

BUILDING IN GRACE

A History of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
of South St. Paul, Minnesota

By Jeffrey Limpert

Senior Church History
Section A
Prof. E. C. Fredrich

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

Building In Grace:
A History of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
of South St. Paul, MN.

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Acts 20:32

"St. Paul's Farewell to Ephesian Elders"

South St. Paul, Minnesota. This name had always invoked one picture in the mind of this writer and that was, "the stockyards." I grew up along the banks of the Mississippi River about ninety miles south of South St. Paul. Though I lived relatively close to the city and indeed traveled by it numerous times, all that I knew is that it had a large stockyard. The South St. Paul stockyard reports became a daily feature. They were printed in the newspaper, heard on the radio and seen on the local TV newscast. It seemed that South St. Paul's last name was "stockyard".

But yet, I was soon to find out that there was and is more to the city. For on top of western bluffs, that overlook the Mississippi River, is a story of a group of Christians who built a church; a church that was built by the grace of God. The founders of this small group of conservative Lutherans realized that it was only by God's grace that they had come together, so appropriately they named their church "Grace". God was gracious to these people. God's gracious hand can be seen in the building projects that this church has undertaken in its relatively short history. Therefore, in

this paper I would like to make a study of Grace and what makes it special and unique. In order to do this, I will make an examination of its various building projects.

A church of course does not consist in how much property it owns or additions it makes, but in the gathering of men and women who share the same fellowship of faith. Yet, when one looks over the history of a church, its building projects show the fruit of that fellowship. Therefore, this paper is not a paper of only building projects but of the people behind the projects and the faith behind the people and the grace of God which gave them the faith and courage. With this in mind it is appropriate that the title of this paper be "Building In Grace". For ultimately it is by the grace of God that these men and women committed themselves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ just as Paul told the Ephesian Elders to commit themselves to their church.

Building of South St. Paul, Minnesota.

It is important that a person have a knowledge of the city of South St. Paul to fully comprehend the history of Grace. Many factors such as industry, population growth, geography, to list a few played a part in the decisions made around Grace and its future.

In 1837 the Indians signed a treaty to give up all land east of the Mississippi River. This treaty

forced the Kaposia band of Sioux Indians to move to the west side of the Mississippi River where they settled at the foot of the hills. Here they established the village of Kaposia. The word "Kaposia" means "fleet" or "light footed". Kaposia village was not large, but it had a style and friendliness which made it of great interest to many people. Stories of this picturesque settlement traveled as far as England and was a main attraction on steamboat excursions. In 1852 the Kaposia Indians were moved to the Redwood Falls Sioux Agency according to terms of the Traverse des Sioux and Pilot Knob treaties. The fate of the band was to have a sad ending as they blended into the Sioux Nation. Hungered and disillusioned by the white man's breaking of the treaties. They persuaded a reluctant Little Crow to lead his people into one of the largest and bloodiest Indian uprisings in the United States.

With the removal of the Indian population, the vacant Kaposia village was open for settlement in the 1860's and 1870's. Yet it wasn't until the railroad arrived in 1885 that serious thought was given to turning Kaposia village into a modern town. When the Chicago Great Western Railway Company laid their tracks from St. Paul to the Iowa state line, developers eyed the site of the former Indian village as a possible live-stock stop-over to prevent shrinkage of animals on their way to Chicago.

A plot of 260 acres was obtained along the Mississippi River flats. Livestock pens were built and the first shipments were received by rail in September of 1887. The stockyards were funded by the St. Paul Union Stock Yard Company. This was an organization of businessmen of St. Paul organized by president of the Minnesota and Northwestern Railroads, Alpheus B. Stickney. One of those who lent immediate support was the empire builder and railroad tycoon, the Canadian-American, James J. Hill.

This building of the stockyards opened the gate for expansion in the newly organized city of South St. Paul which was officially founded in 1887. The Fowler Brothers of Chicago founded the first meat packing plant. Soon more and more businesses were attracted to South St. Paul to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding city. There soon came real estate offices, banks, railroad car repair, machine shops and many other businesses to support the stockyards. In order to make South St. Paul a more desirable place to live, a great deal of grading was done. Hollows were filled and hills were leveled, changing the geography of the once Kaposia village.

The Mississippi caused a major change in South St. Paul. In 1897 it overflowed its banks, driving out the Fowler Brothers of Chicago and their meat packing plant. The buildings were vacant for a few months, but

then Swift and Company bought them. Swift was to provide even a larger business and more money. The result was more immigrants came to work at the plant. Swifts grew as the major force in the city, holding interests in almost all businesses including the banks and even the fire department. In 1916 another major force came to South St. Paul. This was the Armour and Company who took a place in the growth of South St. Paul by establishing businesses and creating a large job market which immigrants hurried to fill..

Beginning about 1910 the immigration quotas for southern Europe were increased and large numbers of immigrants from the Balkan Countries came to America to find a better life. Most of them were farmers or peasants who had very difficult times supporting their families in the depression ridden countries of Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland and Greece.

