

**A History of Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in
Martinez, Georgia – 1979-2000**

**Church History Department CH3031
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Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church is located in Martinez, Georgia, a suburb of Augusta, Georgia. Augusta is a town full of history. Ft. Augusta was founded in 1736 as a colonial trading post by General James Ogelthorpe, being the last bit of civilization before the wild frontier. It was one of the few cities that was not destroyed by General Sherman during his march to the sea. Rumor says it was because he had a girlfriend from Augusta. It was home to the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence, one of the most important cotton exchanges in the south, James Brown, and the most prestigious golf tournament in the world, the Masters. Today, the metro area of Augusta is approaching a half-million people from all walks of life, many moving in and out because of Ft. Gordon, a military base in Augusta. It has a booming health care industry, tourism industry, and offers many employment opportunities. It is also a highly churched area, having approximately 500 churches in the metro area. It is the second largest metropolitan area in Georgia, and over the last ten years grew at a rate of nearly fifteen percent, and is projected to grow nearly three percent in the next year.¹

It is in this promising mission field that Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran church is located. They began as a preaching station in 1979, made up of several families from Augusta, North Augusta, and Aiken, South Carolina. These families would drive an hour or more to attend Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lexington, South Carolina.² Considering Augusta to be a possible mission field, on January 28th, 1979 Pastor John Guse held an informational meeting at the local Ramada Inn concerning the future of a WELS³ mission effort to the Augusta area. There were eighteen WELS members and twelve non-members in attendance.⁴ Things at the meeting went well, several of the visitors seemed to be sincerely interested. They planned to

¹ Statistics from www.augustaga.org/

² They have since relocated to Irmo, South Carolina

³ Stands for Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

run \$200 worth of advertising the following week, and they held their first service on February 4th, 1979. There were twenty-one WELS members and twenty non-members in attendance with a total of forty-one people, including the Guse family. They held services at Augusta Christian Day School⁵ in Martinez, Georgia at a cost of thirty dollars per week.

Their initial schedule was to have bible class at three in the afternoon, followed by worship at four. Pastor Guse conducted bible class and the worship services, while his wife Carolyn was the first pianist. By March they had a functioning church council made up of a President, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and Secretary. Plans had also been made to call the first pastor of what would one day be Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in May of that year.

In the meantime they planned to go canvassing and pass out flyers during March and April. They began their outreach efforts on March 10th, and continued for several weekends. Hope Lutheran from Lexington sent their youth group to help the first Saturday, and other members from Hope came to help canvass other weekends as well. Their efforts were concentrated to the northwestern part of the metropolitan area of Augusta. This area was chosen because as one member wrote in a letter to Pastor Broehm before he arrived in Augusta, “[It] is the fastest growing part of the city and has most of its population in [this] corner of the county.”⁶

As the canvassing and flyer distribution continued, more and more visitors began to show up. By the end of March the congregation realized its need for someone to do follow-up work. They were averaging thirty people in worship a Sunday. On May 6th, 1979 the General Board for Home Missions approved the request for full mission status and the right to call their first

⁴ These statistics and all others until 1990 are from the monthly reports to the District Mission Board unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Located at 313 Baston Road

⁶ Written by Roland Springstroh in a letter to Pastor Broehm dated May 29th, 1979

pastor. Certainly, the Lord had stretched out his hand of blessing, as one member wrote, “All of the above efforts were certainly not of our own doing; rather, they were the fruits of our faith in a loving Father who, through His grace, guided and supported us.”⁷

On May 22nd, 1979, pastoral candidate Dennis Broehm received and accepted the call to serve as the first pastor for what would one day be called, Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church. The ordination and installation was set for July 8th at 4:30 p.m. In the month of June, before Pastor Broehm even arrived, the congregation had already completed the first draft of its constitution, narrowed the name of the congregation to two possibilities, adopted a budget, begun to pursue incorporation for the congregation, and filed for Synod subsidy. By the end of July the congregation had chosen the name “Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church” and had forty-six baptized souls, nineteen communicant members, with four adults in the Bible Information class. They averaged forty-four people for worship, six kids for Sunday school, and seventeen adults in bible class.

