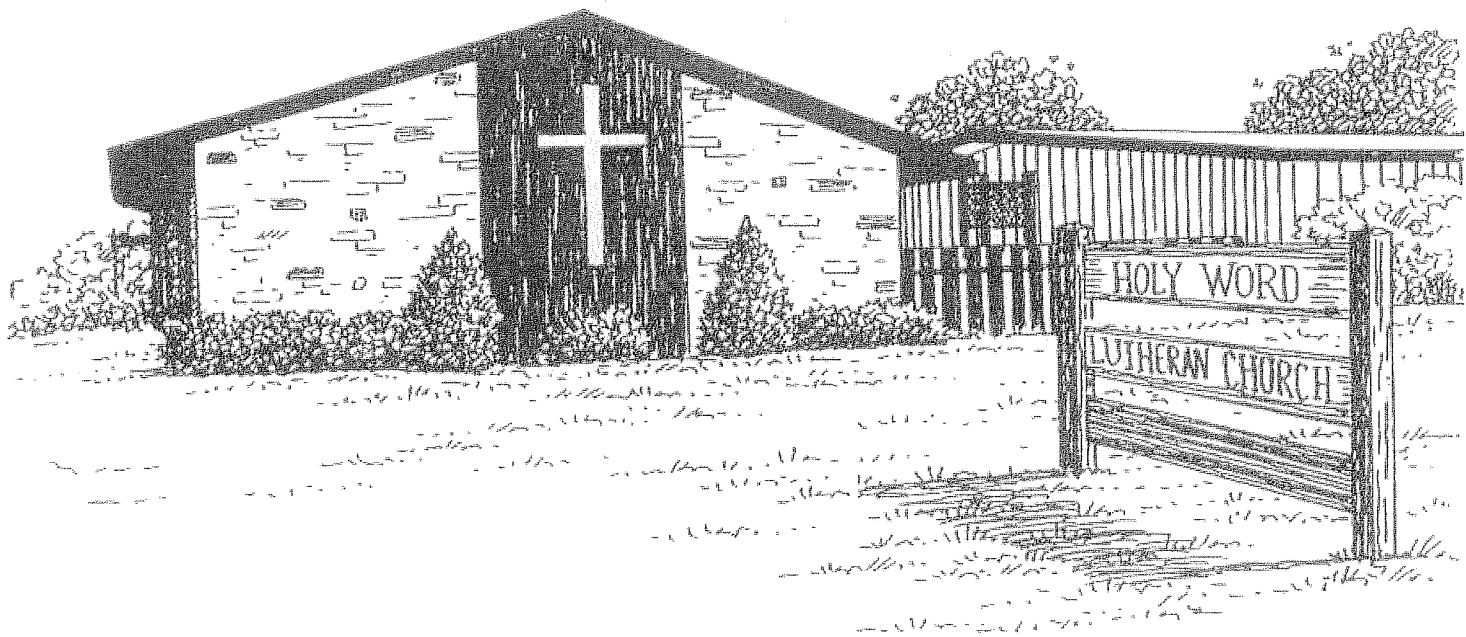


# History of Holy Word Lutheran Church



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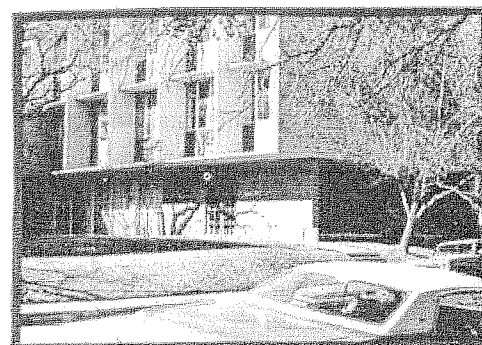


“Question Authority.” “Keep Austin Weird.” “I Feel Better Now That I’ve Given Up All Hope.” One look at the car bumpers in Austin, Texas, with bumper stickers such as these, reveals much about the atmosphere. A relaxed, quirky, liberal atmosphere is the city’s trademark. Austin, the Texas state capitol, and home to numerous senators and congressmen, employs thousands in large corporations such as Dell, 3M, and Motorola. It is home to the largest university campus in the U.S., the University of Texas, and is a decidedly liberal college town. It is where about 50,000 adult revelers come every Halloween and Mardi Gras to party on its infamous Sixth Street. The Live Music Capitol of the World has plenty to do on the weekends besides go to church.

It is in this environment, seemingly resistant to the Word of God, that in 1968, a tiny nucleus of eight believers in Austin, Texas, contending for the faith yearned for the confessional stand of their home synod – the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Several times they visited the nearest WELS congregation 85 miles away, Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran in San Antonio, itself only a mission. Before long, Our Savior’s pastor, William Krueger, began to make trip to Austin, saving them the drive. His son, Pastor Silas Krueger, himself pastor of Holy Word for three years, recalls:

My father got involved in establishing Holy Word when he was serving at Our Savior in San Antonio... He went to San Antonio in the fall of 1968, which was a time of theological uncertainty and foment in the Missouri Synod... My father heard that the Lutheran churches in Austin were very liberal and that people were looking for a more conservative, Bible-teaching church. My father ran a number of ads in the Austin newspaper, and a man named Ed Sedberry, a retired military man from Temple, responded. My father met with Ed and a number of other people in Austin, and out of those meetings they decided to begin services, using the chapel at the Episcopalian student center on the north side of the UT campus.

On February 23, 1969, Pastor William Krueger of Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church of San Antonio, with the approval of the synod, began holding services in Austin. Three families met for worship that Sunday at 3:30 in the afternoon at the Canterbury Chapel of the Episcopal Student Union near the UT campus. Though attendance was at times discouragingly low, the young church was determined to establish a permanent WELS church in Austin and continued to hold regular services as advertised in Austin’s newspaper, the *Austin-American Statesman*.



Canterbury Chapel where Austin members first met for worship February 23, 1969.

