

Christ Light - Lolo, Montana

In 1978 members of First Lutheran residing in Lolo, made an arrangement with Pastor Gary Trowbridge of Our Savior Lutheran in Stevensville with the help of First Lutheran's Pastor Paul Blunck to conduct services at Christ the Light Lutheran Church in Lolo. The first service was held on September 17, 1978, in the new Spirit of Christ Catholic Center in Lolo. The Montana District in convention in April, 1980 received Christ the Light into membership and called candidate Fred Grundmann, Jr., who had been serving as a colloquy vicar under the supervision of Pastor Blunck. He was installed on July 27, 1980.

Because of special needs, the congregation asked to be considered for "Forward in Remembrance" funds to build its own facility. Ground breaking for the new facility was held on September 23, 1981. The first worship service was conducted on December 14, 1981 with 154 souls in attendance.

Pastor Grundmann left the congregation in June of 1984. In February 1985, Vicar Scott Johnson was called under the sponsorship of First Lutheran church in Missoula. In the fall of 1985 Daniel Bohlken was ordained as pastor and served for three years. More than a year of vacancy in Lolo was served by Pastor James Gruber of Superior and Pastor George Putman of Stevensville. In November 1989 retired Pastor Martin H Wenzel of Minnesota was installed and served the congregation faithfully until Christ the Light discontinued services in May 1991. The building was later sold.

Our Vicars

Our first vicar was Norman Raedeke and he served from 1959 - 1960 during the vacancy between Pastor Ondov and Pastor Leucke.

Gary Heckmann 1970-1971. He was also a student of St. Louis.

Dan Wurster 1971-1972

Philip Kelly 1972-1973 Our first vicar from the seminary in Springfield, Illinois .

Glenn Zander 1973-1974

Daniel Bohlken 1974-1975

Robert Hinz in 1975-1976

Dave Meier in 1976-1977

Jim Gans in 1977-1978

Gary Gramisch in 1978 - 1979

Dennis Morner in 1979-1980

Dennis O'Neill in 1980-1981

George Earhardt in 1981-1982

Nolan Ashley in 1982-1983

Al Keller in 1983 -19 84

Fred Grundman in 1984-1985 (Lolo)

Mark Piepenbrink 1988-1989

Scott Johnson (Lolo)

Our Parish Workers

The Parish Worker Program at First Lutheran Church had its beginning as a part-time secretary situation. Mrs. John (Shirley) Bowers was the first regular secretary starting in 1957 to assist Pastor Ondov. During Pastor Luecke's ministry the position became 1/2 day.

In 1964 Mrs. Marge Pullmann succeeded Mrs. Bowers and worked at First Lutheran until her husband Rev. Al Pullmann accepted a call to the Seeley-Swan churches. Mrs. Ruby Jacobs, daughter of Mrs. and Mrs. Carl Eisenbarth, was the next to fill the position.

For a time in First Lutheran's history we had a succession of many short-term secretaries, including Mrs. Neal Mandelko.

The problem of getting and keeping a full-time secretary combined with the similar problem of getting a student organist and other volunteers caused First Lutheran to review its secretarial and organist program. Also, the office workload was increasing in volume. During this period the congregation looked into the Parish Worker Program offered by our synodical school at St. John's in Winfield, Kansas.

It was decided to apply for a Parish Worker in 1967. Duties were assigned the Parish Worker so that she might serve Lord and the Church by helping the Pastor. Some activities which she did included: secretarial work, teaching first year confirmation, working with and calling on University students, playing the organ and counseling brides on wedding music selection.

Val Uetzmann was our first Parish Worker and she stayed at First Lutheran until 1969 when she moved to St. Louis.

Phyllis Hiese, also a graduate of St. John's College came in 1969 and served until 1971.

In 1971 Marilyn Wood accepted the position until 1973.

Arlene Cooper served as secretary in 1973 until Melissa Eschenbacher (now Johns) came. In 1981 Melissa took time off and Margaret Gloyne held the position for about a 2 years.

Others who served after Margaret were Judy Gilbert, Karla Erp, Bev Baisch, and Jeannine Schmidt.

Melissa Johns returned to the job in 1992 and is currently serving as secretary and organist.