The ordination occurred on schedule, with seventy-one guests and members in attendance. Pastor Guse gave the sermon with a reception following the service. Pastor Broehm held his first service at Prince of Peace on July 15th, with forty-eight people in attendance.

Right off the bat they proved to be a congregation ready for action. By the end of July the lay people of the congregation had done 570 canvass calls and three evangelism calls. They were also a growing congregation, and by the end of July were forced to think about moving the location of their worship services because of their growing numbers in worship.

On September 16th, Prince of Peace was officially incorporated. The constitution for Prince of Peace Lutheran Church was approved by the congregation, and the stewardship and evangelism committees were set up. In October, Prince of Peace held its first Communion

⁷ The 1979 annual report for Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church

service, deciding to celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month. There were sixteen communicants in attendance. Unfortunately, one of the people in the Bible Instruction class was offended by the practice of close communion. This was the case the following month with a couple from the Missouri Synod. However, Prince of Peace continued on, faithfully doing the Lord's work according to His Word.

In November, the first annual Peace & Hope golf classic was held, a golf tournament still being held to this day, between Hope Evangelical Lutheran church in Lexington, South Carolina, and Prince of Peace. Hope Lutheran won the day, taking home the traveling trophy and enjoying a day of fun and fellowship with their brothers and sisters in the faith.

On December 24th, Prince of Peace held its first Christmas Eve service. There were forty-four people in attendance to watch the children praise the Lord in recitation and song. The year came to a close as Prince of Peace numbered forty-six souls with twenty-one communicants. They began to put aside ten percent of their weekly offerings into a building fund as they looked forward to another year working together for God's glory.

They began a new decade and a new year as they installed their first permanent church council on January 6th. And soon they were canvassing the area to find a good spot to build or at least base the church. Early on, the northwestern part of Augusta had been targeted as a good spot for the church to be based. Mostly because the southern part of Augusta was primarily military and so was a more mobile community. The northwestern part of Augusta offered a more stable community in which to operate a congregation. By February, the evangelism materials were completed and Pastor Broehm went around to the members' houses to talk about the congregation's evangelism program, always keeping the need to spread the gospel before the eyes of the people.

In March of 1980, Prince of Peace broke the “fifty mark” for the first time, having over fifty people in attendance at one worship service. In June, Prince of Peace became an official member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The congregation also canvassed over 300 homes, as they continued to reach out to the community. By August of that year, the evangelism committee was consistently canvassing the area one night each week, and by May of that year Prince of Peace reached a total of fifty souls.

In September of 1980, the growing congregation was forced to move to another location because of space restraints and they began to worship in the cafeteria of Augusta Country Day School.⁸ This proved to be difficult for the evangelism committee, having to reprint the evangelism materials to include the new address, but growing too fast is a good problem to have. Thanks to the gain of some new transfers, the congregation reached thirty communicants and had their first “Mission Sunday” in November. Pastor Broehm wrote, “It was a good first try at getting people to bring a friend with them to church.”⁹

In May of 1980, the congregation was granted authority to search for land to purchase for a future building. Pastor Broehm gave an idea of what kind of site Prince of Peace was looking for, “Location was key – accessibility, visibility, ample space for on site parking and expansion – good middle class neighborhood, where many people were moving in and out – we would not do well in a truly southern neighborhood – none of the missions which I knew about did – it would take a generation of solid work in the community to crack in seriously to the southern community.”¹⁰

In October, the mission counselors recommended two locations for Prince of Peace to consider for future sites of their facility. In November, they had completed the approval process,

⁸ Located at 265 Flowing Wells Road

⁹ November, 1980 monthly report to the District Mission Board

and were awaiting the results of their bid on their first choice. However, in December they were forced to go back to the drawing board, as their bid on a piece of land was unsuccessful.