That year Pastor Krueger once made a prophetic remark when he likened the little mission gathering in Austin to a very small spark deep in the forest that, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, would grow into a large, enduring flame for spreading the Lord’s gospel.

Before long, his prophecy came true. In August of 1969, the WELS General Board for Home Missions authorized the Austin worshipers to officially organize as a mission congregation and the election of temporary officers on September 14, 1969, marked the formation of a formal organization. On October 5, the young congregation selected the name “Holy Word Evangelical Lutheran Church,” the name representing the doctrinal and confessional position of the congregation—based solely on the Holy Word of God. South Central District President, Vilas Glaeske, then a member of the General Board for Home Missions, recalls:

When Our Savior finally received their first resident pastor in the person of the sainted Pastor William Krueger, there was the opportunity to explore Austin more intensively. I don’t remember how many people began attending worship and Bible study at the start, but it was enough to warrant the mission board in approving the calling of a full time mission pastor. This call was accepted by Pastor James Radloff. What moved the mission board to grant mission status? I would say it was the fact that Austin was a growing city. Another factor was the support of the people who had gathered in Austin both in their outreach activity and in their financial support of the work.



Pastor James Radloff

Barely more than a year after its first exploratory service, on March 1, 1970, Pastor James J. Radloff, their first resident pastor, came to Austin from Litchfield, Minnesota, and was installed at Holy Word where he and his wife would continue to zealously serve for the next 14 years. One member recalls, “Out of necessity in the early days, Pastor Radloff and his wife did everything – mowed the property, typed up the bulletins, cleaned the church, etc. Joyce [his wife] was Holy Word’s first teacher, was president of the Mary-Martha Guild and was solely responsible for the altar care.” On May 17, 1970, Pentecost Sunday, twenty-six souls were recorded as charter members.

Growth of the young church was slow at first. Pastor Radloff explains, “We as a Synod were heavily involved in doctrinal battles with the Missouri Synod, ‘contending for the Scriptures...’ The history and events of the church sometimes have a way of ‘forcing your hand’ so that you pay too much attention to nurture, holding on to the Word, and not enough time to outreach, giving it to others.”

Though growth was slow, there were results. Pastor adds, “Slowly but steadily we kept at it and the Lord blessed. Many times he gave us results not from and in the area in which I was working, but from another place...keep on fishing and the Lord will do the catching.”

One of the greatest challenges for Pastor Radloff was the Midwestern/Texan culture clash. At times it was difficult for a Northern pastor to serve in the South and to learn a new culture. Another bumper sticker describes a common attitude, “We Don’t Give a Damn How You Did It Up North.” Radloff says:

Texans don’t always think and do things the “way we did it up north.” When we would get WELS transfers from up north, they would sometimes think they had the right, since they were WELS

Lutherans longer, to impose Midwest ideas and Midwest church culture on our Texans. It is not an easy task to convince stubborn German Lutherans from the Midwest that “their way isn’t the only way.”

One of the early members of Holy Word, a native Texan, remarks on the culture clash, “I truly believe that, aside from doctrinal issues, each church has its own ethnic, cultural, and philosophical personality. Holy Word’s at that time was outspokenly Midwestern, right in the big middle of Texas. It was a heritage that members were understandably proud of but also worn as a badge of honor.”

Pastor Radloff had to work hard at sensitizing people from both groups. He reminded both Texans and Midwesterners that the others were people just like they, sinners who needed the Savior, even though they talked “funny” and acted “differently.” But the common bond of faith in Christ overcame such problems. He says, “We learned quickly that more important than talking like Texans was just loving them and caring for them. Love and care for souls is a common language that all Christians can understand, even though spoken with different accents or even different languages.”

Another challenge for the infant congregation was their location of worship. While the Episcopal Student chapel was centrally located in downtown Austin and thus easier to draw people from all over the city, it did still have its drawbacks. Pastor Silas Krueger remembers guest preaching for his father when he visited him one summer, “There was one memorable August Sunday afternoon when the air conditioning in the chapel was not working. I didn’t have the quickness of mind to do a John Tetzl and preach about the horrors of hell, but it would have been the perfect setting in which to do that, because it was hotter than Hades!” Pastor Radloff also recognized that the chapel was not the most conducive to worship. He comments:

[Though] the Episcopal Student Chapel was a very pleasant setting for worship, you never knew what or who you would find in the chapel when you arrived to set up for worship on Sunday morning. You see, the chapel was always left open and so it became, at times, a haven for bums or students who were drunk or smoking pot or whatever. I remember one time we had to wake people up sleeping on the pews and invite them to worship or to leave.

The young church was in need of a place to call their own. Thankfully, in early June of 1970, Holy Word received word from the Board of Trustees of the synod that funds were available for the purchase of land in Austin. Having received permission to purchase property in Austin, Holy Word began the search for land.

Pastor Radloff recalls:

[A major challenge] was deciding *where* to locate in Austin. When we arrived there was a nucleus of about 3 families and they were renting the Episcopal Student Chapel on the edge of the campus in downtown Austin. We knew, of course, that we would not be starting a downtown church and so we had to start researching the outer areas of the city to see what might be the best and fastest growing area of town. With the help of members, we soon determined that it should be somewhere on the north side. We continued for a year or so to worship at the Student Chapel but did outreach on the north side.



Members put in a sign that reads, “Future Site of Holy Word Lutheran Ch., Wisconsin Synod.”