Up to this time most of the immigrants that settled in South St. Paul were Germans, Swedes, Englishmen and Irishmen. When the immigrants from southern Europe came to America very few of them could speak English and even fewer could read or write English. They had strong backs, willing hands, and a fervent desire to find a better life for their families. They migrated to the coal fields of Kentucky and Illinois, the iron mining country of northern Minnesota and various cities that offered unskilled labor jobs such as those found in packing plants. From 1910 to the beginning of

World War I many Croatians, Serbians, Romanians and Poles settled in South St. Paul to work in the packing plants.

These various ethnic groups brought with them their religions from the old country. The Poles, the Slovians, and the Croatians, who came from northern Yugoslavia, were generally Catholic. The Serbians came from southern Yugoslavia and belonged to the Orthodox church. Meanwhile, the first settlers of German and Swedish background were predominantly of a Lutheran background.

The number of different ethnic groups that settled in South St. Paul can be seen in the number of churches it possesses. The oldest church within the city was South Park Congregational Church, now the Clark Memorial Church. It was organized in 1886, one year before the city of South St. Paul was incorporated. In 1893 St. Paulus Evangelical Lutheran was dedicated and held services in German, Swedish and English. In 1896 the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church was formed and later changed the name to Bethesda Lutheran. In that same year, First Presbyterian and St. Augustine Catholic churches were organized. Other churches organized through the years were Grace Lutheran; St. Stefans Romanian Orthodox; South St. Paul Baptist; Trinity Lutheran and Holy Trinity Catholic (Polish). More recently organized churches include: St. Sava's Serbian Eastern Orthodox, St. John Vianney Catholic;

Apostolic Christian; First Calvary Baptist; Assembly of God; Concordia Lutheran; Gethsemane Baptist. In 1953 St. Paulus and Trinity Lutheran Churches merged to form Lutheran Memorial.

As the stockyards and packing plants grew larger and created more jobs, the churches in turn grew to meet the needs of more families moving into the area. Indeed from a 50 year period, 1910-1960, South St. Paul continued to prosper. The city weathered the depression reasonably well. It had minor set backs of industry fire and more devastating were the floods of the Mississippi River. Yet the industry of South St. Paul continued to grow and supply jobs. But it was basically a one industry town.

On May 29, 1969, the management of South St. Paul's major industry, Swift and Company, announced they would cease operations within six months. This meant a loss of 2,650 jobs, a 22 million dollar annual payroll, and 325,000 dollars in annual property taxes. "It is a black day for South St. Paul," said Mayor Phil Woog. (South St. Paul City Council Minutes)

In response, the city spent millions of dollars to upgrade and remodel the Concord Street area where the packing plants were to attract new industry. The city maintained its fine educational system which had won national awards for quality. It boasted that it was still a city that possessed many advantages to raise a family. The result of this is that South St. Paul

maintains its own dignity and small town atmosphere even though it is only ten minutes from downtown St. Paul, the capital of Minnesota. This is the city and events that took place as Grace began to build. These are the events that shaped the decision it made.

Building Of The Chapel

The newly organized Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States saw the growth of the St. Paul area. The Board of Home Missions in 1919 reported to the Synod the need for pastors to meet what they felt was an area of significant growth. Therefore, in May of 1920, two ministerial candidates were given to the St. Paul area. One of these men, fresh out of the Wauwatosa Seminary, was Rev. C. P. Kock. Reverend Kock was sent to St. Paul where they formed the church, Mt. Olive. The church is still in existence near what today is the state fair grounds. The other recent seminary graduate was the Rev. Arthur W. Koehler. Reverend Koehler was sent to the small but rapidly expanding city of South St. Paul which was near his classmate Reverend Kock.

When Pastor Koehler arrived in South St. Paul he stayed with the Gustav Krueger family, one of the original families to make the request to the Minnesota Home Mission Board. It was out of the Krueger home starting in July of 1920 that Koehler held services.

Pastor Koehler himself did not remain at the Krueger house but soon moved into the home of Paul Oesterreich. It was here that Pastor Koehler met and married one of the daughters of Paul Oesterreich. The need for a parsonage became evident but the need for a church was greater.

In the fall of 1920, it was determined to build a small wooden chapel to serve as a place of worship. The Board of Trustees of the Wisconsin Synod secured a loan for the new mission. The building was quickly erected in order that the group may have a place of worship for Christmas.

On December 19, 1920, with great pride and thankfulness to God, the church held its dedication service. They adopted the name Grace. A name which they felt told the story of their coming together. Six days later 38 persons came together to worship on Christmas. The majority of these people were transferred from other congregations in the area. Yet they proved to be a strong core of believers that looked to God for a blessed future.

This attitude is evident in the establishment of the Sunday School. Pastor Koehler stressed the importance of Christian education to his small mission. This attitude was shared by his congregation. On January 9, 1921 at 9:00 the first Sunday School session took place. There was an attendance of 20 pupils. About half of whom later became Sunday School teachers

themselves at Grace. The first Sunday School collection was 83 cents. This was a generous offering considering the value of money at the time and number of children.

