



**A History of Cross of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
Liverpool, New York**

Modern Christianity 3031

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The Lord is not just the Lord of the church here on earth; he is also the Lord of history. He guides the events of history to accomplish his will and to strengthen, challenge, and grow his people. Evidence of God's guiding mercy is demonstrated in the history of Cross of Christ Lutheran Church located in Clay, New York. Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), recently celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary, and this paper is a brief look at the Lord's blessing hand through those thirty five years.

Cross of Christ (and by extension, the Syracuse area) has faced numerous challenges in the last thirty-five years. One theme, of several, that runs through the numerous interviews and surveys conducted by the author is that the Syracuse area has been a transient area for people and jobs. This is especially true in the earlier history of the church. Heavy industry and manufacturing ruled the day from the 1970's to the early 1990's in the greater Syracuse area.

Syracuse was ideal for these things because it is in ^aprime location in upstate New York. It is in the center of the state and is at the confluence of U.S. Interstates 90 and 81. Several large companies like General Electric, General Motors, Miller, and Carrier Air Conditioning had plants in the area.¹ These industries thrived here until the recession of the late 1980's and early 1990's. Then a combination of the recession and high taxes drove the industries away to the west and to the south where taxes and labor were cheaper.²

Now, the area seems to have stabilized a bit after the ups and downs of the manufacturing boom and decline. Lockheed Martin does still run a plant in the area despite most of the rest of heavy industry leaving the area. There have, however, been small companies that have sprung up.³ And the Syracuse area is also the center of major hospital care in upstate New York, and as a result many people

¹ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

² (Toensing 2010)

³ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

also have employment in the healthcare industry. Finally, Syracuse University and the government round out the list of major employers.⁴

Lutheranism does not have a very strong presence in the area of upstate New York. The presence it does have there is predominantly represented by liberal churches that are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Of note, there is one Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregation, Trinity Lutheran, in the area. This church experienced a period of steady growth from the 1950's until the 1970's.⁵

The Assembly of God's New York District office is located right next door to the property of Cross of Christ.⁶ There are also a few other denominations in the area, such as Baptist and Roman Catholic to name a couple. The area primarily possesses an Irish and Italian Catholic religious heritage.⁷ The area is predominantly Caucasian, but the fastest growing minority groups are East and South Asians from India, Pakistan, China and Korea.⁸

This is the backdrop of Cross of Christ and the cultural and social identity of some of her members. Cross of Christ has experienced several highs—highs that include its inception, calling of the first pastor, buying a parsonage, buying land for a church, building a Worship Education Fellowship (WEF) unit, daughtering one congregation in Rochester, New York, and looking at daughtering a second in Watertown, New York.

The hardest and lowest point of the congregation is "The Vacancy" as it is referred to by the members of Cross of Christ. "The Vacancy" was the period from April 24, 1995 until July 24, 2005 that Cross of Christ was without a full-time pastor. The members of Cross of Christ persevered through this

⁴ (Toensing 2010)

⁵ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

⁶ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁸ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

hard time by conducting services every week and on holidays and by holding Bible class and Sunday school regularly. All of these efforts were led by dedicated lay leaders and visiting pastors.

Organization

The history of Cross of Christ really began in the late 1960's. Donald and Evelyn Barg were two of the founding members. They both grown up in the Wisconsin Synod but moved from place to place because Don worked for General Electric in the radar department. They ended up in Syracuse in the late 1960's and started looking for churches in the area.⁹

They joined Trinity Lutheran, the LCMS church in the area, but were alarmed by the increasingly liberal stance that the Missouri Synod was taking on fellowship.¹⁰ Most alarming to them was the fact that the Missouri Synod declared fellowship with the American Lutheran Church in the summer of 1969. The Bargs began to search for a new church home and came into contact with two other Wisconsin Synod families who were in the Syracuse area.

In 1970, the Bargs and the other two families met with pastors Norm Berg and Daniel Gieschen. These two men were representatives of the Wisconsin Synod Board for Home Missions (BHM). Also at the meeting was Erich Waldek. Waldek was pastor of the Wisconsin Synod church in Clifton Park, New York. These men looked at the feasibility of establishing a congregation in the Syracuse area because the Wisconsin synod's policy for establishing churches at the time was to establish churches where there were WELS' members already present.¹¹

Unfortunately, the decision was made that the WELS would refrain from establishing a mission in Syracuse at that time. Despite the potential for success, two of the other "foundational" families were

⁹ (E. Barg 2010)

¹⁰ (E. Barg 2010)

¹¹ (E. Barg 2010)

victims of the transient culture of Syracuse and were moving out of the area because their jobs were being relocated.¹² The idea of the WELS moving back into Syracuse was taken off of the table until 1974.