Finally, the small group decided to purchase a 5.3 acre tract of land at 10601 Bluff Bend Drive in the early fall of 1970. On October 1, after the morning services the congregation went to put a sign on the five and three tenths acre tract of land they had purchased during the previous week. The road just north of the church, Braker Lane, was hoped to be a major thoroughfare and thereby would make the church very accessible. Today, however, Holy Word still lacks visibility, tucked away, out of sight. Pastor Radloff remembers selecting the land:

The land was found by a member, Clarence Luke, driving around looking for sites. We found several with better locations but too expensive for Synod's budget. The site was five acres while Synod policy called for the purchase of only three acres. Much wrangling followed with the Executive of the Board of Trustees over dividing the land or not dividing it. Finally the will of the people prevailed when it was agreed that the church (not the Synod) would pay for two acres of the land. Our land cost \$ 5,000 an acre, \$ 25,000, of which the congregation raised \$ 10,000 to pay for two acres which the Synod would not buy unless we paid for it. The remainder was through a CEF loan. Since the land was large by Synod standards at that time, the requirement of Synod was that we would need to build the parsonage on site. For whatever strange reason in those days, there was more money available in CEF to build parsonages rather than churches. So construction began on the parsonage with a plan for an enlarged garage which would become our on-site worship place.

The newborn church was quickly taking shape. The first choir, Sunday school classes, and adult Bible classes began that September and on November 15, 1970, the first constitution was adopted and a revised plan for a parsonage was approved.

On January 24, 1971, the congregation moved their location of worship in order to be nearer to its recently purchased land and began meeting at the Texas Pharmaceutical Association Building on East Anderson Lane and Highway 183. Pastor Radloff recalls:



Texas Pharmaceutical Association Building  
on East Anderson Lane and Highway 183

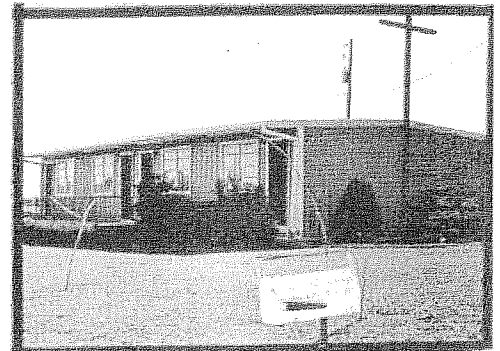
I was riding around one day looking for potential places and spotted it setting up on a hill close to the highway. It was a pretty new building, built to hold conferences for Doctors and Pharmacists, etc. It was perfect. It had a very nice sized (bigger than we could ever use) auditorium and side rooms that could be used for Sunday school. I was excited about the prospects until I met with the administrator to inquire about its use by a church. His first response was, "no, it is dedicated to be used for health purposes only." In dejection I went home and dreamed about its possibilities. Then it dawned on me that we were in the "spiritual health" business. I wrote an appealing letter to the administrator and delivered it with the plea that he take it up with the Board. Several weeks later I received a phone call with the news that they had granted our request, agreeing that spiritual health care was a legitimate use for the building... [This new facility] was great and led to a spurt of growth. The first Sunday we were there one of our prospects who lived on the north side brought a neighbor family and they became members..."

Those members in turn, brought their family and they too became members. The move to the new worship location proved to be quite a blessing from God. But they wouldn't worship at rented facilities for much longer...

When Mrs. Radloff noticed a classified ad for a portable building for sale, Holy Word decided that the church would grow more quickly if they held services on their own land. They purchased the 24 by 60 foot portable from Trinity Lutheran Church in Austin (LCMS) and located it on the church land.

While the parsonage was under construction and we were planning our move from the Pharmaceutical Building to our land, my wife, Joyce, was reading the Sunday Newspaper and in the ad section saw a portable building for sale. It measured 24 by 60 and was used by a LCMS church to house their school. Their school had burned down and they used this portable building as a classroom or two. It was for sale for \$ 10,000... Within a matter of weeks we purchased it with Synod approval but without their money. Part of the requirement in purchasing it was that we pay for it ourselves. We moved it on to our land and it became our worship place for two years.

Their new chapel was dedicated June 20, 1971, and on the following Sunday Holy Word received eleven more souls into membership. One of these members, the first person confirmed at Holy Word, Mr. David McKee, spent all day Saturday, June 26, building a baptismal font. The following morning, the font was put to use as he also became the first adult baptized at Holy Word.



Holy Word purchased this portable building, their newest chapel, for \$10,000

On October 1, 1971, the Radloff family moved into the new parsonage. On October 10, the congregation was invited to the new parsonage for a tour where they inspected the two-car garage which had been converted into a Sunday school room and fellowship area. This worked for a while, but Holy Word was still growing...

In the summer of 1972 the building committee began meeting and making plans for a church fellowship hall. In early November the General Board for Home Missions granted \$64,000 to Holy Word for construction of their first permanent building. On September 2, 1973, ground was broken for construction of the new worship facility and on February 24, 1974, Holy Word's first permanent building was dedicated, and served as the sanctuary for 28 years. Pastor Radloff remembers the building project going well, "All in all I remember the building project flowing smoothly. I know there must have been some glitches but they do not register in my mind."

With the new fellowship hall their place of worship, the portable building was free to use as classrooms. But when the council discussed starting a school in May of 1974, many were concerned about the costs of such an ambitious endeavor. At the time it was Synod policy that a mission congregation could start a school only if it bore the whole cost without any subsidy help. Nonetheless, the members of Holy Word realized what a priceless aid a Christian day school would be in training their children in the way they should go. Pastor Radloff remembers discussions of the cost:

At an open forum where the discussion was whether or not we could “afford” to start a school one lady said, “It doesn’t seem to me to be a question of whether we can afford to start the school. It is a question of whether we can afford not to start it.” That comment carried the day. And she and her husband didn’t even have children of school age!

Holy Word Lutheran School began the next fall with Joyce Radloff called as kindergarten through seventh grade teacher. There were 15 children in the first class, representing all grades except the third. From there, the school grew. Originally planned as a mission arm of the church, the school proved to be extremely successful. Pastor Radloff writes:

With church and school in place, we began to draw people from different parts of the city. The church grew steadily and at the same time we transferred members to many different parts of the country. At this time Austin was beginning to show great growth in the Electronics Industry. This brought lots of new people but also resulted in many people leaving Austin for high-tech jobs in other parts of the country.



Pastor Krueger, elders and architect break ground for their new church.

