

History of Faith Lutheran Church Mentor, Ohio (1952 - 2025)

Lue & Char Skilskyj



Faith Lutheran Church - 2026

To prepare *God's* people for works of service, so that
the body of Christ may be built up (Eph. 4:12)

Background

In late 2016, Lue and Char Skilskyj searched Faith's archives in order to update the church's sixty-three-year history. Many documents were found and were used to assimilate an accurate and detailed history. These documents included:

- Myra L. Wright, Faith historian, issued a document, "*History of Faith Lutheran Church 1953 Through 1960*"
- In 1963, a Call Letter attachment was issued to prospective pastors explaining our history and what Faith had to offer
- Marlis Schmidt updated Wright's document through September 1968
- In May 10, 1975, REB (presumably Ralph Behnke) issued "*Chronological Highlights*"
- The 1976 Faith Lutheran Church picture directory contained historical highlights from 1953-1974
- An unsigned typed document covered the church's history from 1953 to 1984
- An unsigned handwritten document, used for Faith's 40th anniversary celebration, covered Faith's history from 1953 - 1984
- On October 4, 2003, Wayland Tenkku typed a document titled "*In Faith We Grow*" which discusses our history from 1953 to the building of our new church building in 1964.
- In 1999, Lue Skilskyj and George Yaworski published "*History of Faith Lutheran Church Mentor, Ohio 1952 – 1999*"
- Data between 2000 and 2025 was gathered from Council Meeting minutes and Congregation Meeting minutes

All these historical documents now reside in a three-ring binder that is stored in a file cabinet on the second floor of the Fellowship Hall. Council Meeting minutes and Congregation Meeting minutes are also stored in file cabinets in that same room.

An electronic version of this document will reside in the church office so that future updates can be easily made.

FAITH'S GLORIOUS BEGINNING - 1950's

By 1951, it became clear that the Mentor area needed a Lutheran church. A canvass of the area was made in December of 1951 by various Lutheran pastors at the suggestion of the Missouri Synod Central District Mission Board. The following year, on Sept. 15, 1952, Rev. Robert Raabe arrived in Mentor. Sent by the Mission Board, he began immediately to contact the interested prospects found in the previous canvass, with the purpose of establishing a mission church in Mentor.

Within 3 months, in December 1952, a meeting was held at Zion Lutheran Church in Painesville, Ohio. There were 20 people present at this initial meeting. They were: Mrs. and Mrs. Fred Shemenske, Mr. and Mrs. John Stankewitz, Mr. Ralph Behnke, Mrs. Charlotte Goetsch, Mr. Joseph Shimko, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Loomis, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Dombey, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hervey, Mr. and Mrs. Irving Ingram, Mr. Arthur Bornemen, Mr. Walter Kratzer, Rev. Birkner, and Rev. Bickel of Zion, and Pastor Raabe. The meeting was under the direction of Rev. Birkner (Director of Missions for the Central District) and Rev. Raabe. Those present learned that negotiations were already underway by the Mission Board to purchase the land just west of Memorial High School, near Hopkins Road on Mentor Avenue, for the site of the new church.

The first organizational meeting was held two months later at Zion Lutheran Church in Painesville on February 2, 1953. At that time, various names for the new church were considered, and the one selected was Faith Lutheran Church. The Constitution and By-laws were adopted, as were various recommendations concerning the conducting of church business. The first officers were elected, and they were:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| President | Mr. Fred Shemenske |
| Recording Secretary | Mr. Philip Beebe |
| Financial Secretary | Mr. Irving Ingram |
| Treasurer | Mr. Ralph Behnke |
| Deacons | Mr. Julius Dombey |
| | Mr. Joseph Shimko |
| | Mr. Richard Hervey |
| Trustees | Mr. Arthur Borneman |
| | Mr. Walter Kratzer |
| | Mr. Harold Loomis |

A report from the Mission Board at this meeting indicated that difficulties had arisen in getting a clear title to the previously mentioned land.