The Bargs were still looking for a church home when they spotted an advertisement in the local paper. The ad was inviting anyone looking for a confessional Lutheran church body to a service. The advertisement was placed by a man named Kenneth Becker. Becker's own words describe the situation the best,

Regarding my involvement in the start of the congregation my employer (Miller Brewing Company) transferred me to New York as the Engineering supervisor for the construction of a new brewery in Fulton. In August 1974 we moved into a new home in Baldwinsville.

At that time there were no WELS churches in the area and our Pastor said the Mission Board was interested in doing some exploratory work in the Syracuse area. Some way he arranged for Synod to begin some exploratory work in the area then and they arranged for a pastor to serve us. So began what we called the Syracuse Mission.

To start we placed ads in the local newspapers and the Northwestern Lutheran and invited interested persons to attend a meeting at our house which concluded that there was a desire to continue.

The first exploratory services were held in the family room of our home in Baldwinsville shortly thereafter. I'm not sure of the attendance at those first services, about 10 – 12. It was enough to fill all our chairs and some sat on the steps leading up to our kitchen. Most of those attending were from area LCMS congregations that were looking for a more conservative church.¹³

A few of the people who were at this first meeting included: members of the Becker family, the Vernon Kompe family, the Paul Hahm family, the Barg family, Merlyn and Trudy Breiland, and some others.¹⁴ This service took place in December 1974. Pastor Waldek led and conducted this service. Becker remembers the services in his home,

¹² (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

¹³ (Becker 2010)

¹⁴ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

I don't recall his name but the pastor (Waldek) would fly from in from Schenectady (Albany area) to conduct the services and then fly back on a later flight the same evening. We had no supplies so he brought a cross and communion wine and communion ware along. Our first altar was my wife's sewing machine covered with a table cloth and the cross the pastor brought along. We had music accompaniment using a keyboard that the Hahm family (a WELS family) brought with them from Rochester for each service.¹⁵

Because there was a great enough interest, these founding families sought a more accommodating facility in which to worship. The first location found to hold the services was a Holiday Inn located on Buckley Road. The first service at this facility was conducted on January 12, 1975 by pastor Waldek. Becker recalls, "After several services we started worshiping in a rented meeting room at the Holiday Inn in Syracuse which continued up to the time we left the area in August of 1975 when I was again transferred."¹⁶

Pastor Waldek recalls that it was, "...a highlight of initially servicing a dedicated group in homes and planning to organize a congregation. Depending on a plane from Albany to Syracuse each Sunday morning after Bible class and worship in Clifton Park, NY. Having a plane hold for me at times was scary when I was late." [sic]¹⁷ The plane that he would ride in was a Mowhawk single propelled plane.¹⁸

A man named Bert Toensing arrived in the Syracuse area in 1974 after helping to open the WELS church, St. John's, in Antigua. Because of his work in Antigua he knew WELS president Oscar Naumann and called him and asked him if there were any WELS churches in the area. Naumann informed him that there were not, but that there were a couple of Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) churches to the east of Syracuse.¹⁹

These ELS churches, however, were forced to close because of factions in the congregation, and the Toensing family was stuck continuing their search for a new church home. They joined the group of

¹⁵ (Becker 2010)

¹⁶ (Becker 2010)

¹⁷ (Waldek, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

¹⁸ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

¹⁹ (Toensing 2010)

WELS people that were forming in Syracuse.²⁰ The small group kept worshiping regularly in the Holiday Inn, and on November 15, 1975²¹ they were granted mission status by the WELS. This enabled the group to call a pastor. They called a graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary named Kenneth Kappel.

Cross of Christ

Kappel arrived and was installed on July 11, 1976.²² A month later the name "Cross of Christ" was officially selected as the name of the group that was forming and meeting.²³ Cross of Christ adopted its church charter on September 12, 1976.²⁴ The process for this charter and constitution to be ratified and accepted by the WELS at large led to discussions with the Michigan District constitution committee.

The dialogue between the two groups provides a glimpse into the fascinating window of what it takes for a congregation to be adopted into the WELS. Copies of one edition of the early forms of the constitution and the correspondence by Michigan District constitution committee chairman Pastor John Brenner have been attached at the end of the document as appendices.