With such tremendous growth the small portable building couldn’t contain the school for long. In the fall of 1980 the congregation resolved to build a new school and fellowship building. Groundbreaking for their new fellowship/education facility was held on January 11, 1981 and was (as much as possible) a “do-it-yourself” project.” Pastor Vilas Glaeske says of the congregation, “Holy Word was blessed with a variety of talents among the membership. There were craftsmen from the building professions and as a result they could undertake almost any project and have the expertise to get it done.”

Many liken the project to an old-fashioned barn raising. The school was completed in only a few months at the cost of \$85,000, with \$42,000 of that coming from L.A.C.E. (Lutheran Association for Church Extension). At the dedication service on September 6, 1981, nearly 300 people gathered to worship. Pastor Radloff writes of the results in the December edition of the Northwestern Lutheran for that year:

While one would expect some time to pass before seeing some of the spiritual fruits of a project such as this, the Lord blessed this work with some immediate results: an increased enrollment in our Christian day school, with 10 new students enrolled and with all of the parents of these new students enrolled in the pastor’s Bible Doctrine Class.... The Christian day school has proved to be a very strong mission arm.

Pastor Radloff says of the success and tremendous growth that Holy Word enjoyed from their start, “[We had] a clear and positive and powerful message to declare...the Word works! [We had] a school that was mission minded with excellent, caring and mission minded teachers. [We were in] one of the faster growing



cities in the country and a very desirable place for people to live and raise families [with] people inviting and bringing other people!”

In all, Pastor Radloff served at Holy Word for 14 years. He remembers Holy Word fondly and still visits his daughter and son-in-law, who are currently members there. He says:

In spring of 1984 I accepted the Call to serve as Mission Counselor for the South Central District and the Arizona Mission District. That ended my wonderful and memorable stay at Holy Word, Austin, Texas... Holy Word today seems as vibrant as the day it started. To God be all the praise and glory and thank you, Lord, for the privilege of service to God’s people in Austin and Holy Word.

In 1985, Pastor Silas Krueger, son of Pastor William Krueger, accepted the call from his church in Tucson, Arizona, to Holy Word in Austin. There he was instrumental in reaching out to the students on the campus of the University of Texas. Pastor Krueger recalls:

In the early years the emphasis was on establishing the mission on the north side, so not much organized work was done at UT. But since I had had a sizable campus group (30-40 students) at the University of Arizona while I was in Tucson, I decided to try to do something at UT... We had a weekly Bible study for UT students during the lunch hour. This was somewhat informal, and we did it while eating lunch, but we got anywhere from five to ten people. The second effort was for the students and me to take turns speaking at the speakers corner on the west side of the tower during lunch hours. (Anyone could speak on any subject for five minutes—or until he/she got booed off the stage or shouted down. We would usually speak on issues such as abortion, personal morality and the like, which were not very popular topics. I can still hear the boos ringing in my ears....)

Another major outreach effort Pastor Krueger started was an outdoor Easter Sunrise Service off the church property. In spite of the challenge of getting everyone on board, the Easter Sunrise Service is now an annual tradition at Holy Word and has even been on the local Austin news Easter evening, several years in a row. Pastor Krueger recalls those first couple of years:

The congregation at Holy Word is distinctively Texan, with all this implies, both positive and negative. I love both the land and the history of Texas, but I feel... that sometimes the Texas psyche limits the horizon and narrows the perspective of the people in that great state. One of the challenges in ministering there was to get the people to accept new ways of doing things—things they had never done before. [An] illustration may show what I mean:

When I first proposed the sunrise service at the Pioneer Historical Farm, there was absolute silence in the boards and at the council. And the number of volunteers who helped the first year was minimal. (I will always have a soft spot in my heart for people like Lester Wessel who handed out thousands of flyers, and Nelson Poldrack, who "talked it up" even though he wasn't personally convinced that this was a good idea. Nelson went along with it because he has such respect for the ministry and is going to support his pastor in whatever he suggests.) When we got over 200 people the first year and about 500 the second year, then the service created its own inertia.

One member recalls, “The first most dramatic [outreach opportunity] was the Easter Sunrise Service at Pioneer Farm in 1986. There was some skepticism about Pastor Krueger’s innovative idea but even the first

year was a big success. It continues to grow.” Pastor Patterson, the current pastor at Holy Word, loves the opportunity to share the gospel with the community, an opportunity afforded by the outdoor Easter Sunrise service Krueger started. He says:

We get about 600 people (when the weather’s nice and cooperates) at a local park area and we’ve probably gained every year one or two three-member families from having that outreach. But maybe more importantly, on Easter Sunday we get to proclaim the resurrection of Christ to the public, many of whom don’t go to church throughout the year and they get to hear the Easter story.

Pastor Krueger enjoyed serving at Holy Word for three years and remembers most fondly the people at Holy Word. He says of his time spent in Austin:

God's guiding and preserving hand were apparent in the type of people He sent Holy Word—just when it most needed them... What bound them all together was their common love for the Lord and their commitment to His Word... I really enjoyed my ministry at Holy Word. The people there are always in our hearts, and my family and I often share little stories or remembrances about them.



Pastor Bruce Bitter

Pastor Bitter was next in the line of pastors to serve at Holy Word. He accepted the call to Austin in 1988. During Pastor Bitter’s three years of service, Holy Word underwent what he describes as turbulent times. But Pastor Bitter adds, “God will continue to preserve his remnant through the preaching of law and gospel. Through all the difficulties, through all the good times, the law and gospel continues to be preached and God’s ‘little flock’ continues to take it to heart, produce its fruits, and ultimately be saved.” Pastor Bitter adds, “And yet the Lord used all of these circumstances including the sin and wickedness, to serve his own good and gracious purpose. That truth will of course redound to the glory of God.” And District President, Pastor Vilas Glaeske underscores that truth, “Not everything was ‘peaches and cream’ for Holy Word. The congregation had its up and downs. But in each trial and challenge the Lord strengthened the flock and readied it for the next phase of its growth.”