January of 1981 was a big month for the young congregation in Augusta. At the beginning of the New Year there were sixty-six souls and thirty communicants in Prince of Peace, and by the end of the month they had reached seventy souls. January saw the highest weekly worship attendance average to date, nearly forty-six people per Sunday, and revealed plenty of prospects in canvassing efforts. In March, the congregation was looking at a church that was for sale, however their search for a facility was delayed as the Church Extension Fund in Milwaukee was frozen. But in May they were back to the land hunt, and discussed purchasing an existing church building with about five acres of land for \$125,000 - \$169,000. They made an offer of \$131,500 and awaited the results of their second bid for a facility.

In June of 1981, Prince of Peace entered a new phase of their existence. They bought the facility in which they currently worship on Old St. Petersburg Road, a major artery in that part of the Augusta area. Immediately, the members of Prince of Peace got to work. They began to hunt for tables and chairs, set up the sign for the church, passed out 1800 flyers, and made all of the necessary arrangements for the first service in their new facility on August 2nd, 1981. On August 2nd, there were forty-seven people gathered to worship a gracious God in their new facility.

Prince of Peace prepared for their dedication service on November 8th. They removed three walls to make room for a fellowship area, sold the baptistery already in the church, and began patching holes, fixing the lighting, and doing landscaping for the dedication of their new facility. The evangelism committee ran advertisements and passed out flyers to inform the

¹⁰ E-mail interview conducted with Pastor Broehm in December of 2003

neighborhood of their arrival. Pastor John Guse preached for the dedication before ninety-two people, to celebrate the blessings the Lord had poured out upon Prince of Peace.

In the months following the dedication things really began to pick up. Visitors began to show up from time to time. They regularly had large Bible Information classes, with fourteen non-members enrolled in the month of November. They had their first Advent services on Wednesday night, as well as Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years services.

In 1982, Prince of Peace saw more growth. In February their attendance average was over fifty-six per Sunday, up ten per Sunday from the previous year. For Easter they had eighty-four people in attendance for church, with an Easter breakfast beforehand. Their fellowship opportunities also increased. The Ladies Evening Circle was formed in January, followed by the starting of a Girl Pioneers program. In February they held their first Wednesday evening Lenten services, which were relatively well attended. They spent the spring getting ready for their first Vacation Bible School, which was held on June 13th. During the summer, the evangelism committee prepared materials with the new address and congregational information. They continued to fix up their new worship facility, including a project to redo the front of the chapel. By November, Prince of Peace reached ninety souls and by December they averaged sixty people or more for worship for three straight months.

In 1983, the congregation continued to branch out. They set up a fellowship committee to come up with ideas and opportunities to gather together and enjoy the company of fellow Christians. They broke the fifty communicant mark with fifty-two in July of that year and ninety souls. They also began to incorporate a new evangelism tool, where the congregation received a list of new comers to the area and sent them information about the church. The program had

initial success, enrolling a family in Sunday school and Bible Information Class from the first mailing!

Not only was Prince of Peace stretching out its roots in Augusta, but there was also a possible new mission field opening up in nearby Greenwood, South Carolina. There was a nucleus of over ten WELS people in the town of Greenwood eager to begin a congregation. There were also a few Missouri Synod people interested in possibly joining. Pastor Broehm began to travel there to have monthly services. The first service was held on September 18 and seventeen people attended. But there were less at the second service, and it seemed the realization of the amount of work it would take to get a congregation going in Greenwood began to sink in with the people there. Unfortunately, the preaching station never got off of the ground. Pastor Broehm commented on the efforts in Greenwood, South Carolina, “

The Greenwood station was an attempt to satisfy the request of two families to begin a mission there. I traveled to Greenwood and did services several times a month for some months – but this was an example of Northerners wanting their kind of church, partly because it was comfortable for them. Greenwood was a small and static southern town – we were viewed as invaders and the ELCA¹¹ Lutheran pastor gave our reputation a black eye among his people. It had no chance of developing, as did other mission attempts in small, purely southern, cities.”¹²

Yet despite the problems in Greenwood, Prince of Peace continued to grow, having its best worship attendance to date with nearly seventy-five worshipers attending per Sunday. They ended 1983 with nearly 100 souls in a young, but growing, congregation.