Pastor Koehler served as superintendant of the Sunday School from the beginning until he left. At the very beginning of Sunday School he put into effect the Cross and Crown pin system which is still in existence. Each child entering Sunday School received a pin and after each three months of perfect attendance the child received another, and for a year a gold pin to which can be added a bar for each year of perfect attendance thereafter. The following year Pastor Koehler initiated the Cradle Roll which also is still in use.

In an attempt to build a foundation for Grace to expand on, Pastor Koehler organized the Ladies Aid. This organization from the very start held a prominent position at Grace. It also generated many other organizations to evolve at Grace. The first spinoffs were the Men's Club, Ushers Club and a very active Young People's Society. It is interesting to note that the Sunday School and Ladies Aid were organized before the first congregational meeting on January 30, 1921.

It was at this January meeting the congregation voted to become an officially organized congregation on March 6, 1921. The congregation continued to receive financial aid from the Synod until 1940. It was later that same month on March 26 that the congregation

adopted an official constitution. A constitution which gave the women the right to vote, a very pertinent issue since at that time the 14th Amendment was just adopted in 1920.

The organizers and charter members of Grace are listed as the following:

Ernest Esslenger (President)	August Bortz
Melvin Schofield (Secretary)	Charles Plan
John Hahn (Treasurer)	Mrs. J. O. Hahn
Oscar Nelson (Elder)	Mrs. Paul Oesterreich
Charles Kech (Elder)	Mrs. O. Nelson
Gustav Krueger (Elder)	Mrs. Fred Schulge
George Esslenger Sr.	Agnes Krech

From these small beginnings the congregation began to grow by the grace of God. They looked ahead to the future. Already on November 8, 1921 there was official discussion of a Christian Day School. Also the next year the congregation, on February 7, 1922, officially joined the Wisconsin Synod. That same year on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1922, Grace held its first confirmation. The class had a total of 11 confirmands; 6 boys and 5 girls. That same year they made plans for a parsonage which they finally built in 1923. The parsonage that is still used today.

Grace was not building only inwardly but was very conscientious of reaching out to the community. This was a duty which Pastor Koehler makes mention of in the Church Council, Quarterly and Voters' meetings. In 1926, Grace organized to do a canvass of South St. Paul. They intended to let people know about Grace and the grace of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that

the next such activity would take place exactly 60 years later in 1986.

This group of conservative Lutherans did not just sit back and be happy with their small wooden chapel, but went out into the community. A trait which would dominate Grace as it builds for the future, and God shed his grace on their plans. So greatly was this church blessed that its small chapel became too small. It was too small for large social gatherings. It was too small for the number of children in Sunday School. Now it was even becoming too small for the number of worshipers on Sunday morning.

Building Of The Main Church

Grace was one of the few churches in the area to offer a Sunday School. Soon this church was receiving requests for transportation to the school on Sunday mornings from outside South St. Paul, namely Inver Grove and Church Street District. After this subject was given a great deal of consideration, it was decided in October 1926 to have a chartered bus to cover a certain part of this area. This bus had a regular route which picked up the pupils and brought them to Sunday School and waited until Sunday School was dismissed, when it made the return trip. So successful was this program that Pastor Koehler wrote to the Sunday School teachers:

"This was about the greatest advancement that our Sunday School experienced, for from then on our

church building became too small to accommodate the Sunday School and after a year of this bus service our enrollment was nearing the 200 mark and attendance was usually 75 percent."

It was not only Sunday School that needed the space but the church in general. Also the chapel was showing signs of wear and tear by 1928. It was in need of repair. So in response a special council meeting was called January 26, 1928.

At this special meeting Mr. Mohn of the trustees gave his report on repairs of the present building.

He stated:

"The estimated cost for repairing of the roof and plastering of interior was figured to amount to \$1,300. The estimated cost for repairing of the church throughout, the roof, plastering and restuccoing would amount to \$1,700 to \$2,000."

Mr. Mohn also presented sketches of a possible new church at this meeting.

Also in attendance at this meeting was Rev. Schulze who was a representative of the Synod's Ways and Means Committee. He was asked by the congregation to decide the fate of the present church or "lemon" as he put it. Rev. Schulze advised the congregation that it had at least three options to choose from:

1. Undertake repairs of present church and for-bear the pressing and growing need for more room.
2. Or the standing debt on the old church be paid off, thereby obtaining absolute title to all of our church property and then ask the Synod for aid in erecting a new church.
3. Or make an effort to raise \$5,000 as a special fund for the building of a new church and

continue paying the Synod the annual payments on the present church debt and to go ahead with the erection of the new church.

Rev. Schulze promised that if we decided upon the third plan that he would do all within his power to obtain for us the support and financial aid from the Synod. This was a promise he kept.