The members of Cross of Christ were authorized to look for land in May of 1977.²⁵ The congregation was officially incorporated into the WELS on June 5, 1977, and on June 19, 1977 the services moved from the Holiday Inn to the Penn-Can Mall.²⁶ The Lord was blessing the efforts of the members of Cross of Christ.

Evelyn Barg shared some memories about the Penn-Can Mall. She recalled that the mall was mostly one floor except for in the middle of the complex. In the middle of the complex there was a second story where there were offices and meeting rooms, and Cross of Christ conducted worship

²⁰ (Toensing 2010)

²¹ (Unknown 2010)

²² (Unknown 2010)

²³ (Unknown 2010)

²⁴ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

²⁵ (Unknown 2010)

²⁶ (Unknown 2010)

services in one of these meeting rooms. She said, "There was a pet store in the mall too and the dogs in the pet store were rather noisy."²⁷

The congregation continued to move forward. On December 15, 1978 they purchased the first (and current) parsonage at 4276 Gemini Path, Liverpool, New York.²⁸ During this time Cross of Christ served more than just the Syracuse area. Some of the members of Cross of Christ were still coming from Rochester, New York, and as a result mid-week Lenten services were started on May 7, 1979 at the Hamilton Nursing Home in Rochester.²⁹

A little over two months later, May 13, 1979, the WELS gave permission for the establishment of a preaching station in Rochester.³⁰ These services were held weekly at the Greece YMCA. Paul Hahm recalls,

From its beginning in spring 1979 to present, we have been worshipping at Prince of Peace in the Rochester area. Prior to that, we worshiped at Cross of Christ from its beginning in 1975. This was a 110 mile trip for my family from our home in Hilton, NY (NW of Rochester). My first council position was treasurer at Cross of Christ. I currently serve as president and one of the elders at Prince of Peace. Prince of Peace is on the SW side of Rochester and about 28 miles from our home.³¹

Prince of Peace is still a beacon of hope for the WELS in the northwestern part of New York. The fact that it remains to this day is a testament to both the Lord's gracious and guiding hand and also to the dedication of the first members of Cross of Christ. Hahm shares the fact that the members of Cross of Christ possess the same mission zeal ^{as} that the North Atlantic District of the Wisconsin Synod share.

It may be interesting to note that pastors from WELS congregations founded in the east helped start WELS congregations to their west. Pastor Karl Gurgel, South Windsor CT, served Faith, Pittsfield MA as they

²⁷ (E. Barg 2010)

²⁸ (Unknown 2010)

²⁹ (Unknown 2010)

³⁰ (Unknown 2010)

³¹ (Hahm 2010)

started up as a WELS congregation. Pastor Paul Kelm from Faith served King of Kings, Clifton Park NY (Albany) as they started up.

Pastor Erich Waldek, from King of Kings served Cross of Christ, Liverpool NY as we started up in Syracuse. Pastor Ken Kappel from Cross of Christ served Prince of Peace as we started up in the Rochester area. And, Pastor Mark Gieschen from Prince of Peace assisted Our Savior in Springville, NY's (small town south of Buffalo, NY) start.³²

During this time Cross of Christ was doing more than just establishing a new congregation Rochester. In February 1979 the location for worship services was moved once again. This time it moved from the Penn-Can Mall to the Metropolitan Water Board building at 4170 Route 31 Clay, New York.³³ The agreement for lease was for one year. It was to last from March 1, 1979 to February 29, 1980.³⁴

Meanwhile, the members were conducting a search for a purchase of land. A location of three acres at the corner of County Route 57 and Soule Road was purchased in May 1979.³⁵ Mike Terpstra, current congregational president, wrote about the location, "It was a corner lot on a growing intersection. It provided great visibility to a vast amount of people."³⁶

The congregation chose an architect and a general contractor in the fall of 1979.³⁷ The architect presented his plans for the new Worship Education Fellowship unit (WEF unit) on January 6, 1980.³⁸ The ground for the new building was broken on August 17, 1980³⁹ with a target date of occupancy around February of 1981.