In January, of 1984 Prince of Peace sent out their first newsletter. They enjoyed a streak of faithful worship attendance capped off by their Easter service which 100% of their membership in the area attended, a total of 120 people. They also began a pilot personal bible study program for the members of Prince of Peace, attempting to nurture a young and growing

¹¹ Stands for Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

congregation in their personal devotion lives. In the month of May, their worship attendance average jumped by nearly twenty-five people from the previous year. And on May 13th, the land trade that Prince of Peace needed in order to have a spot for their parsonage came through. They soon began building a new parsonage for Pastor Broehm and family. In September of that year, Pastor Broehm and family had moved into Prince of Peace's new parsonage.

It was during this time that the Lord saw fit to present Prince of Peace with some new challenges. Between July and October, Prince of Peace saw many of its core families move away. They had to replace five of the six church council officers due to moves. And by October, they went from seventy-four communicants down to sixty-five, and from 123 souls down to 109 due to different core families moving away from the Augusta area. By November, the weekly worship attendance average was down to nearly fifty-seven people per Sunday from eighty-four people per Sunday before the moves started. In addition to the loss of key leadership, the congregation had lost a good bit of its financial support. By November, Prince of Peace had lost thirty percent of its financial support. Prince of Peace was seeing some tough times for the first time in its young history.

But the Lord is gracious, and used this shift in church leadership for the good of the young congregation. In December of 1984, the church council was full of new faces. But these were new and excited faces, full of enthusiasm, and eager to serve in capacities that were not open to them before. In addition to this, some of the women of the congregation began to serve as staff persons on committees, getting involved in areas that were previously filled by some of those core families that had moved away. Under the leadership of this new segment of Prince of Peace, the congregation soon saw a turn around in their recently declining numbers. By the end of January 1985, Prince of Peace had recovered from its losses numerically, totaling seventy-five

¹² Pastor Broehm interview

communicants and 118 souls. The church budget saw a recovery as well. They entered a new year with a church council that was energetic and committed, the Ladies evening circle growing, home bible study groups beginning to take off, and every member visits being made. By March their weekly worship attendance had recovered to the second highest average in the church's history, nearly eighty-two worshipers per worship service. Pastor Broehm commented on this point in the congregation's history, “

God is in charge – we lost a huge number of people, financial support and leadership capacity – but no one panicked and slowly we grew out of it as new people from the community joined us. One positive note about the exodus – this removed some of the northern core of people and made it easier to involve non-core people – In some of our missions in the South, the core became obstructionists to the real outreach purpose of the church and the desire to enfold people of all cultures and backgrounds, including those who are different than Milwaukee Lutherans.”¹³

Prince of Peace continued on in 1985, enjoying a summer in which there wasn't the usual dip in church attendance. Instead, Prince of Peace offered some Marriage Enrichment seminars for late September to mid-November. There were fifty-one people present, including thirteen non-members. By the end of 1985 Prince of Peace was enjoying a steady stream of visitors with worship attendance and offerings at an all-time high.

By March of 1986, Prince of Peace averaged 100 people in worship for the first time in its history, with an all-time high of 130 people attending the Easter service. By July of that year, Prince of Peace had 150 souls under its care! In August, Prince of Peace began to do family emphasis Sundays every fourth Sunday and it was well received. They started a new greeter program to welcome visitors to worship, and began to gear up to attack 1987 with an aggressive outreach campaign. Prince of Peace ended the year planning to go off of operating subsidy from the synod, receiving only interest subsidy support.

¹³ Pastor Broehm interview

Prince of Peace had over the past three years increased from sixty-three to ninety communicant members, from ninety-one to 149 souls, and took over the operating costs of their congregation. There were sixteen adults enrolled in Bible Information class as well.

