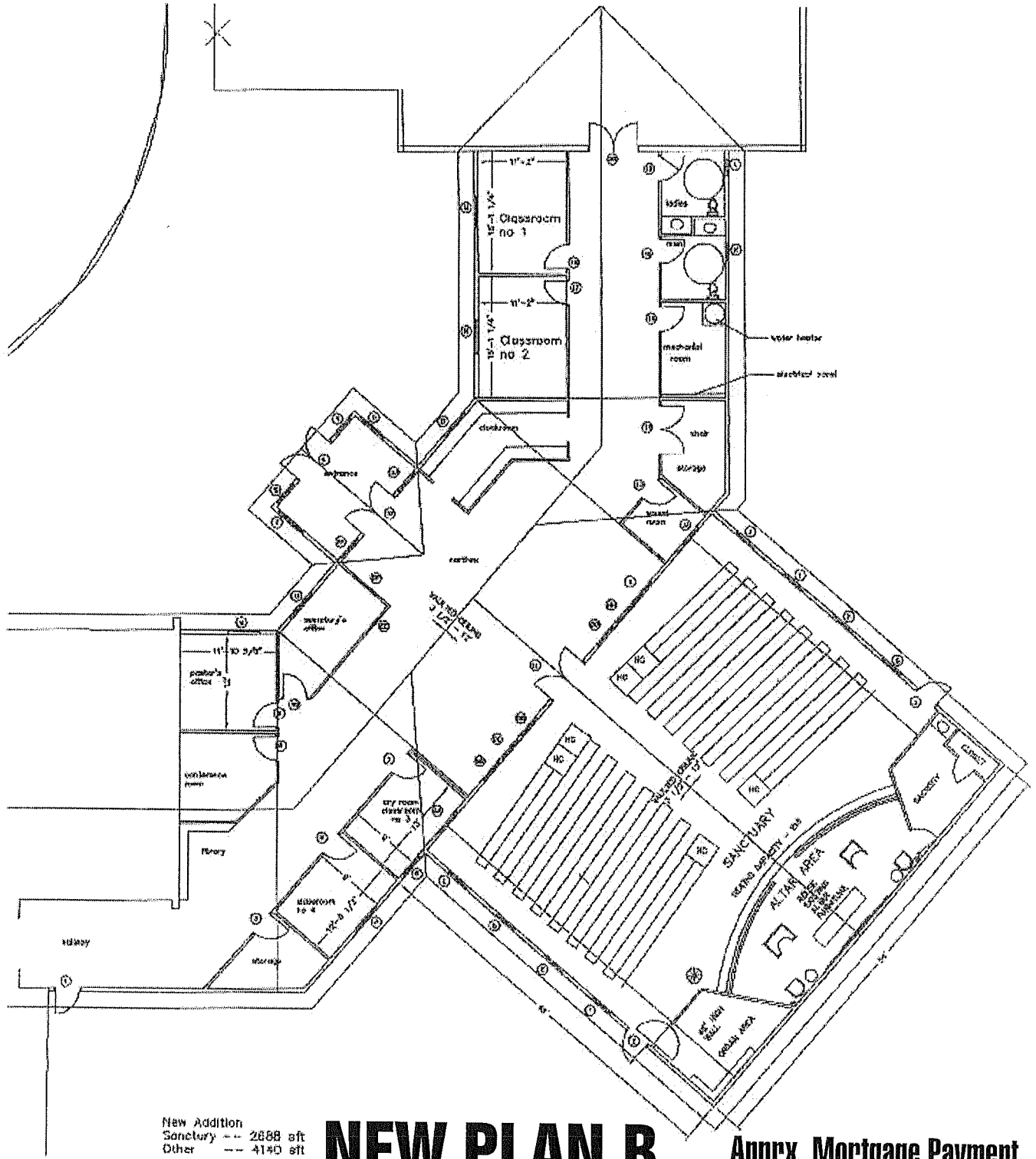
Muskegon, Michigan

Muskegon Heights Church; founded 1923, closed 1962



Shettler Road Church; founded 1959

Our Building Project



New Addition
 Sanctuary -- 2888 sq ft
 Other --- 4140 sq ft

NEW PLAN B
\$425,000

6828 Sq. Ft. - includes (parking, sign & kitchen)

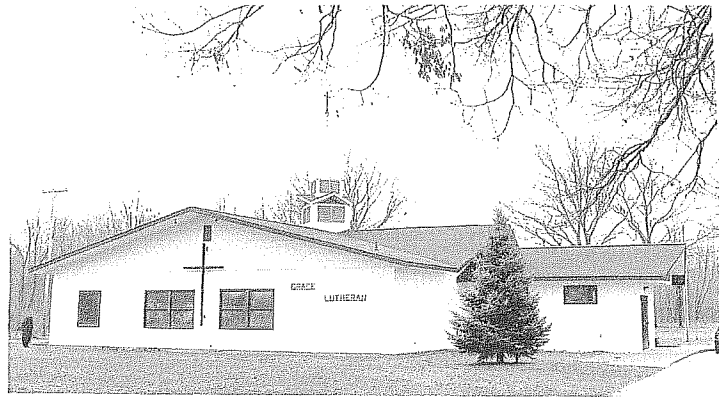
Aprx. Mortgage Payment
\$2100/month

based on \$20,000 new funds raised and
 includes estimate of increased utility costs.

Sanctuaries of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church



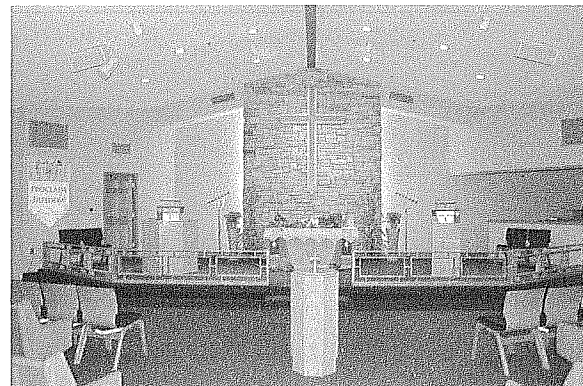
Heights Church and parsonage, sanctuary
dedicated June 6, 1926



Grace Chapel, dedicated October 25, 1959



Current facility, dedicated February 12, 2006



Interior of current sanctuary