When Pastor Bitter received his call to Manitowoc, the congregation had a vacancy for several months before they received their new Pastor. Pastor Bitter writes, “I accepted the call in either May or June and stayed until the beginning of August. I think the congregation called from August through the following May. At that time Pastor Patterson was assigned to Holy Word out of the seminary.” The members survived the vacancy by God’s grace with a high commitment to the Word of God. Pastor Patterson explains:

Their last vacancy Holy Word had 110 people in church on average and had 35 adults and about 30 children in Sunday school. So 60 of the 100 people were staying for Sunday school and Bible class even during vacancies. So they’ve always had a high commitment to the Word and the study of the Word.

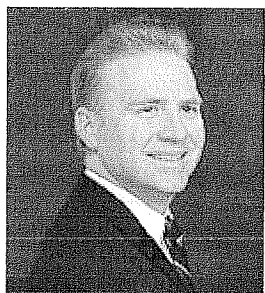
It was to this commitment to the Word of God that Pastor Patterson was pleased to come!

Pastor Don Patterson, born and raised in Texas, was a non-traditional student. After already receiving a degree in agriculture, he decided to become a pastor. After going to school up north, he vicarred in Texas, for

Pastor Vilas Glaeske, and upon graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1992, he was assigned back to Texas—to Holy Word.

Under Pastor Patterson's leadership, Holy Word has seen tremendous growth, going from 175 members eleven years ago to over 500 today—and it's still growing! Pastor Patterson credits the growth to of course the Holy Spirit working through the Word, but also to the hard work of the members using what he calls the FRAN network. Patterson says:

We took off like a rocket really. They were real hungry for the word when I got here. We were 175 people when I got here and now we're 500... [The cause for such growth is] always going to be if the gospel is proclaimed in the right way. The gospel is the most emotional, wonderful, self-satisfying thing that there is on the planet. And if we struggle to communicate it in a way that reaches anyone we meet where they are living, we're going to see fruit... the gospel works! ...Most of our growth comes from the FRAN network—Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances and Neighbors—and we encourage that a lot... I was just thinking this Sunday, as I was worshipping and thinking about all the people I see out there, that just a large, large percent of them are from friends and neighbors, the FRAN network thing—"I understand you need help and you look like you're willing to listen so why don't you come to my church..."



Pastor Don Patterson

Pastor Patterson is full of examples of how Holy Word has grown through members witnessing to their faith. One couple, Judy and Larry Voigt, had opportunity to witness to their neighbor, Julie Witte. Julie had two children, a five-year old and a baby. When she saw how the Voigts' kids behaved and treated their parents with such respect, Julie asked Judy and Larry, "What church do you go to? Because I would like to go there." Julie's been at Holy Word for close to ten years now. Pastor Patterson offers another example:

One of our members, Karen Timmerman, was at a man's house with her kids, who was teaching them swimming lessons in his pool in the backyard. (These are private lessons and they're back to back about every 30 minutes). A woman and her two daughters came for lessons early for their appointment. Karen and her kids were getting out of the pool and talking and interacting... Annie [the woman who came early] said to Karen, "I'm watching how you're interacting with your kids and I'm looking for a church and I'm wondering if you know of one or if you have one." Karen said, "Sure! You can come to our church!" and Annie took the doctrine class, joined our church, and she and her two girls have been a big part of our church family ever since—she's even helped me with a lot of marriage counseling. [Annie had been a marriage counselor for over 25 years prior to meeting the Timmermans.]

Professor Emeritus Harold Johne, who served alongside Pastor Patterson from the summer of 1998 to the summer of 2001, attributes the fact that those newcomers stayed to the excellent Bible classes and sermons, both firmly founded on God's Word. He writes:

I believe that the most significant thing about Holy Word especially since Don got there is the emphasis on Bible Classes. They have not only a large number of Bible



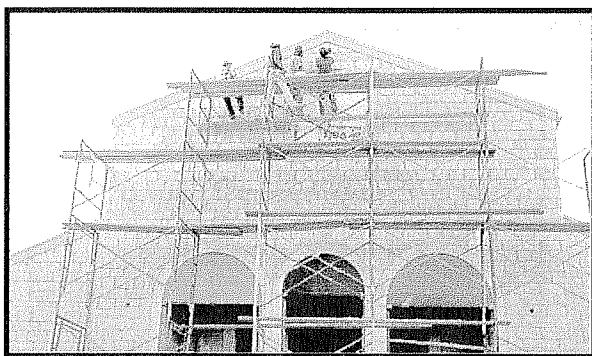
Pastors Johne and Patterson and their wives.

Classes at various times during the week in addition to the Sunday morning class, but Don begins many of the meetings such as council meetings with Bible study that may run around a half hour. Most of these classes are not topical or doctrinal in format, but are actual study of a portion of the Scriptures including such things as study of the background, historical setting, context, etc. I believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the word these Bible studies have done a great deal to make Holy Word the vibrant congregation that it is... Don's preaching is exceptional. He once told me that it is his hope that after hearing his sermon his people might know this particular text better and know their Savior better. He does an excellent job of explaining the text including historical setting and context, putting you right there, and then goes on to show how what happened so long ago or what was written so long ago is relevant for each one of us today. Again by the power of the Spirit that kind of preaching brings life to a congregation.

Under Pastor Patterson, Holy Word has not just grown in membership, but in buildings as well. With such great growth, the old church couldn't hold everyone for long. Patterson says, "The challenges over the years have been trying to keep up with the growth in a way that would consistently minister to everybody's needs in a way that they needed." Always willing to adapt, the members of Holy Word did what they could. When they had need of more classroom space, they ceased to use their school building/fellowship hall for fellowship. Instead, they used the sanctuary for their fellowship hall, moving the pews between services.

Our church got a whole lot of use and there was a whole lot of moving of pews, and we knew that was only a step in another direction. We didn't know if we were going to build maybe a big gym and make that the fellowship hall and keep our sanctuary the way it was, or build a sanctuary. And so over a couple of years we mulled that over and it just seemed—because worship attendance kept growing and we had chairs along the aisles of the side and the walking room was about three feet on either side of the pews, which is even against fire code—we just decided that this building was just not worshipful. We really needed a new sanctuary!