Unfortunately, however, the contractor could not meet the original target date of February 1, 1981.⁴⁰ This led to a petition being written for the continued use of the Water Board Building until June 29, 1981. The contractor had given a verbal promise of the new WEF facility being ready for Easter of

³² (Hahm 2010)

³³ (Unknown 2010)

³⁴ (Gay 1979)

³⁵ (Unknown 2010)

³⁶ (Terpstra 2010)

³⁷ (Unknown 2010)

³⁸ (Unknown 2010)

³⁹ (Unknown 2010)

⁴⁰ (D. Barg, Letter to the Metropolitan Water Board 1981)

that year, but the members of Cross of Christ requested that they be allowed to use the Water Board building well into June in recognition that the WEF unit still may not be finished by Easter.⁴¹

The contractor kept the verbal promise and, as a result, the first service held in the new WEF unit was on Easter, April 19, 1981. The congregation held a dedication service on May 3, 1981.⁴² Pastor Kappel accepted a call to the Milwaukee area in 1984, and his last Sunday serving at Cross of Christ was February 26, 1984.⁴³ Kappel recalled his time at Cross of Christ,

I was their first pastor, arriving in 1976. It was my first call after graduating from Sem. There was a nucleus of people. Some disgruntled LCMS members and some transplanted WELS people. The family that really pushed for the start of the mission had already been transferred by the time of my arrival. I would say that there was a 50/50 mix of transplanted mid-westerners and native New Yorkers.

It took us about 3 or 4 years to get on our feet. At that time the Syracuse area was very transient. Companies were transferring workers in and out like crazy. God always found a way to bless the congregation, though. A big help was finally getting our own place of worship.

The location was near a developing area that had a lot of traffic passing by everyday. Future plans showed that the area would be built up in a big way and at the time the price of the property was not bad. I left Cross of Christ, Liverpool in 1984. I still am very close with the members who joined while I was the pastor.⁴⁴

The Middle Years

The congregation called Erich Waldek to serve as vacancy pastor on February 12, 1984.⁴⁵ They petitioned the assignment committee for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and were granted a candidate for the holy ministry named Robert Duehlmeyer. Duehlmeyer arrived and was ordained and installed

⁴¹ (D. Barg, Letter to the Metropolitan Water Board 1981)

⁴² (Unknown 2010)

⁴³ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

⁴⁴ (Kappel 2010)

⁴⁵ (D. Barg, Letter to Erich Waldek 1984)

into office on July 29, 1984. The preacher for the service was Allen Lindke of Divine Word Lutheran Church, Nepean (Ottawa), Ontario.⁴⁶

Duehlmeyer served until May 28, 1987 when he accepted a call to a congregation in Michigan.⁴⁷ Duehlmeyer recalled, "Cross of Christ had a good base of people. The biggest problem was the transient nature of the area. People would be there for about 3-5 years and then move."⁴⁸ The transient nature of the congregation continued to haunt its ability to grow and sustain stability.

The congregation appealed once again to the seminary for a graduate and was assigned Jonathon Bitter. Bitter arrived and was installed on July 12, 1987. The preacher for the service was his father pastor Donald Bitter of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.⁴⁹ Bitter's years at Cross of Christ presented many challenges to not only Cross of Christ but also to the entire Syracuse region.

A recession hit the United States in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This recession hit especially hard in Syracuse because the local economy was dependent on heavy industry and industry slowed down economically at this time. The recession, combined with the high taxes of New York State, drove industries away to the west and to the south where it was cheaper to do business.⁵⁰

Cross of Christ suffered terribly during these years. Pastor Bitter remarked, "During my years at Cross of Christ we had a good number of people who moved away from the area for employment reasons. I recall that we "lost" (transferred) 24 souls one year. That was a big blow to a small congregation."⁵¹ Bert Toensing emphasized that in one month 13 of the 52 communicant members of Cross of Christ transferred to different churches.⁵²

⁴⁶ (Waldek, Installation Letter 1984)

⁴⁷ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

⁴⁸ (Duehlmeyer 2010)

⁴⁹ (Waldek, Cross of Christ Bulletin 1987)

⁵⁰ (Toensing 2010)

⁵¹ (Bitter 2010)

⁵² (Toensing 2010)

Cross of Christ was not able to rebound from the crippling loss of people quickly and another blow came when the Wisconsin Synod was no longer able to lend financial support to Cross of Christ. Bitter stated, "Finally, after 20 years of synod subsidy (1975-1995), the mission board withdrew funding and the congregation was no longer able to support a full time pastor."⁵³

Bitter commented that one of the biggest challenges he faced at Cross of Christ was, "During my years it was members moving away due to changes in employment. While we did gain new members from the community, the growth was not fast enough to offset the transfers. We never really broke into the community in a big way. I always felt there was great potential in that location and was hopeful that at some point things would take off."⁵⁴ Bitter accepted a call to Illinois and his last Sunday was April 23, 1995.⁵⁵