On February 6, 1928 at another special voters' meeting it was decided to go along with Rev. Schulze's third plan of building a new church. The special meeting set the desired amount for the new church to be \$20,000. By February 27, 1928 they received pledges of \$3,910 for the new church. Therefore the church opened themselves for bids to build the church. On April 30, 1928 the church accepted the bid of \$26,584.15. This was the lowest bid and was offered by Larsen and Nelson Construction Company out of St. Louis Park.

The old chapel was then sold and moved from the corner of Eighth Avenue and Southview on May 6, 1928. Immediately following, construction on the new church building began. On July 1, 1928 the congregation gathered for a special laying of the cornerstone. While the new church was being built, the congregation held services and Sunday School at the Junior High School.

On October 28, 1928 the new church was dedicated to the glory of God. The Sunday School met at the Junior High gymnasium that Sunday and marched in a double line one block long to the new church building for services and school. The day was observed by three services.

At the 10:45 am. service, the guest preacher was Rev. J. P. Klause of Hankinson, North Dakota. There was a 3:00 pm. service in German with Rev. Johannes Blocher of St. Paul. Finally a 7:45 pm. service was held with Rev. G. A. Ernest of Emmanuel Lutheran Church of St. Paul preaching the sermon. The Ladies Aid, of course, served meals throughout the day in which many from the community took part.

Pastor Koehler on the dedication of this new church gave this description:

"The church is Gothic in design and of brick and tile construction. Floors and roof are supported by steel beams and trusses and iron columns. The entire roof is insulated with Balsam wood. The ceiling is paneled with masonite, a sound absorbing and insulating material. All trusses are cased. The fan system is used to heat and ventilate the building. The basement is fully equipped for social gatherings and entertainments. The Sunday School will occupy the main assembly room and the annex.

The dimensions of the church are 36 x 83 feet and height is 40 feet. The annex is 26 x 40 feet. The reredoses, organ grilles, pulpit, lectern and choir rail were designed by N. Edward Mohn, Architect, and were made by the Stillwater Manufacturing Company. The altar itself has been retained from the former chapel. The pews were designed by the architect and made by Villaume Box and Lumber Company.

The chancel windows depict the Word and the two Sacraments. They were designed by Messrs. Weston and Leighton of Minneapolis. The center chancel window 'The Sermon on the Mount' is a memorial gift of Mrs. E. Metz and her daughter Grayse. The left chancel window, 'The Baptism of Christ' is a memorial gift of Mr. & Mrs. Louis Stebner. The right chancel window 'The Lord's Supper' is a donation on the part of Wm. Cordes, Albert and Olga Forester, Mrs. Jul. Lueck, Paul Oesterreich and Albert Marz.

The light fixtures, carpet and runners are a gift of the Ladies Aid Society. The confirmation class

room was equipped by the Ushers Club. The Young People's Society is gathering funds for a bell, while all the other organizations contributed sums of money to the Building Fund."

Grace grew steadily into the Thirties. The year after its dedication of the church building, the Great Depression hit. Yet Grace weathered the storm as did the packing plants. Rev. Koehler records that the depression is weathered well by God's gracious mercy. The church continues to grow.

The Young People's Society becomes quite active in the 30's. They made use of the new basement to put on a number of plays. They held and performed plays such as: "Such a Girl", "Too Much Varnish", and "Little Mother Baker". They even took their act on the road after receiving permission from the Church Council in 1930. They performed "Too Much Varnish" in Nicollet, Minnesota. Pastor Koehler noted the plays boosted the Young People's fund.

God certainly blessed the congregation as it steadily grew in the 1930's until 1940 when the congregation became self supporting and independent. However, the 1940's brought hardship to this new church.

The first hardship was a hardship that the whole world was facing. That hardship was World War II. Pastor Koehler made the plea in June of 1942 that America would have victory if its churches were not always empty on Sunday. Pastor Koehler in his semi-annual report also states that he keeps regular contact

with all the boys in the service. He even pays for the airmail himself so it gets to them as soon as possible. In 1943 the records show, for example, that in a six month period Pastor Koehler sent 401 letters to 79 men in the military. This did not include the church newsletter, "The Messenger", which also was sent.

Throughout the war the council encouraged the buying of Series F Bonds in the name of the church. The council sent letters to the homes of each member. The appeal is to both God and country.

The next hardship is one that came from within the church. In April of 1945, Pastor Koehler accepts a call to a congregation in Hutchinson, Minnesota. Grace had only known one pastor, a pastor that God had blessed with a church that rapidly expanded with new converts and many transfers from Wisconsin and Missouri Synod churches. A church that certainly showed its name, Grace. Yet Grace was not long without a pastor because in June of that same year Pastor Winfred Schaller was installed as the pastor.

At the first council meeting Pastor Schaller makes two pleas. The first is that thought to a Christian Day School be given and that women's suffrage be eliminated. Pastor Schaller pointed out the scriptural reasons for such action. A vote was then taken to suspend the women's right to vote in church affairs. The issue of changing the constitution was set for the Quarterly meeting on January 21, 1946.