Pastor Broehm began to look into adult bible study programs, to better ground Prince of Peace and people in the community, in the truths of scripture. Pastor Broehm and Prince of Peace decided to establish Trinity Bible Institute. Trinity Bible Institute was a bible study program in which people could take an in-depth look at the truths of the bible. The first course, an Old Testament survey course, was set to begin on September 16th, with twenty-eight people registered to attend. The Old Testament survey course went so well that they planned a New Testament survey course to begin in January of 1988. Over forty people enrolled in the New Testament survey course, including all seven of the church council members.

Their Vacation Bible School program was well attended. It drew forty kids, fifty-three percent of whom were non-members, and the closing service brought forty-four new visitors through the doors of Prince of Peace. From this group, there were six families interested in Prince of Peace. Prince of Peace was having a lot of visitors walk through its doors.

However, Prince of Peace did have its struggles in 1987. Weaning the church off of synod subsidy proved to be harder to handle than expected. By August, Prince of Peace was in the worst financial deficit it had ever faced. In fact, in October they noticed that the deficit was the exact amount they had lost from synod subsidy.

In 1988, Prince of Peace began exploring new outreach tools, considering a “sharing your faith” study class to train the laity to share the gospel with their friends and family. They also began a thirty-six hour visit program, where teams of people in the congregation were responsible for visiting new comers to Prince of Peace within thirty-six hours of their arrival in

worship. They were also exploring the possibility of a Fall Festival of Friendship, an event Prince of Peace could promote and encourage members to bring family and friends along with them to church. Many of these activities were being explored and established because of the increased number of visitors, and the responsibilities that come with a growing church. Prince of Peace needed its laity to become active in outreach and follow-up work, and it was taking steps to do so. By December of 1988, Prince of Peace numbered 218 souls under its care and had 114 communicant members, averaging as high as 120 people per worship service.

In 1989, Prince of Peace took time out to evaluate itself at the beginning of the year. Among some of the things that Prince of Peace felt they needed was a more varied fellowship program, to reach different segments of Prince of Peace and the surrounding community. They wanted higher lay involvement in evangelism and follow-up. They considered trying to do an adult Vacation Bible School along with the kids that summer, to get the parents involved. And as Prince of Peace continued to do the work of the Lord to the best of their ability, they celebrated their ten-year anniversary. Pastor John Guse preached to encourage them to, "Continue your walk in faith"¹⁴.

In 1990 a renovation committee was started to put together an overall site plan for Prince of Peace, to expand its present facility to accommodate its growing numbers. Because of growing worship attendance, the church council discussed setting September 16th as when they would begin holding two services on Sunday. But they weren't able to implement it until two years later in September of 1992.

Prince of Peace continued their evangelism efforts, sending welcome letters to new movers in the area. They noticed that while most of their visitors weren't from these mailings, they were receiving more visitors than ever before. The Trinity Bible Institute studies were also

set to begin again, another way Prince of Peace was striving to put God's Word into people's hands.

Prince of Peace was also able to play host twice in 1990. First, they hosted the Michigan Lutheran Seminary choir on April 20th. Secondly, they hosted the Spring LWMS rally for the Southern Hills circuit. Great times were had by all, as the people of Prince of Peace were able to get to know their brothers and sisters in the faith.

In 1991 Prince of Peace began to focus its attention inward to address a growing number of inactive members in the congregation. They began a visit and follow-up program to contact those inactive members. They also started a men's group to provide a way for the men of the congregation to get together, and enjoy Christian fellowship with one another. The laity became more active in evangelism follow-up by hand-delivering letters to new comers to the area. The elders and Pastor Broehm decided to begin an every-member visitation program to continue to nurture the people of Prince of Peace.

It was also a year in which they began to look at the upgrading and expansion of their facility. In March of 1991, Prince of Peace purchased its first computer for the church. They looked into purchasing new pews for the chapel. In August, conceptual drawings for the facility expansion were begun.

