

BRIEF HISTORY OF GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

In 1972, in an article published by The Central States Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, the writer had this to say about the “young” Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

“From its beginning, this mission church has experienced growth in being able to do things for itself. The ladies of the church designed and made the chancel paraments for all the seasons as well as the large candles on the altar. There are musicians, both vocal and instrumental, which includes five members of the congregation who are capable of playing the organ for worship services. Members of this congregation feel the Holy Spirit is working through their gifts, talents and friendships. The result is constant enrichment and encouragement of each other in the Lord’s work and an increasing sense of mission with respect to the community and the world.”

Even though that description was written thirty-five years ago, the atmosphere of our present day church remains very much the same. This church continues to be

blessed by an abundance of talented people who work together to follow Christ and present His Gospel to their fellow men.

1967 - 1977

It all began with a decision made in the summer of 1965 by the Board of American Missions in the Central States office. Northwest Arkansas was chosen as the location of a mission to be developed by the Lutheran Church in America. The Rev. Stanley Rogge was sent to Fayetteville in August of 1966 as a mission developer. The mission board purchased a parsonage at 920 Overcrest in Fayetteville and acreage for a church at the corner of Rolling Hills drive and Old Missouri Rd.

The first home of the congregation was actually located in downtown Fayetteville at 17 N. Block St. This building had previously been used as the Rockefeller for Governor Headquarters. A steering committee, including Jack Perkins, Wayne Saabe, and Helene Furst, was appointed to make decisions on business matters and served until a permanent Church Council could be elected. In preparation for the first service, an adult and youth choir, under the direction of Meg Rom, began rehearsing, and on December 4, 1966, the first service was held with 108 in attendance. Christmas was celebrated that year with a children's Christmas program and a Christmas Eve service, and on January 8, 1967, Sunday school for all ages was begun. In April of 1967, the services were moved to the Aumick Building at 120 S. East St. where they remained

until the present structure was built. On May 14, 1967, Pentecost Sunday, Good Shepherd was formally organized with 84 baptized members. Pastor Stanley Rogge was installed on September 24, 1967, as the first pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Good Shepherd officially became a member of the Central States Synod of the Lutheran Church in America at its convention in June of 1968. After a great deal of planning, the ground-breaking for the new building took place on October 5, 1969. The church was dedicated in a special service on October 26. Up until this time, the members of Peace Lutheran Church in Rogers were worshiping with the Good Shepherd congregation, but they separated into two churches in January of 1970. During the summer of 1970, the first Vacation Bible School was held with 45 children enrolled.

In August of 1970, Pastor Rogge resigned to accept a call in Salina, Kansas, and the Rev. Harry Allen served as interim pastor until December of that year. The congregation extended a call to Dr. Charles Chamberlin of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. Pastor Chamberlin was installed on January 3, 1971. The congregation celebrated the 5th Anniversary of the church on May 14, 1972 with a pot luck dinner, entertainment and an arts and crafts show.

The young church was beginning to outgrow their new facilities, and after a two-year fund drive and a generous gift of \$6,000, three new Sunday school rooms were dedicated on October 27, 1974. In July of 1975, Pastor Chamberlin suffered a heart attack and laymen and visiting

pastors conducted Sunday services until the pastor was able to return in November of 1975.

Two auxiliary organizations have been active at Good Shepherd since the beginning of its history. The first is our youth group which was organized in December of 1966 and has been active ever since. There were many fund raising projects initiated by the youth to help them fund their trips to Bible camp and to district and national youth gatherings.

The second organization that can trace its roots to the very beginning of the church is the Lutheran Women's group which was organized in October of 1967. The first major project of this group was to design and make the church paraments for all the seasons of the year. The altar guild was also formed at that time to care for and change the paraments, care for the altar and acolyte robes and perform the duties connected with the service of Communion. Each year during those early times, the women assumed the responsibilities of preparing the Advent wreath and decorating the church for Christmas and Easter. These tireless women made the Chrismons which decorated the early Christmas trees, and they have been used each Christmas for 39 years. The women began meeting weekly to do whatever needed doing to help their church. This activity became the Love Bear group which continues to meet on Tuesday mornings to sew bears for injured or sick children. The women of our early church also began meeting monthly for Bible study, another activity which continues to the present time.

One interesting activity occurred on July 4, 1976 in conjunction with the observation of the American Bicentennial. Pastor Chamberlin presented the sermon dressed as George Washington.

The concern for the welfare of others and service to the community has been evident in many activities. A ministry to University students was begun during the formation of the church. Good Shepherd has sponsored Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Brownies since 1971. Since 1969, Christmas gifts have been provided for needy families in the community. In 1974, Good Shepherd joined two other churches in supporting an after school child care program, called, Orange Brick House and during these same years the church facilities were used by the Cerebral Palsy Association for a pre-school program.