At the second organizational meeting held two weeks later on February 16, 1953, it was decided to put in a request to the Mission Board that Pastor Raabe be the pastor at the new church. Other decisions included the length of terms for various offices, appointment of a Finance Board (members were Ralph Behnke, Harold Loomis, Richard Hervey, and Irving Ingram), and a recommendation was made to purchase a mimeograph machine, record files, Service Books, and a communion set. Further title difficulties on the property were also announced.

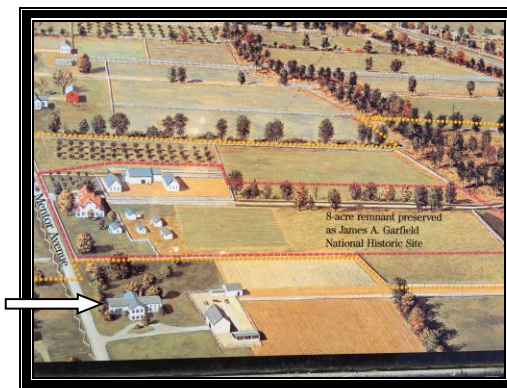
The first Sunday services of Faith Lutheran Church were held on February 22, 1953 in the auditorium of Center Street School in Mentor, at the corner of Center Street and Mentor Avenue, with 105 people in attendance. There were 60 communicant members on the roll. The portable altar, dorsal curtain, and lectern were loaned to us by Shore Haven Lutheran Church in Euclid, Ohio. Church services continued to be held at the school at 10:00 a.m., with Sunday School at 9:15 a.m.



Center Street School
Site of Faith's first service on Feb. 22, 1953

By June 1953, it was evident that due to title complications, acquisition of the land near Mentor High School was not possible. At the same time, it was learned that the Janet Dodge Garfield Estate on Mentor Avenue was available. A special meeting was called to discuss the possibility of purchasing the very beautiful and historic site which included 9.23 acres and 2 residences. It was agreed that the larger residence (James Mason House) could be converted into a church, which would seat about 140 people, and the rooms on the second floor would be suitable for Sunday School rooms. The smaller dwelling could be sold. On June 29, 1953, the Voter's Assembly authorized the Trustees to purchase the Janet Dodge Garfield property for \$40,000. In August, the smaller residence was sold to Mr. Gerald Spencer for \$19,000. The Mission Board loaned Faith \$20,000, and the members raised the \$1,000 difference.

The James Mason House is one of the oldest historical structures in the Western Reserve and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built for the James Mason family in 1830, a cornerstone on the southeast corner shows the 1830 date. Just west of the James Mason House was the James Dickey farm that Congressman James Garfield purchased in 1876. In 1881, James Garfield became our 20th President. Sometime later, President Garfield's son, Harry, and his wife Belle Mason (daughter of James Mason), moved into the James Mason House. Their son, John, married Janet Dodge, and it was from Janet Dodge Garfield that Faith Lutheran Church purchased the property and adjacent acreage.



Dickey Farm now Garfield's Home
James Mason House (arrow)



James Mason House 1931
No garage on the North side

The first project was the conversion of the James Mason House, later named by the parishioners as the Parish Hall, into a useable church facility. Work continued on the James Mason House throughout the fall and winter of 1953, with members donating their time, effort, and money for this important work. Walls were torn down and new ones added with new supports and a steel beam under the floor to provide a large room to function as the Nave of the church. The rooms on the second floor were rearranged and painted for Sunday School rooms. A great many contributions were received from local and outside firms and individuals. The names include:

Osborne Inc. donated concrete and slag for the driveway
The Land Title Guarantee & Trust Co. did not charge a fee for escrow & title work
Mr. Clyde Hadden surveyed the property free of charge
Lakeland Heating & Sheet Metal Co. donated material for the chimney
Messiah Lutheran Church of Fairview Park, Ohio donated the altar, pulpit, lectern,
baptismal font, and communion rail
Christ Lutheran Church of Anderson, Indiana donated the organ

The total cost of the improvements was \$5,212.