At the end of 1991 Prince of Peace's growth looked to have leveled off a bit. Their weekly worship attendance average was nearly 102, up from almost 100 in 1990. Their weekly Sunday school attendance average was twenty-three, down from nearly twenty-eight in 1990. Their weekly bible class attendance average was twenty-five, up from twenty-four in 1990. They communed fifty-three people per communion service, which was up from forty-nine in

¹⁴ Prince of Peace timeline, put together for twenty year anniversary

1990. Their communicant membership was at 131, up from 122 in 1990, with forty-eight voting members, up from forty-four, and total membership at 203, up from 191 the previous year.¹⁵

In January of 1992, Prince of Peace did a self-study, rating areas of congregational life, and asking for suggestions on how they could improve. Worship received a high rating, but people suggested that including some children's services might make it even better. Christian education received a high rating. Half of congregation was involved with adult bible class and there was a high attendance average for bible class. It was suggested that forming cell groups within the congregation to do home bible study groups, could help to get even more people involved in bible study. The leadership of Prince of Peace received a medium rating. It was suggested that the team's planning and ability to work together needs to improve. The planning at Prince of Peace received a low rating. People felt they needed better strategy in planning to allow enough time to put plans into action. The outreach ministry of Prince of Peace received a medium rating. Prince of Peace's mission contributions were said to be on target and they were said to do a good job of friendship witnessing. But it was felt that in general their evangelism program could improve. The outward appearance of Prince of Peace received a medium rating. The lack of room for Sunday school was considered to be a major weakness, and the crushed rock drive was hard to walk on.

Pastor Broehm and the church council attempted to make use of the feedback they received from the survey. In order to improve the planning of the church council, Pastor Broehm asked that the heads of each area of ministry turn in written reports. He asked that each area of ministry also set intermediate and long-term goals so that the direction of each committee could be clearly seen. Pastor also began doing children's sermons. The evangelism committee

¹⁵ These statistics, and all following, are from the church council minutes for the respective month. These are from January of 1992.

discussed doing follow-up phone calls to people on the prospect list and to visitors, in order to keep more regular contact with visitors. They considered reviving the greeter program to welcome visitors. And they began neighborhood canvassing work. Prince of Peace also worked to improve building appearance by putting lighting in the parking lot, beginning a chapel renovation project, and looking into getting a computerized music system. The building committee explored the idea of expanding the classrooms and the parking lot, and updating the sewer system. Prince of Peace looked to improve communication in the congregation by assigning certain elders to certain members, so that each member had an elder they could go to for information.

As Prince of Peace was attempting to address some of the weaknesses that were brought to its attention in the preceding year's self-reflection, they also considered the possibility of becoming self-supporting. And in January of 1993 Prince of Peace became totally self-supporting. It was "no longer a mission congregation, but a congregation with a mission."¹⁶

In their first year as a self-supporting congregation, Prince of Peace began to look more seriously at facility expansion. Their building committee considered what Prince of Peace needed now and in the future. In October, they hired an architect to come up with a master site plan for Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran church.

It was also a year for change in worship. The congregation began to offer the Lord's Supper in individual cups for the first time. They decided to implement Christian Worship into their worship as well. They followed the WELS program of introducing Christian Worship to the people and on November 28th, 1993 Prince of Peace used Christian Worship for the first time.

¹⁶ Church Council meeting minutes from January, 1993

In 1994, Prince of Peace began preparations for their fifteenth anniversary service scheduled for May 22nd. The building committee began to press the architect to get a preliminary drawing of the church ground improvements ready for the anniversary service. In those plans, Phase one was a 4,400 sq. ft. addition. There was also a large sanctuary, expanded parking lot, and enough classroom space for a Christian Day school in the plans. They celebrated their fifteenth anniversary, taking a step back to thank God for all of His blessings in the last fifteen years, and praying for many more in the years to come.

The congregation was also continuing to work on some of the weaknesses of Prince of Peace. One way they did this was by hiring their first church secretary to handle the increasing amount of office work. They attempted to address the communication difficulties within the congregation by having "Sunday Dinners". These were dinners in which the visitors would have a chance to meet the other members. And it provided a type of open forum in which people could ask questions about what was going on in Prince of Peace. In order to provide a dinner, eight to ten communicant members were asked to provide a light supper one night a month. They were also thinking of having a "Sunday Meeting Night" where all or at least many of the meetings would take place on one night a month. This way Pastor Broehm could attend them and not have to dedicate so many nights to meetings.