As could be expected, both men and women attended the meeting. Article 6 Paragraph 2 which gave women the right to vote was taken up. The chairman of the meeting stated:

"Since the Word of God is very clear and plain on the matter that women are to be silent in the church and since the Synod as a body has at no time and does not now endorse womens' suffrage in the church a motion is made that this Article be stricken from our constitution."

The chairman then immediately spoke to the women present. He stated that they were not banned from all meetings but encouraged to attend. Needless to say many women found disfavor with the discussion and ultimately with the new pastor.

The feeling of uneasiness culminated in a series of special meetings called for in early January of 1948 by a special council resolution. The first meeting was held at Grace on January 22, 1948. It lasted from 8:15 pm. to 12:05 am. Present at this meeting is Rev. C. Kock who is elected as the presiding chairman of the meeting and Rev. Oscar J. Nauman, Secretary for the visiting Elder of the St. Croix Conference.

The first unfavorable condition mentioned is the attendance which was dropping rapidly.

1943	-	21,869
1944	-	23,626
1945	-	20,671
1946	-	18,715
1947	-	15,038

The reason given by the people in attendance is the pastor's sermons. The complaints range from

manner of delivery to no applications for daily life. At one time during the meeting Rev. Kock drew a sample sermon from Rev. Schaller's file and examined it.

From there the meeting moved on to many areas, including stewardship, social gatherings, Ladies Aid, and deteriorating choir. From reading of the visiting Elder's notes, one can feel the tension of the meeting. A meeting which pitted member against pastor, and even member against member. It was certainly a bleak time for Grace. A time when its strength was being used not in building up but in inward fighting.

These were the feelings expressed by Pastor Kock, the visiting Elder. He gave the recommendation that both the Pastor and members communicate better and work together. Yet this did not satisfy the members of Grace and voted to take the matter to the Minnesota District President, Rev. A. Ackermann. The meeting ended with the visiting Elders being questioned on the subjects of lodges and Scouting and why all pastors do not agree. Chairman Kock finally gave in and advised them to go to the District President if they will not listen to him.

The meeting of district officials was set for April 25, 1948 at 7:30 pm. All officials were in attendance except for the second vice-president, Rev. Arthur Koehler, former pastor of Grace. Pastor Schaller had written a letter of protest about Koehler attending the meeting. In a letter giving his excuse for not

attending he states:

"My record as former pastor in your congregation stands as sufficient testimony before God and man irrespective of what others have tried to inject into this record."

The district meeting was a repeat of the conference meeting. No solutions to Grace's problems were devised. The church began to lose more and more members. Tempers grew as patience weakened. One can see the tension in all parties involved. Pastor Ackermann called for a meeting to be held at Grace at the end of July. Pastor Schaller, upon receipt of the letter, immediately penned back a letter to the President of the district and the President of the congregation for going behind his back. It was a terrible situation. A situation in which there seemed to be no fast solution or easy solution.

Then on September 15, 1948, Pastor Schaller received a call to be President of Winnebago Lutheran Academy located in Fond-du-lac, Wisconsin. He was to replace Prof. E. C. Fredrich. He was granted release of his call on October 3, 1948, which was the following council meeting.

What caused such an undesirable situation to occur? A situation that had lasting scars on this vibrant group of believers. A situation which for a period of four years hindered the building up of Grace.

In examining the many correspondences of the President of the congregation and all the pastors

involved, I've arrived at two reasons. The first reason is the congregation had before only been under one shepherd, Pastor Koehler. The congregation was used to the way he ran the church at Grace. For in the 25 years of existence it was always done the same way. Pastor Schaller, in no fault to himself, walked in on this situation. He, therefore, had an uphill battle to prove himself to a congregation which scrutinized every move. A feeling and attitude Pastor Kock warned the congregation against at a special meeting to avoid.

The other reason is that Pastor Schaller, who in a meeting himself confessed, made bad judgments. No one can deny his basis for pushing a Christian Day School or to deny womens' suffrage. But what one can look at with apprehension is the manner that he undertook. As one parishioner put it in one heated meeting, that he possessed a "superior than thou" attitude. Of course one should not put much stock in that observation, but it shows the feeling of many parishioners. Pastor Schaller may have profited more if he did not in his very first meeting take the womens' vote away, or if he would of gradually worked toward a Christian Day School. In short, it may have been more profitable to educate first then make changes.

Building Again In The 1950's

In his first council meeting in November of 1948, Pastor Albert Eberhart set a tone for his ministry of cooperation. Pastor Eberhart asked that past difficulties be put aside and with God's grace they build for the future. This is exactly what happened to Grace in the 1950's.

Immediately after Pastor Eberhart came and tensions subsided, the congregation focused on ways to bring life to the congregation. One of the ways decided upon was the formation of the Grace Gulld in September of 1949. The Grace Guild was founded for the younger women of the congregation. The main thrust behind the organization was to provide Christian fellowship and activities that would appeal to a younger generation than the Ladies Aid attracted. This group from the start to the present has been a positive and life generating organization in the congregation.