Marilyn Wood



Phyllis Hiese



Melissa Eschenbacher (now Johns)

Our Choir

The First Lutheran Choir has had a long history. The first choir director was Frederick Homburg, who was the choir director and organist in the early 1900's. The choir did not meet on a regular schedule, but was called upon to sing for all special occasions during the church year.

The choir began meeting on a regular schedule in the early 1960's. Pastor William Luecke was instrumental in getting the choir organized and Mrs. Norman (Doris) Balko was the choir director. There were 13 members. The choir sang all during the church year and the membership continued to increase.

In 1965, the Sr. Choir sang a Christmas Contata at First Lutheran. They also sang in many churches throughout the area. They traveled to Swan Valley, Seeley Lake, and Superior to present the candlelight service in Trinity Lutheran Church. They did many Christmas and Easter Contatas after that. In 1967, the voters assembly expressed their gratitude to the choir for all their work and had a reception for them after the church service.

In 1966, the choir sang at the Messiah Lutheran Church dedication and the installation of Rev. Robert Rahn.

A Junior Choir was started in the 1970's and beautified the service for many years. They alternated singing on Sundays with the Sr. Choir. They did many things to add to the worship service including a chancel drama "It's Cool in the Furnace". The drama was well received and the choir continued for many years.



Choir in the 1960's - led by Mrs. Norman (Dori) Balko.

One wonderful highlight came in 1975. The choir was invited to sing at the Festival Service at the First Methodist Church. It was First Lutheran's 75th anniversary celebration with Dr. J.O. Preuss, Synod President, as the speaker. They practiced long and hard for that day!

Mr. Don Lentz Sr. became the choir director in 1980. The choir has continued to be an integral part of the worship service at First Lutheran. They are always ready to sing and beautify a service and to do whatever is needed to make the service meaningful. They were especially happy to be able to sing at the groundbreaking of the new church at 2808 South Avenue and at the Church Dedication. It was a special time for all of the members. One member of the choir, DeDe Lienau, had a song written especially for the occasion. "*Here We Stand Lord*" was written by Don Besig, with words by Don Besig and Nancy Price. The song is now being printed for other churches to use and has instrumental music to accompany it. The Lord has truly blessed everyone at First Lutheran.

Here We Stand Lord (words and music are copyrighted)

We are gathered in this place, O Lord, joined in worship and in prayer.

Come and touch us with Your grace, O Lord; keep us always in Your care.
Help us show our faith and love in all we say and do
As we follow in Your way, O Lord, help us put our trust in You.

*Here we stand, Lord, Yours forever. You have called us to spread Your word.
Hand in hand, Lord, we'll serve together, sharing Your light with all the world.*

To this fellowship we come, O Lord, joined in gratitude and praise.
In Your spirit we are one, O Lord, blessed in many special ways.
Help us share the joy and peace we find in knowing You.
May the wonder of Your love, O Lord, show in everything we do.

*Here we stand, Lord, Yours forever. You have called us to spread Your word.
Hand in hand, Lord, we'll serve together sharing Your light with all the world.*

About First Lutheran's 100th Year Book...

At the time our 100th anniversary a committee was gathered together to assemble a book celebrating our history. Members of the committee were: Norm Balko, chairman, Kay Langland, Char Klofstadt, Art Brackebusch, Bev Baisch, Jack Sundt, Meighan Hanich, Jayne Hanich, Melissa Johns, Terry Druyvestein, Bob Lehman, and Bill Gamradt. Also, of great assistance in the making of this book was work done by Marilyn, Dawn, and Laura Schwaderer who had assembled a detailed history of our church into a beautifully arranged scrapbook of typed pages and photographs. Through countless hours of research - going through many church documents and scrapbooks - the information Marilyn, Dawn, and Laura put together was quite helpful in the making of this book.

About the cover pages...

Each cover page shows a stained glass window - each was designed and crafted by Lisa Blunck - and each of these windows is now in the sanctuary of our church. The windows depict various scenes of Biblical history. Windows on the east side show the Old Testament stories of Cain and Abel, Noah, Jacob's Ladder, and Daniel. West side windows illustrate events from the New Testament including the birth of Christ, His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Also on each of the cover pages is a picture of our church at a corresponding time in church history.