In 1995 Prince of Peace saw its first major building project come closer to fruition when they received an estimate stating that adding forty-three parking spaces, restrooms with a janitors closet, a septic tank, a classroom with a divider, and thirty-four gravel parking spaces would cost \$134,640. They approved a topographical survey by the architect to take the first step in putting this plan into action.

In June of 1995 Prince of Peace was about to move into another era of its existence. Pastor Broehm received a call to serve at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Manitowoc, WI and the next month Pastor Broehm accepted the call. The farewell dinner for Pastor Broehm was held in August, as Prince of Peace prepared for its first vacancy since its incorporation.

The Lord had certainly blessed Prince of Peace under the leadership of Pastor Broehm. He left a congregation of 232 souls, 148 communicants, and fifty-three voters. When he arrived in the Augusta area, Prince of Peace had forty-six baptized souls and nineteen communicant members. They now averaged over 100 people per worship service, up considerably from their worship service attendance average of forty-four, which they had when Pastor Broehm arrived. They had purchased a church facility and property, had built a parsonage, and enjoyed countless hours of fellowship, fun, and study of God's word together. Most importantly, Prince of Peace enjoyed sixteen years of working together for the glory of God, growing and going with the Word of God.

From September 1995 until May of 1996 Prince of Peace had a vacancy. They were served by Pastor Daron Lindemann during this time. The congregation had a chance to become more involved in the work of the congregation and to take ownership of it. They began to work on connecting the church to the city sewer system. Because of the cost, they put off some of their building plans until a later date. They also began every member visits to try to regain some who hadn't been in church for a while, and to keep the lines of communication open with those who had.

In May of 1996 they called a Seminary graduate. Pastoral candidate Ben Golisch received and accepted the call to serve as pastor of Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran church.

On July 7th, 1996 Prince of Peace held Pastor Golisch's installation. There were 151 people in attendance as they joined to praise the Lord for bringing another shepherd to Prince of Peace.

Upon Pastor Golisch's arrival, Prince of Peace was energized to continue on under the leadership of another pastor. Pastor Golisch wrote, "There was a renewed excitement in the congregation after ten months of vacancy—their first vacancy ever."¹⁷ They continued doing every member visits, attempted to reorganize and review the files in the church office, and looked to finishing the sewer system repairs with paving the parking lot next in mind.

In September, Pastor Golisch started traveling to Savannah once a month to help with a possible exploratory congregation. In Savannah, twenty-nine people attended the first service that Pastor Golisch held there, and they continued to work together to start another mission in the beautiful state of Georgia.

Prince of Peace worked to reestablish contact with those members who had strayed either before or during the vacancy. They attempted to set up a system where anyone who missed worship more than three weeks in a row would be contacted. They also sent out mailings to inactive members. Unfortunately, many of their efforts to reestablish contact with members of Prince of Peace were unsuccessful and in January of 1997, fifteen people were released from membership. In April of that year, ten more people were either released or removed from membership.

But Prince of Peace went faithfully on and considered reestablishing the Lutheran Boy Pioneers program, the men's fellowship group, and discussed starting a church sponsored softball team. There was a church campout in June of 1997. There were also several prospects identified in the October canvassing efforts.

¹⁷ E-mail interview conducted with Pastor Golisch in December of 2003

In January of 1998, they had finished one part of the parking lot project, and received sufficient funds to continue the next part of the parking lot project. In February, Prince of Peace numbered 170 baptized souls and 115 communicant members. They began to send out bulk mailings for the Lenten season and prepared for the arrival of the Michigan Lutheran Seminary choir in April, and the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary choir coming to Irmo, South Carolina on April 15th. In May of 1998 Prince of Peace got together a working web page to begin their own “electronic outreach”¹⁸.