The Vacancy

The members of Cross of Christ were faced with a challenging decision: Close because they had no money or continue to "get by" in whatever way possible. The congregation decided that they wanted to make a go of it and see how the Lord would bless their efforts. They first called Adam Horneber to be vacancy pastor and called Erich Waldek to serve a semi-retirement call. Waldek accepted and was installed as a retirement pastor on July 30, 1995.⁵⁶

Pastor Waldek served this retirement call for two years until he requested that he be granted retirement.⁵⁷ The congregation continued to meet without him. Evelyn Barg recalled that they would put advertisements in the Northwestern Lutheran to invite any pastors visiting the Syracuse area to stop and preach to them.⁵⁸

⁵³ (Bitter 2010)

⁵⁴ (Bitter 2010)

⁵⁵ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

⁵⁶ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

⁵⁷ (D. Barg, An Introduction to the Cross of Christ Evangelical Church (WELS) of Liverpool, New York 2000)

⁵⁸ (E. Barg 2010)

Barg recalls that numerous pastors did. Pastor Tom Kraus even came and spent the season of Lent and some of Easter with the congregation in 1998.⁵⁹ The congregation was given a grant that permitted retired missionary Del Kannenberg to serve in Syracuse from June of 2001 till the fall of 2002.⁶⁰ When pastors were not available to help out and lead services, the congregation would try and watch videotaped sermons or have someone read sermons that a pastor had written.⁶¹

Bert Toensing recalled that the congregation met almost every Sunday. They kept a regular Sunday Bible class going, Sunday school and active Vacation Bible School going. They made every effort to continue as a normal congregation, ~~as would~~ except without a pastor.⁶² Mike Terpstra admits that the greatest challenge Cross of Christ ever faced was, "Trying to maintain a congregation without a full time pastor."⁶³

The land that Cross of Christ is located on drew the attention of some developers in the area. The first one was in 2001 by Hess (a filling station company). Hess was unable to change the zoning laws of the city and as a result the deal fell through.⁶⁴ The second group was a drug store chain named Eckerds (since bought out by Right-Aid) and they came forward in 2003. They offered 1.6 million dollars to purchase the land but that deal fell through as well because of the same zoning problems.⁶⁵

Pastor Jon Bitter shared about "the vacancy" as it is called, "I believe it was challenging for the group. But they stuck it out. Kept holding services and tried to reach out as well as they could under the circumstances. I was impressed at how many of the members who were there when I left continued to attend and serve throughout those vacancy years."⁶⁶

Restart

⁵⁹ (Bassett 2010)

⁶⁰ (Bassett 2010)

⁶¹ (Bassett 2010)

⁶² (Toensing 2010)

⁶³ (Terpstra 2010)

⁶⁴ (Bassett 2010)

⁶⁵ (Toensing 2010)

⁶⁶ (Bitter 2010)

In the fall of 2004 the North Atlantic District of the WELS started looking at mission possibilities inside of the district and Cross of Christ was a possible candidate. Through careful work by Steve Neumann, Cross of Christ was granted mission subsidy.⁶⁷ An unusually large class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary brought the possibility of some graduating seniors going without calls. This situation, combined with new types of funding, allowed Cross of Christ to be granted restart status for five years.⁶⁸

Candidate Jeremiah Gumm was assigned out of the seminary in May 2005. He arrived and was installed at Cross of Christ on July 24, 2005. His father Alan Gumm of Hope Lutheran Church, West Chicago, Illinois served as preacher. Faithful vacancy pastor Erich Waldek served as liturgist.⁶⁹ The long vacancy was over at last and Cross of Christ once again had a pastor.

Pastor Gumm remarked that one of the most necessary things he needed to do was to begin teaching and instructing the congregation. Some issues that need a pastor's constant attention and care—such as fellowship issues and communion issues—were addressed.⁷⁰ Cross of Christ was energized by the fact that a full time pastor was now there and could help lead them in a positive direction.

One major obstacle that faced Cross of Christ was that they were denied a loan from the WELS church extension fund.⁷¹ They were going to use the loan to finance some of the ministry that was going to take place after the restart. Gumm said that it seemed like a dire situation but that it changed when he had the opportunity to take a Winterim class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 2006.⁷²

One of the classes that Gumm took was a course on serving the military.⁷³ He recognized that there was an opportunity to serve Fort Drum which is located near Watertown, New York—about 75

⁶⁷ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁶⁸ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁶⁹ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Bulletin 2005)

⁷⁰ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷¹ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷² (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷³ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

miles to the north. He took full advantage of this opportunity and now they are holding services twice a month. Cross of Christ's desire to daughter a congregation is coming forth again!