1977 to 1987

For the first 10 years, the church did not have janitorial or lawn service. Two or three families were assigned each week to clean the church. In 1977 the Council decided that the budget could afford custodial care once a week. The lawn care, however, was still done by a committee of members. Initially, several church members spent their Saturdays plugging in Zoysia grass, and over the years, trees and shrubs were planted – some as memorials and some commorative. All the landscaping around the church at this time was the result of an “adopt a tree or shrub” campaign. In the spring of 1979, Pastor Chamberlin announced his plans to retire but agreed to continue with

reduced responsibilities as vice-pastor. The Chamberlins remained in the area for some time after his retirement.

In June 1980, the Rev. Fred Nelson was installed as the 3rd pastor and served Good Shepherd until February 1988. During that time he participated in further studies to earn his Dr. of Ministry degree. On the 20th anniversary of the church, he was awarded that degree by Rev. Roger Geishen, former president of the Central States Synod. During Pastor Nelson's time at Good Shepherd, the congregation thrived. One of the memorable activities during this time was the celebration by the church of the Arkansas Sesquicentennial. On Father's Day of that year an outdoor worship service was held along with a pot luck picnic, musical entertainment, arts and crafts show, and singing telegrams for fathers. The 20th Anniversary Celebration occurred during May of 1987. Charter members of the church were invited to back and honored, the heritage birch tree was planted at the edge of the parking lot, and the congregation had an evening of fellowship with a banquet at the Fayetteville Holiday Inn. In June of 1987, the first assembly of the newly created Arkansas/Oklahoma Synod was held. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church was now a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The church was growing rapidly, and in January of 1988, a survey was taken to determine what the membership felt were the most pressing needs for the expansion of the building. This survey resulted in plans for

a new sanctuary. In February of 1988, the congregation was saddened when Pastor Nelson announced that he had decided to accept a call from a church in Hutcheson, Kansas. While searching for a new pastor, Pastor Paul Funk, a retired pastor living in Bella Vista, served as the Interim.

In August of 1988, Rev Roger Bruns, became the 4th pastor of Good Shepherd. These were busy times as plans were drawn up by Perry Butcher's architectural firm, for the new sanctuary. Ground breaking was held in November of 1990 and construction was begun by Heckathorn Construction Company. In the spring of 1991, Pastor Bruns received orders from the Army Reserves, and was sent to the Middle East as part of Operation Desert Storm. Pastor Harold Olsen served as the Interim Pastor until Pastor Bruns returned in June of 1991.

The first service in the new sanctuary was held on November 24, 1991, and the service of dedication took place on December 8, 1991. On January 12, 1992, the dedication of the new pipe organ was held, and organist, Max Ryan, held an organ concert entitled, Music by Max. Later on in 1992, Pastor Bruns resigned and accepted a pastorate in Virginia. Once again, Harold Olsen filled in as the Interim until March of 1993 when Rev. Robert Lutze became the 5th pastor of Good Shepherd. Later on that month, the "Good Shepherd" Reredos, the large wooden figure of Jesus and the sheep, was installed in the front of the sanctuary and was dedicated in March of 1994. Additional kneelers were added and the old ones received

new backs. The kneelers were dedicated in April of 1995. Also in 1995 the new kitchen was completed and the old entrance was remodeled into a new secretary's office.

During this ten year period several new programs and activities were started. The "Help Your Church" group began creating Love Bears which were given to children who were seen in the emergency rooms at Washington Regional Hospital and Northwest Medical Center. Two children's choirs were formed and performed for the congregation several times a year at either the end or beginning of the worship services. The youth group attended their first national convention in Atlanta during the summer of 1994. Also, all Sunday school rooms were carpeted and a new playground was added at the back of the church.

1997 – 2007

1997 was a great year in the life of our church. Attendance and membership experienced better than average growth. Thanks to a generous gift from a church member, a hand bell group joined our other musical groups and began playing for worship services on a once-a-month schedule. The Love Bear group produced its 2000th bear. This had become a wonderful ministry of concern for the children who find themselves in need of a cuddly friend in a scary emergency room.

In 1998, Pastor Lutze celebrated his 25th year of ministry since ordination, Bob Mueller replaced David

White as organist/choir director, and Jane Mar became a full time seminary student and was replaced as Director of Children and Youth activities by Kysia Thorton. We were also blessed by the donation of a baby-grand piano by the Butcher family for our sanctuary. In addition, the Martha E. & Howard W. Alton Education and Fellowship Building Fund was established.

The last year in the 20th century and the first year of the 21st century saw the church deeply involved in the planning and the building of the Alton Activity Center which was dedicated on Reformation Sunday of 2000. This facility was quickly put to use for Thanksgiving activities and the Sunday School Christmas Program. The addition also included a new nursery consisting of two rooms – a play room and a sleeping room. Other renovations, to the older area of the church, included the remodeling of one of the old Sunday school classrooms into a new pastor's office. The old office was turned into a church library. A visitor's booth, which is staffed by volunteers, was added to the Narthex. In addition, the old fellowship hall was converted into two rooms with a mezzanine above. The Love Bear count at the end of 2000 was 8000 bears.