In July of 1998 canvassing efforts continued, and Prince of Peace requested a Travel Canvass Witness team to come and aid them in their canvassing efforts. They received a group of six college students to help canvass in the last week of February 1999. The TCW team knocked on 1,066 doors, made 429 personal contacts, found seventy-five prospects, and fifteen hot prospects. They also completed a phone follow-up to those prospects. And because of the new list of prospects found, Prince of Peace purchased a prospect list software program to handle the new wave of prospects.

They turned their attention inward as well, and did a congregational survey, receiving sixty responses. The surveys showed that many people in the congregation felt that outreach was going well, and that potential lay in the congregation to do even more. This was seen as a real strength for the congregation. The congregation’s ability to meet the spiritual needs of adults and youth in bible class, as well as in worship, was also ranked fairly high. The area in which it seemed Prince of Peace could use improvement was in reaching inactive members. The survey also sparked talks about starting some type of childcare center at Prince of Peace.

In April of 1999, a committee was formed to plan the twentieth anniversary of Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran church. For the celebration, the members of Prince of Peace put

¹⁸ www.consentric.net/~wels

together a congregational time-line, brief history, and photo albums full of pictures from events over the years. There were 106 that attended the worship service, and 134 people attended the dinner.

Prince of Peace continued the summer, by sending five of their youths to Ottawa, Canada for the Wisconsin Synod International Youth Rally. They went to Atlanta on July 6th to board a bus driving straight to Ottawa. They went with 126 teens from the South Atlantic District, from eighteen Congregations, and a total of four motor coaches to attend the youth rally in Ottawa. They had a great time and enjoyed fellowship with their brothers and sisters in the faith from around the world.

After the twenty-year anniversary service, Prince of Peace once again turned its eyes to the future. The outreach committee came up with a four-month plan, in which they planned to continue with the thirty-six hour visit program, send out mass mailings, and continued to follow up on an ever-increasing prospect list. The building committee moved forward by obtaining drawings for another phase of construction, this time looking to add on bathrooms, and much needed classroom space. They also started a new personal devotion push to get every member of Prince of Peace to read the entire New Testament between January 1st and March 31st. By the end of 1999 Prince of Peace had 188 baptized members, 127 communicant members, and fifty-two voters. They averaged ninety-eight people per worship service.

In the year 2000, Prince of Peace continued to reach out to the community and to its own members in whatever way possible, to put the saving message of Jesus Christ into as many hands as possible. Pastor Golisch wrote, "we tried to be 'all things to all men.' We offered little bits to everyone and tried to keep in mind an entire congregation mindset (that there was something for everyone). It was hard, mainly because of numbers. Augusta had many opportunities but no one

thing was dominant. There was nothing that was so compelling that everyone came to it or was attracted to it.”¹⁹

Prince of Peace tried another approach looking into the possibility of running some pre-made WELS commercials before Easter. In March they became a part of a WELS commercial that ran 105 times on TBS, TNT, USA, VH1, and MTV, all before Easter. They also sent out mailings, ran adds, and put up a new sign on the property to invite people from the Augusta area to join them in their celebration of the Jesus’ resurrection.

In April, they posted the preliminary drawing on the bulletin board for the next phase of their construction. In August of 2001, they became a member of the federation of churches for Southern Lutheran Academy, an area Lutheran high school that is still in the development stages.

Pastor Golisch said concerning his time serving Prince of Peace, “There were many devout Christians who loved their Savior and each other, and they were not afraid to express either one. We shared some trials as well as successes. Throughout it all, the Lord was faithful.”²⁰

In twenty years of ministry, the Lord certainly poured out his hand of blessing on Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Lord has given Prince of Peace faithful pastors, dedicated members, a facility in which to worship, and most importantly, a saving message to proclaim to the community and to one another. May the Lord continue to bless Prince of Peace as he has in the past, always pointing them to the salvation that has already been secured for them by Jesus Christ.

¹⁹ E-mail interview conducted with Pastor Golisch in December of 2003

²⁰ E-mail interview conducted with Pastor Golisch in December of 2003