Another piece of evidence that the church was back on the road of building itself up is the organ. Grace had the same organ that it first had in the old wooden chapel. This instrument, needless to say, was worn out from 30 years of use. On January 28, 1951 at 4:00 pm. Grace dedicated its new pipe organ. A dedication service which included these parts, congregational singing, choirs and a mini concert by the famous organist Paul O. Manz. Mr. Manz was organist, choir-master at Mount Olive Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, Director of

Lutheran A Cappella Choir of the Twin Cities and organ instructor at Macalester College of St. Paul.

Yet it was not only a new organization and pipe organ that got Grace back on the track of moving forward. When one looks at the situation, one can see God shed his grace on this congregation. South St. Paul was experiencing a growth spurt. Many men out of World War II looking for jobs were attracted by the many well paying jobs available at the stockyards and packing plants. Also, South St. Paul attracted families to settle in with their low crime and excellent school system. This also meant growth for Grace, rapid growth. Grace was the only conservative Lutheran Church in South St. Paul. Therefore Grace received many transfers not only from other Wisconsin Synod Churches but a majority from Missouri Synod churches. The closest Missouri Synod Church was historic Old Emmanuel, but was in the "country" of Inver Grove Heights and not in the "city".

The result of these conditions was a skyrocketing membership in Church and Sunday School. Sunday School had reached the 500 mark in the early 50's. But when one sees this number of pupils one must remember they were one of the only churches to hold Sunday School in the city. With all this growth, soon more room was needed. So in 1953 the church expanded its facilities. A new classroom and church office was added to the northside of the church. The cost for the addition

was \$15,000. Thus, new space was quickly filled with eager Sunday School children.

The expanding congregation also produced a large amount of work and soon Pastor Eberhart was swamped with responsibilities his predecessor didn't have. So at a church council meeting in 1956 it was decided to hire Mr. Egon A. Banke as a parish worker. He was responsible for catechisms, youth work, and liturgy to name a few duties. It is interesting to note that in 1958 he received a salary of \$317.69 a month with housing and car allowance. This is interesting because Pastor Eberhart received only \$325 per month and some car allowance. Also the house next to the parsonage at 145 8th Avenue was purchased for the parish worker. Today the house serves as the vicarage. No reason was given in any of the council notes why a parish worker was called and not a pastor as was done at neighboring Emmanuel in St. Paul.

God continued to bless Grace in its organization. One organization that grew phenomenally was the church choir. The Grace choir sang in every late service, attended concerts and put on concerts such as "The Messiah", for example, on December 15, 1957. In 1958 the congregation voted and built an upper room designated for the choir at a cost of \$7,000. In all, Grace had four main choirs; preschool, gradeschool, senior high school and adult.

A final factor that the Lord used to show his grace was the radio. During the mid 1950's, Grace's 10:45 am.

service was broadcast live on the local South St. Paul radio station. The lasting result is that congregation still has the unusual times of 7:45 and 10:45 am. for its services. Times that were made because of the radio broadcast.

The 1950's closed with an event that gave the crowning touch to this expanding decade. That crowning touch fell on February 8, 1959 when Grace joined the St. Croix Lutheran High School Association. This was a crowning touch because it showed how Grace had turned around in 10 years from a congregation on a decline to being one of the largest financial supporters of St. Croix Lutheran High School. Grace continues to this day to be one of the top two supporters of St. Croix Lutheran.

Yes, God certainly, by his grace, put Grace back on the road of building itself up. He blessed it through the city's economic and population growth. He blessed it with the ministry of Pastor Eberhart who, even with personal hardship of the death of his spouse, labored faithfully and was not disappointed. Grace certainly lived up to its name in the 1950's because only God's grace can be the answer for such growth.

Building In Spite Of Difficulty--The 60's & 70's

The dawn of the turbulent 60's saw the dawn of a new ministry at Grace. Pastor Eberhart had taken a call out of Grace and on September 12, 1959 was replaced

with Pastor Harold A. Sauer. Grace congregation had taken many large steps of progress in the 50's and looked to do so in the 60's. But the dawn of the 60's was a turbulent time for the Wisconsin Synod and its churches. For it was the time of the break of fellowship between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods.

In 1960, on recommendation by Pastor Sauer, the parish worker program was stopped. Mr. Egon Banke was commended for his years of faithful service to Grace, It was decided to call a second pastor to shoulder the many responsibilities. Pastor Carroll G. Sengbusch was given the call from the assignment committee of the Seminary and began his ministry in July of 1961. Together these two pastors weathered tense times in the church.

These were tense times for the church because if you remember, a large majority of the members were transferred from Missouri Synod churches in the 40's and 50's. Pastor Sengbusch made the rough estimate that about three-fourths were former Missouri Synod members. Grace did lose a number of good families to the relatively new Missouri Synod church, Concordia Lutheran, on the south side of South St. Paul.