Before they began building however, the members of Holy Word decided they would first raise \$200,000 on preliminaries as they sought loans to build. AAL (Aid Association for Lutherans) offered to loan them money, but only \$1,500 per communicant member, and only if they could demonstrate through a pledge drive that they were able to pay it all back. The members of Holy Word were eager to give back to God what he had given them. Pastor Patterson recalls one Sunday after church:



Holy Word began building their new sanctuary in March of 1999, pictured here on December 19, 2001.

One Sunday I announced that we were \$60,000 short of our goal [before]we could get started. A couple came up after church the following Sunday and said, "We have an investment that we originally put \$15,000 in stock thirty years ago and it's worth what you need and we're going to give it to the church, so start the building." All of this was without a major campaign—just a bunch of friends in Christ trying to do the right thing.

In 1990 they began construction of a new sanctuary with an estimated cost of \$850,000. The construction of the church was possible only due to the generosity of the

members of Holy Word. Due to the generosity of the church president, the contractor worked to build the church without profit.

Our president of our congregation had a salesman in his lumberyard that had built houses, but never built a church, and our president was willing to pay him his salesman salary while he built the church and he would forgo building the church for a profit. So we ended up with a contractor—he was a Christian man, too—building the church without gouging us for a profit. That helped us build more for less money... we broke ground in March [of 1999]. But it took us two and a half years to build it from that time because we took our sweet merry time, all the time people raising money.

One of the members, an electrician, donated his services and time. Patterson said, “We have a member, Tim Moll, who put in all the electrical service free as a donation. It was \$100,000 worth of gift!” Ultimately, the costs of the church were still more than anticipated at \$1,150,000 due to unforeseen problems like having to build a septic tank and drainage pond for \$170,000 among other things. They also ran into some difficulties with the city of Austin when they tried to get their permits:

There are different inspectors for different things. There’s one inspector for a department called the Environmental Department—an environmental inspector... He single-handedly stopped the project a couple of times because we didn’t have our little fences put up to stop erosion if there was a big rain or little fences taken down at the proper time and didn’t have enough grass seeded at a certain time.

Once we were trying to get our certificate of occupancy at the end of the building project so we could legally be using the building and he said we couldn’t get it because he said he couldn’t find the school building on his drawings that he found. And so he sat right in the school with me and said, “This building does not exist!”—he was trying to make a point obviously but he wasn’t even willing to talk about it and of course you have to talk about it to get it done. Well, we finally got that one covered. We got a correction on the drawing and put the school building on there.

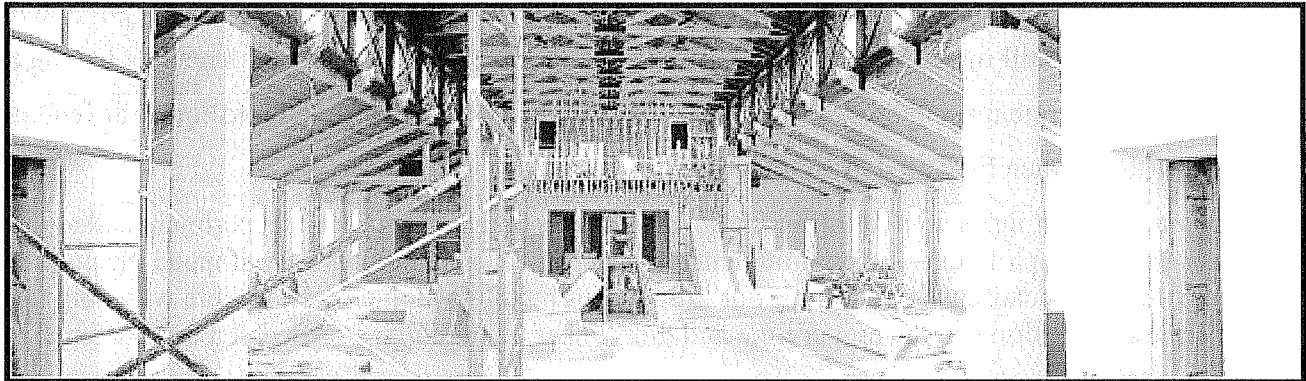
Then he paced off where our playground was and said our playground was too close to the edge of the lot... So we waited and waited and ended up waiting months before we could go before a board of review... The board of review listened to us for about thirty seconds and said this is just fine, don’t worry about it, and gave us a variance.

After we got that all taken care of and I thought we were all free and clear the little environmental inspector calls me again one day and says, “The eaves on your school building are too much watershed for what we’re supposed to have here so we’re going to have to check this out cause the drawing shows one eave but the actual eaves are longer than the drawing.” I immediately called his direct supervisor and accused him of harassment and said, “If he can’t figure out the drawings and all this, we’ve got to do something else here—this is harassment. We can’t get our certificate of occupancy.” So she called me back in about an hour or two and said we’ve taken care of it. He found the right lines on the drawing and everything is going to be fine. So we ended up with our certificate of occupancy finally.

Members’ generosity was crucial not only in building the church, but also in furnishing it. The altar, the pulpit, the lectern and the cross in the chancel were all made by member Dan Voss, donating the labor free of charge. Even the wood itself was free, donated by Robert Timmerman. Patterson talks about putting in the altar:

The altar itself is four inches of solid black marble granite... After we bought it and made arrangements to get it and saw it, the next project was how in the world are you going to get this thing that weighs about 4,000 pounds up the steps? (There are twelve steps leading up into the church.) How are you

going to get it through the doors and how are you going to get it dropped into place? They used a series of cranes and cranks and lifts. They had eight men and as they moved that piece of marble down the aisle. It made it through the double doors fine, but there was only 4 inches of clearance—two inches on either side between the pews and the pews were all bolted down! They made a ramp out of plywood to get it up the two steps into the chancel and then they had a big crane—four legs with wheels on the bottom. They wheeled it up and dropped [the altar] in place on the two legs very carefully with a crank and they had these belts around it that were on top of the wooden legs. So they had eight men on one end and they would very quickly jerk up while somebody jerked the belt out and then they moved the eight men on the other end and jerked up while the belt was pulled out and that's how they got it in. Jokingly one of them said, "I think we're about ½ an inch off. We need to move it." The rest said, "Tough!!!"