After two years of both new construction and remodeling, the emphasis of 2001 was the addition of new staff. The search for a full-time youth director was begun and Lynne Martin's volunteer position as Parish Nurse was upgraded to ¼ time. Lynne visits the sick and aging and coordinates the pastoral care of the congregation with the pastor. Kim Krummel was appointed the new Director of

Children's Ministries and did double-duty as a youth director. A new sound system was installed in the sanctuary. During the summer of 2001, the Love Bears completed their 10,000th bear.

In 2002, a new youth director, Melissa Cowan, was hired which allowed a refocusing effort of Children's Ministries upon children up to confirmation age. A new program, entitled, Mother's Day Out, opened on Tuesdays and Thursdays and averaged 14 children per session. Marci Gies was hired to be a half-time Membership Associate, who coordinates church activities, creates new groups, and involves new members into the activities of the congregation. A new puppet ministry group was organized by Betty Metcalf. Twenty-seven new trees were planted on the church grounds. The Love Bears completed their 13,000th bear.

2003 saw the church celebrate the 30th year of ordination of Pastor Bob Lutze on August 17th. We held a gospel sing service which was followed by a surprise pot luck dinner and a generous monetary gift to Pastor Bob by the congregation. The puppet ministry was joined by a group of younger children, called the Shepherd Kids. The two groups merged to become a Creative Ministry Group. The Membership-Fellowship ministry was very active during this year. The following activities were offered to the congregation: Dinner out in January and March; Winter School which offered 8 three-session classes; an Archeology Seminar; a couples retreat in Eureka Springs; a float trip on the Illinois River; game night; a football game

between the church staff and the church council; a golf scramble; and volleyball. The Love Bears completed the 15,000th bear.

In 2004 the church staff had many changes. Rene Musick, who served as church secretary for 24 years, retired and was replaced by Jennifer McFarland. Sara Cooper became the new Membership Associate, Kim Krummel began work as the full-time Director of Youth and Education and Leslie Harvey was hired to be the Sunday school coordinator, Aaron Johnson was added to the staff as the Contemporary Worship Coordinator. The highlight of the year was the successful establishment of a contemporary Worship Service. Since the service ran simultaneously with the Traditional Worship Service, there was a great deal of planning and the increased involvement of the assistant ministers. The Church Council approved sending four creative ministry leaders to a week-long training in Virginia. This group returned with many ideas for improving that program. The council also implemented the "Chat with the Council" discussion forums to increase the communication between the council and the congregation. A stained glass window committee met on a regular basis and brought a recommendation to the council to place a stained glass window in the large bell tower window. This proposal was put to a vote of the congregation and was approved. A highlight of the three Easter Services was a dowel-rod performance by 6th grade and above members of the creative ministry team to the music, Arise My Love. The Love Bear group completed the 17,000th bear

The creation of the LOGOS program, a mid-week multi-task program involving kids from 4th grade through senior high school, was the high point of 2005. Students participate in four groups – Worship Skills, Bible Skills, Recreation, and Family Time. Each week has a theme which is carried out throughout the session. Students eat family-style with two table parents to supervise them. This program is designed to help the kids become better acquainted with the others in their grade level. The congregation responded in a huge way to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Personal monetary gifts, an on-going Sunday School offering, a music concert, and a mission trip to the Mississippi coast are a few of the ways Good Shepherd reached out to the people on the Gulf coast. The Church Council formed a Growth Development study committee made up of the past presidents of the council. They also established a GSLC Endowment Fund, began the development of a Procedures and Policy Handbook, completed a Financial Plan for Long Term Capital Improvements, and conducted an energy audit. The Worship and Music Committee, with the help of many volunteers, made 12 huge Christmas wreaths to hang in the Alton Center during the Christmas season. In February, the stained glass window was installed in the bell tower window. The Love Bear group kept making bears.

2006 was a rather quiet year after the hustle-bustle of the past. Jane Coffin became the new church secretary. Church attendance and membership continued to grow. Membership at the end of 2005 was 703 baptized members

and 576 confirmed members. Average attendance at Sunday services was 305. In the fall of the year, the congregation was shocked to receive a letter from Pastor Bob announcing that he would retire at the end of January, 2007. The Love Bear group completed their 20,000th bear.

During the first eight months of 2007, the congregation has concentrated on going through the process of calling another pastor. Pastor Dick Jebson, a retired pastor living in Bella Vista, is serving Good Shepherd as the interim pastor. The church activities have gone on as usual under his leadership. A new format for our 3 year old through 6th grade Sunday school program will begin later on in September. Called Rotation Sunday School, it divides the year into themes and each week the grade levels are rotated through one of five different activities. In addition, the council just approved the installation of a computer lab which will have six student stations and one teacher station. On Sunday and Wednesday nights, the computers will be used by the children and youth. During the week, classes will be scheduled for adults – especially senior citizens. The Love Bear group continues to make bears.

Conclusion

As you read through this history of Good Shepherd, it is hoped that you saw the ways that the people of Good Shepherd have always rallied to share their diverse talents, interests, and resources. At this 40th year in the history of this church, the membership has a lot to celebrate. We are

truly a healthy congregation that is continuing to grow and, in the words of our mission statement, we are “connecting people to God through the Gospel of Christ.”