Grace did not register an official vote against the break as did its neighbor, St. James of West St. Paul, but it did clearly upset many members. But thankfully the two pastors guided their flock through these difficult years. The Grace congregation that emerged continued to look to God for help and committed

itself to build for the future as they had done in the 20's, 30's and early 40's and especially in the 50's. They were once again not disappointed.

For God blessed Grace even at this time of turbulence. Grace continued to build by the grace of God. It maintained an active Sunday School. Under the supervision of Pastor Sengbusch the Sunday School developed an excellent and large library of films on doctrines and Bible stories. Grace also enjoyed an active youth group, men's club and ladies' organizations.

In 1964 Pastor Sauer accepted a call to northern Wisconsin. The congregation issued three calls but none were accepted. In a congregational meeting it was decided to enter the vicar program. So in 1965, Grace Lutheran entered upon a program that ever since has become a trait of the church. The church has a high regard for its vicar program and takes its responsibility very seriously. The names of the vicars that have served the congregation are the following:

Verne Vops (1965-66)	James Lindloff (1976-77)
John Schroeder (1966-67)	James Frey (1977-78)
Oliver Lindholm (1967-68)	Alan Gumm (1978-79)
John Huebner (1968-69)	Steven Steiner (1979-80)
Kurt Mau (1969-70)	Michael Feuerstahler (1980-81)
Glenn Groth (1970-71)	Dennis Strong (1981-82)
Arthur Koepsell (1971-72)	Richard Warnecke (1982-83)
David Schottey (1972-73)	Jeffrey Bass (1983-84)
Paul Lemke (1973-74)	Kelly Pochop (1984-85)
James Seelow (1974-75)	Jeffrey Limpert (1985-86)
Thomas Wilsman (1975-76)	Mark Anderson (1986-87)

When Pastor Sauer accepted a call out of South St. Paul, he was not the only one to be leaving.

In 1965 there were rumors of the packing plants moving as Armour and Swift planned to move different operations. Yet in spite of this, Grace was finding the church too small for the amount of people attending the 10:45 am. service and Sunday School. So, in October of 1965 Grace held a congregational meeting in which they decided to expand the facilities. A bold move considering the substantial rumors loose in the city. Yet at the annual meeting in January of 1966 a Building Expansion Committee was appointed.

After considering the complexity of many problems involved in providing adequate and suitable facilities, the Building Expansion Committee recommend that professional assistance be used. Therefore, in March of 1966 the congregation employed Behm, Sullivan, and Associates, Architects and Engineers, to prepare a study and plans and to recommend a solution to Grace's problems and needs.

This study was prepared in depth by commencing with church statistics starting with the year 1948 and including membership growth, Sunday School enrollment and growth patterns, baptisms, funerals, collections, contributions, and an evaluation of Grace's property. The conclusion obtained from this study made it possible for the Building Committee to offer its recommendations to the congregation.

The Building Committee recommended to the congregation in July of 1966 a general plan of expansion.

It included a larger kitchen, more storage, increased seating, new entrance, narthex, and classrooms. The eight months following the adoption of the general plan were used to develop the plans and specifications to be followed in construction. In developing the plans, the architectural scheme, color and decor of the present church were followed as closely as possible.

In March of 1967 the plans were ready and the Building Committee made its recommendation. They advised the congregation to separate the expansion program into two phrases. The decision was made to provide the church with an increase in seating capacity first and provide extra classrooms later. The congregation, feeling the end of the baby boom and the uncertainty of the packing plants, went along with the recommendation to not build the classrooms at this time. The plans for a 10 classroom addition on the north end of the church building are still waiting to be used. So bids were let out for the increase in seating, kitchen and entrance after that March meeting. In April a contract was signed with Kraus-Anderson Construction, which submitted a low bid of \$106,900. They began work the next month.

On November 19, 1967, Grace dedicated its brand new facility. Former Pastor Eberhart was guest preacher at the special 2:30 pm. service in which the addition was dedicated to the glory of God.

The final cost of the structure amounted to \$159,000. This final figure included a new central heating plant for \$23,260, a new modern kitchen, padded pews, a courtyard, an expanded narthex and balcony. It also included a northern Italian hand carved statue of Jesus with open arms in the narthex. This statue of Jesus greets all who enter the church. It commands a dominating place in a specially built area. It is there to symbolize to all that Christ is with them.

The spending of \$159,000 is not the amazing or startling aspect of this project. Neither are the lone results, its beauty. What truly was the beauty is that God blessed the people with the courage and means to undergo such an extensive project. The result of the project was the direct result of the grace of God.

Grace did not only look inward, but as in the past continued to reach outward. Pastor Sengbusch saw the need for a church in the fast growing area of Inver Grove Heights. For although Grace strived to serve these people, the distance proved to be a hindrance. Pastor Sengbusch contacted the Home Mission Board of the Synod to seek advice.

The Board requested a canvass of Inver Grove Heights be taken. Pastor Sengbusch and Vicar Huebner organized this survey with the help of many from the Young People's Society. This canvass was conducted in early summer of 1969.