Interior of Holy Word's new sanctuary under construction on December 4, 2001

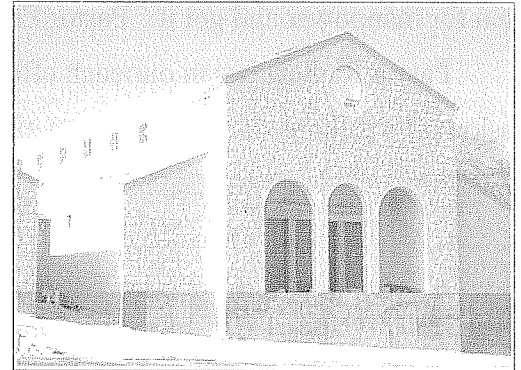
The organ in the balcony was a gift of love from member Dave Widiger, an "organ enthusiast and a great organist," as Pastor Patterson describes him. Alerting the congregation that an organ was for sale from another church, Holy Word bought it for \$3,000 and the price of moving it. Having bought it before finishing the church, they realized they didn't have the money to install it (about \$30,000) and decided to scrap it. When Dave Widiger found out, he had to do something! Patterson recalls, "He found out about it and called me when I was out of town and said, 'If you'll keep the organ, I'll put it in. If you've got patience and let me do it as long as I want to take, I'll put it in and... for free.'" Dave, with the help of a few other members, installed the organ in an eight month period.

In order to beautify the chancel, the building committee asked for an estimate to put in a stained glass window. The estimate given was \$8,000. They didn't have the money for the project, but another member, Andy Schwalenberg said, "I've only done one stained glass in my life, but if you'll let me, I'll do this one. And if you give me time, I'll do it for cost." The stained glass window was installed one year later and ended up costing only \$800!

Finally, two and a half years later, on June 2, 2002, Holy Word dedicated their beautiful new sanctuary. Though the building project cost \$1,150,000, Holy Word currently owes only \$500,000 on the building and has greatly enjoyed using it ever since. Its impact on Holy Word's ministry and worship has been significant. Pastor Patterson speaks of the impact:

When we worship, we worship in a much more worshipful atmosphere with the music being enhanced tremendously by the acoustics... It was actually something that was built for this purpose. It's just a very worshipful space. Everyone's enjoying worship and worshipping better because the building is now aiding the process of praising God and listening to His Word. It's got a transcendent feeling and God is transcendent and people have a different feeling about their worship.

Secondly, we have much more useable space for our discipleship ministry of bible studies and we can have multiple things going on too at the same time that we used to not be able to have because we were all in one room. The conference room has been a great Bible study room, small group counseling room; we've done intervention... It's just a great meeting place!



Holy Word's new sanctuary on January 20, 2002.

Almost every pastor interviewed said that one thing that made Holy Word unique is its outreach mentality and spirit. That truth is evident in the congregations and preaching stations started from that nucleus. Early on in Holy Word's history, they were instrumental in starting new churches. Pastor Patterson says, "In the last eleven years we've started two churches through our ministry taking them as preaching stations. Before that this church started the church in Temple and Risen Savior in South Austin." God has worked through Holy Word's VBS program, their Soccer Bible Camps, their Easter sunrise services, their vicar program, Travel Canvass Witness Program and through the witness of individual members to strengthen and grow his church. From 1969 to the present Holy Word has started four churches and has a present preaching station in Marble Falls.

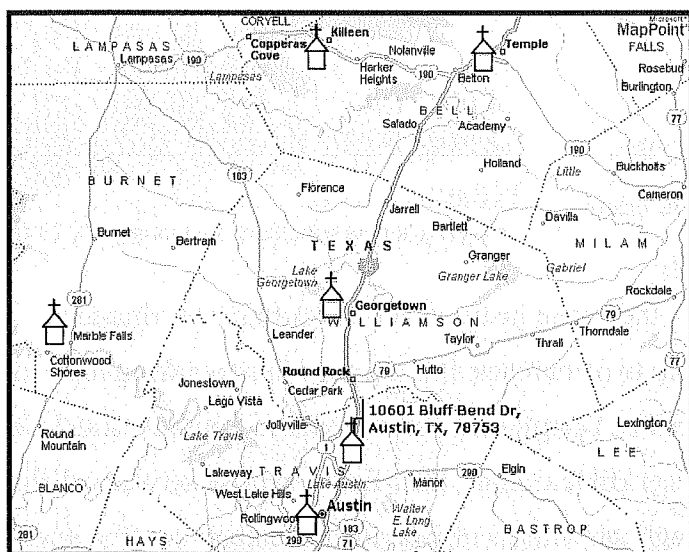
After building the first church and school they had a considerable number of members on the south side of Austin. In 1978 Pastor Radloff began holding worship services on the south side in the Ramada Inn banquet room. After about six months of services, the congregation of about 25 people was granted mission status and was assigned its first pastor, David Clark, from the Seminary. From there, they spread out to Temple, Georgetown, Killeen, and Marble Falls. Pastor Radloff describes the start of a WELS church in Temple, TEXAS:

One Sunday several families from a Missouri Synod church in Temple came to worship at Holy Word. They gave a tale of woe on how their pastor was a part of the Seminex movement and they were not hearing the Word in its truth and purity. They asked if I would come to meet with them.