Cross of Christ has been blessed in the five years since the restart. They originally had a plan to start with a subsidy of \$50,000 and decrease it by \$10,000 each of the five years.⁷⁴ Pastor Gumm said that though the task has appeared challenging the members of Cross of Christ have met the challenge at every opportunity and are steadily working towards being self sufficient.

Cross of Christ has undergone a bit of a demographics change since the restart too. It has become a younger, family-friendly church. As of June 2010 there are more children under the age of five than there are in grades K-12 combined. There is a tremendous opportunity for growth in the congregation. One of the most important factors is that the Syracuse area is starting to stabilize and people are not as transient as in the past.⁷⁵

Cross of Christ has also started a campus ministry on the campus of the University of Syracuse. They hold Bible study on the campus and do so in the public and invite anyone who is interested to come. Cross of Christ has started a youth group and is looking at starting a Lutheran Pioneers group as well. They are starting a building committee as well because the current WEF Unit is too small for their current needs.⁷⁶

Current membership at Cross of Christ, as of December 5, 2010, stands at 55 communicants and 72 souls, but there are people going through Bible Information Class and will increase the numbers in the near future.⁷⁷ With the Lord's continued blessing Cross of Christ will continue to grow and to be a blessing to upstate New York for years to come.

Reflection

⁷⁴ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷⁵ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷⁶ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁷⁷ (Gumm, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

Cross of Christ has undergone major changes throughout its history. It has faced the challenge of being without a full time pastor for 10 years and survived. It has seen members come and go. Almost 200 communicant members have transferred out of Cross of Christ in its history.⁷⁸ But throughout its history, the Lord's guiding hand has never left the members of Cross of Christ.

It is fitting to let some of the members and important players in the history of Cross of Christ finish this paper. Pastor Erich Waldek said about the members of Cross of Christ, "Remember the faithfulness of most members in continuing to serve all the years of vacancies without full time pastors."⁷⁹

Bert Toensing casts an eye to the future, "The goal of Cross of Christ is to grow to be self supporting. We've been able to hold onto the core membership and get some transfers in and there is hope for the future."⁸⁰

Former member Norm Larsen shared,

Dear Members of Cross of Christ.

We want to praise God with you on your 35th anniversary. We were members in 1980-81 when Norm worked at the FitzPatrick power plant in Oswego. You were meeting in the water works building. We were privileged to be there at your church dedication on May 3, 1981, when Sally sang "Bless this House" and made a framed, quilled cross for the sanctuary. She also made a gold embroidered cloth for covering the communion service ware. Norm was also there on June 2, 1996 when you celebrated 15 years in your church.

Due to the continuing contact through General Electric Company paid trips to Oswego, we still think of Cross of Christ as our "second church home" and, along with our children Ruth and Erik, have special memories of the people there. You opened your hearts and treated our then 15 year old daughter as an adult, which gave her a special feeling of acceptance.

We remember Don & Evelyn Barg, Beth and Charlotte Fitting, Bert &

⁷⁸ (Toensing 2010)

⁷⁹ (Waldek, Cross of Christ Interview 2010)

⁸⁰ (Toensing 2010)

Pauline Toensing and the Terpstra's among others. We're talking history here!! God's blessings to you all on this special day, as He holds you all in His almighty hand, and protects you as on the wings of an eagle.⁸¹

Many thanks are given to the people who helped make this paper possible. Evelyn Barg, Bert Toensing and Richard Bassett for taking the time to talk on the phone. Pastors Bitter, Duehlmeyer, Kappel and Waldek, and Mike Terpstra and Paul Hahm for filling out the surveys. Pastor Gumm for allowing the author to come and scan pictures and conducting a near hour long interview. Finally, and most importantly, the good Lord for preserving everything and everyone involved in this paper. To him be the glory alone.

⁸¹ (Larsen 2010)

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Appendix

Appendix One: Copy of the constitution dated 5/9/77.

Appendix Two: Letter from Ken Kappel to John Brenner dated 9/13/77

Appendix Three: Letter from John Brenner to Ken Kappel dated 10/1/77

Appendix Four: Ministry Plan for Cross of Christ for 2010-2011

Appendix Five: Ground Breaking picture of four

Appendix Six: Ground Breaking service

Appendix Seven: Dedication outside

Appendix Eight: Dedication inside



Ground breaking JUL-AUG 80
Vern Kompe - Brian Salen
Pastor K. Kappel - Bert Toensing