Pastor Sengbusch then compiled the information and held meetings in Grace's basement to plan strategy in forming a new church. They secured a school building on 75th Street in Inver Grove Heights for Sunday worship. Here Pastor Sengbusch served as the coordinating pastor. He, in turn, secured Pastor William Staab, a teacher at St. Croix Lutheran High School, as the Sunday preacher. Once the small mission was started and on its feet, Grace continued to assist but no longer became involved with decision making. The mission is now a church which is starting to build a new school. The church is called Shepherd of the Hills.

This active role in starting of Shepherd of the Hills shows how Grace used its blessings to further the cause of the Gospel even though the future looked bleak. For the rumors that had been spreading in South St. Paul came true and the meat packing plants started closing down. This action cost the congregation the jobs of about half its members. Yet, while the times were lean, Grace continued to grow in size. The congregation, as shown in the starting of Shepherd of the Hills, never lost sight of its purpose to spread the Good News. God rewarded their faithfulness by building them up with his grace and seeing them through this turbulence of the 60's and early 70's.

In the 70's two new organizations were started at Grace. One of these organizations was the Lutheran Girl and Boy Pioneers. It was designed to help these young

people to grow spiritually and also respect God's creation. They were started in 1973. The following year the other new organization was created. The new organization was called the Golden Agers. Grace, at this time, was finding more and more of its members reaching retirement so it wanted to serve them also. The Golden Agers is open to any member who is 60 or older. They have meals in the church or a restaurant once a month. They travel to different events. They also deal with topics of concern to their age group.

Socially, economically and politically the 60's and 70's were turbulent years. But Grace continued to build for the future. The addition added on the church in 1967 is a memorial to the congregation's trust in God's grace. For during this time, the congregation did not only make a physical addition but followed God's command to build spiritually. This is seen from the break with the Missouri Synod to the start of Shepherd of the Hills. Grace was building with the grace of God.

Building In The 1980's And For The Future

On the 60th Anniversary of the organizing of the church, it became debt-free for the first time. It was March 1, 1981 that Grace held a celebration of the burning of the mortgage. The congregation worked hard through the 60's and 70's to get out of debt and they, by the grace of God, made it.

Now that the congregation was in a debt-free status, they could afford to make money needed for improvements. These improvements included energy conservation projects such as lowered ceilings, insulation, FM radio broadcast of service for the hearing impaired, improved office equipment such as a computer to name a few. It also included art work, which was a one of a kind carved statue from Italy, a basement wall mural and new stainglass windows. Grace has built itself up to a very modern equipped church to serve its people but keeps the dignity of its heritage.

The 80's also saw the emergence of two more organizations to help build its people up. In 1983 the Young Adult Group was founded for single college age members. The second was the Young Couples Club founded in 1986. Both organizations deal with the certain problems of their group such as family life, financial problems, etc. The purpose is to give these young people clear Biblical direction.

All the groups played a large role in a 1986 canvass of South St. Paul. This was in connection with a Mass Media campaign called Gospel Outreach '86. Grace in this program showed that it wasn't an island by themselves. This is evidence in how every organization took an active role. This included leaflets handed out by the Pioneers to recruitment by the Young People's Society, from lunch by Ladies Aid, to door hangers

stuffed by the Grace Guild. Once again God blessed Grace's work.

What does the future hold for Grace? Grace no longer finds itself in a booming town as when it first started in 1920. It will never see the boom of the 1950's. Yet Grace, by the grace of God, continues to build for the future. It still receives many new members each year through Adult Information Class. It builds for the future through educating its young. Grace provides scholarships for those attending St. Croix Lutheran High School. It pays for the tuition of any of its children who attend one of the three area Christian Day Schools. As a matter of fact, 47% of the 1986 budget went for the building of God's church outside of Grace in such things as the Synod, Missions and St. Croix Lutheran High School. Grace uses God's gifts to build for the future.

Grace's history is filled with many accomplishments as we have seen. I pray that God would continue to move this congregation to go forward. For there is a danger at Grace that plagues many congregations and that is to sit back and take it easy, in other words, maintain the status quo. Grace has never been a congregation of that nature and may it never become one. May it always follow the plan they started with and that is to always move forward by building for the future, building in the grace of God. May it always

be committed to the Word of Grace, as Paul committed the congregation in Ephesus to, so it may continue to build in Grace.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Resources for this paper consisted in a study of:

Letters and Correspondence
Church Council Notes
Quarterly Meeting Notes
Annual Meeting Notes
Various Organizations' Notes
Church Bulletins
Personal Interviews

The history of South St. Paul was drawn from various essays found in the South St. Paul Public Library.

"Now and Then", by J. Robert Stassem, 1958.

"The Birth of a City-South St. Paul to 1910", by Al Someby Sr., 1940.

"A History of Minnesota", by Val Bjornson, 1958.

"Meat and Men in Minnesota", by Charles Bottemiller, 1958.