Pastor Radloff set up a series of classes on Lutheranism, comparing chief doctrines of Scripture in members' homes. Starting with about 20 people at the first meeting, they quickly grew and started holding worship services in a Seventh Day Adventist Church. In April of '74 Holy Word transferred about twenty communicants to Trinity, Temple, and shortly thereafter they were assigned their first pastor from the Seminary, Pastor Mark Krueger.

From there, Pastor Patterson sought to start a new church in Georgetown, Texas since there were already two dozen members driving the 22 miles to come to Holy Word. He says, “In a 2 year period we gained 20 to 25 members from the Georgetown area for our church and so we asked them if they would like to start a church... At our opening service we had 50 people there! ...a year later, we had a vicar there and next year we asked for manpower and got it.” Pastor Eric Hartzell has been there ever since.

Pastor Radloff began outreach efforts at the military base, Fort Hood, in Killeen, Texas. He writes of the mission efforts there directed to a great extent by member Lt. Colonel, Ed Sedberry:



Outreach efforts to the greater Austin area in South Austin, Temple, Georgetown, Killeen, and Marble Falls.

I used to go once or twice a month to serve our WELS military people at Fort Hood. It was Viet Nam war time and we had lots of WELS people there, as many as 45 attending services. We had a Lt. Colonel, Edward Sedberry and his family there at the time. They were already members at Holy Word and drove down to Austin almost every Sunday... When we started services at Fort Hood, Ed was my recruiter. I would give him the names of new WELS people moving on base and usually the next time we held a service they would be there.

Pastor Radloff jokes, “I don’t know how he did it but I suspect that he pulled rank on them and ordered to be there!” With a steady supply of men coming in and out of Killeen, they considered starting a church there.

Pastor Krueger writes, “While I was at Holy Word I instructed several couples in the Killeen area. I would take turns with them on the driving. One week I would drive to Killeen for instructions, and the next week they would drive down to Austin.” Before he could get things going steadily, however, Pastor Krueger took a call.

Finally, a few years later, Pastor Patterson started the efforts again. Patterson writes:

Pastor Paul Prange was at Risen Savior, he was the circuit pastor and when we had a vacancy in the Temple church he came to me and said, “I will either take the mission at Fort Hood or the Temple vacancy. You take the other one.” And I really didn’t have a choice, (and I guess I didn’t want to back away from it either) so I said I’ll take the mission start in Killeen. And that’s how we got started! ...After a year in Killeen we asked for manpower and Kevin Mau was assigned there from the seminary. They bought land this year—12 acres—and they’re building a house and then a church. They have about 80 members.

Currently, there are about 80 members attending the church in Killeen.

Finally, outreach efforts have been made in Marble Falls, Texas, as well. Pastor Radloff writes, “We had two families who came to Holy Word from the Hill Country and for a time we held services in the Marble Falls area. We did not experience much growth there and after a while the two families decided they wanted to return to their worship life with the Holy Word family.” By the time of Pastor Krueger’s ministry another family had



been added. He says, "There were once three families who lived near Buchanan Dam and faithfully drove to Holy Word every Sunday." Ironically, he adds, "They were usually the first people at church!"

The situation seemed to be working well so outreach efforts were suspended until they were aided by the vicar program. Efforts have continued now for the last three and a half years by the last four vicars, leading Travel Canvass Witness teams and even starring a very well attended Easter sunrise service in Marble Falls. The vicars have been a valuable help in Marble Falls and at Holy Word and have had opportunity to learn a lot as well.

Pastor Patterson has been "bishop" to six vicars: Todd Engel (in the summer of 1994), Michael Geiger (1995-96), Nathan Buege (2000-2001), Caleb Schoeneck (2001-02), Robert Guenther (2002-03), Steven Prah (2003-present). All but one of those vicars has been funded largely by a "vicar in mission settings" program—a team effort between synod and individual churches to provide an outreach setting for vicars and to offer help to a congregation who has the will to do outreach, but lacks the funds. Patterson says of the vicar program:

We get a lot of help from the different faith level and the different abilities that they bring and a fresh new face and a fresh new set of ideas every time a new vicar comes. When you've got a pastor who's been around a while it can get stagnated by his own personality, his limitations, his inability. When you have a vicar coming in and out you get something new that comes out of every vicar year that ends up staying as a part of the congregation... We keep adding them to our family. The former vicars' addresses and phone numbers stay in our directory—that's how much a part they are of our heart. Every time we print a new directory we've got where they are!

The growth of God's kingdom out of Holy Word, extends beyond the greater Austin area as well! Through an audio tape ministry and Holy Word's website ([www.holyword.net](http://www.holyword.net)) Holy Word's sermons are heard throughout the world. Besides the technology, Holy Word members have been very active in ministry themselves. Two different couples have become world missionaries. The Radloffs have served in Grenada for one year and the Stelljeses have served in Africa for three years.

Several of Holy Word's own have gone on to prepare for full time service in the ministry. Clint Rogas, Jr. and John Stelljes, sons of Holy Word, are both currently at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary studying to become pastors. Julian Roberts and Emily Gebert are attending Martin Luther College to become Wisconsin Synod teachers. In 2001 Holy Word called one of their own members, Chad White, to be their Staff Minister.

Holy Word will continue to serve their neighbors and their synod for years to come. Pastor Patterson looks toward the future:

In our strategic planning we would like to start a mission in the Round Rock-Hutto area in the next year... We would want to expand our ministry on the web and maybe even get on the radio with our sermons... There is still some interest in doing some Hispanic outreach since there is a large Hispanic population here.

In attempting these new outreach efforts, Patterson thankfully notes that the challenges facing Holy Word are not doctrinal. Like every congregation in the synod, balancing the budget is perhaps the biggest challenge.

“[The challenge is] just staying informed—keeping everybody informed—keeping in Christ’s love as we try to plan what we’re going to do with very limited resources.” Now, thanks to Holy Word, one more bumper sticker can be seen on the cars in Austin. It reads, “Come to the WELS!” As Holy Word approaches its thirty-five year anniversary this February, may God continue to bless his church in Austin for the next thirty-five!