The Women's Guild was organized on April 22, 1953, and the first officers of the group were:

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| President | Mrs. Fred Shemenske |
| Vice President | Mrs. Leonard Anderson |
| Treasurer | Mrs. Joseph Shimko |
| Secretary | Mrs. John Hakala |



A choir was organized under the direction of Mrs. Joseph Shimko, and choir robes were purchased from Shore Haven Lutheran Church in Euclid for \$3.00 each. Miss Katherine Nurmi served as our first organist and continued in that capacity for several years.

The first service in the new church was held on December 20, 1953. There was a Christmas Eve service at 7:00 p.m., and a Christmas Day service at 10:30 a.m. The very first Communion service was held on New Year's Eve at 8:00 p.m. We had 101 communicant members, 70 children enrolled in Sunday School, a choir, and 25 members in Women's Guild. We were the first Lutheran church in Mentor.

The church was dedicated on January 17, 1954 with a festival service in the morning and the dedication service in the afternoon. Rev. Edwin C. Abendroth and Rev. Ottomar E. Bickel were the keynote speakers. Rev. Robert M. Raabe and Rev. W. C. Birkner were the liturgists. Shore Haven Youth Choir and the Senior Choir of Zion Lutheran Church, Painesville sang during the dedication service. The dedication service church bulletin noted:

"We know that every Pastor believes there is no finer church than the one in which God has placed him. This was especially true at Faith, Mentor. The endless hours of labor put in by our men and women in an effort to reduce the total cost of the building is awe-inspiring. Though in years to come these efforts may fade from memory, they will never be erased from the Lord's Book."

Additional work progressed during this year, with some new sidewalks being installed and more hymnals and chairs purchased. But in general, 1954 was a year of deficit financing due to the heavy expenditures associated with the alteration of the church. The one memorable event of the year was the marriage of Pastor Raabe. His bride was the former Elaine Kinter of Willoughby, and the wedding took place on August 7, 1954 at Shore Haven Lutheran Church in Euclid.

By January 1955, the communicant membership grew to 140. Additional alterations were undertaken to enlarge the sanctuary -- another wall was removed, a steel beam installed, a chimney knocked out, which allowed for the sanctuary to accommodate 185 people. The Mentor Well Baby Clinic was renting two rooms on the 2nd floor of the Parish Hall, and a nursery school was utilizing space during the weekdays.

The Women's Guild continued to help beautify and improve the church. At the end of 1955, they had an astonishing list of completed projects. A few of their purchases included: 2 electric ranges, a refrigerator, kitchen cooking equipment, filmstrip camera, and a floor scrubber and polisher. On June 23, 1955, Pastor and Mrs. Raabe were blessed with their first child -- a daughter named Susan.

The communicant membership in January 1956 was 214, and there were 180 enrolled in Sunday School. During this year, several new organizations were formed -- the Walther League held their first meeting on January 22, 1956; the Couple's Club had their initial meeting on February 12, 1956; the Altar Guild was formed. Vacation Bible School was held for the first time in 1956. In the fall on 1956, Pastor Raabe received a Call from La Crosse, Wisconsin, but after a unanimous vote of confidence at a Voter's meeting, he decided he would be happy to remain in Mentor.

During 1956 the plans were made for building a new parsonage on the church grounds. Mr. Donald Worley was the chairman of the Planning and Building Committee. An every member canvass was made to secure pledges and loans to build the parsonage. Construction started in July 1956, and much of the work was done by members. Irv Ingram was the foreman, Paul Alexa volunteered for plumbing, Al Papp helped with plumbing and obtaining material at a discount, Lester Boudinot and Bill Wentling volunteered for general work. Additional volunteers included John Hakala, Ed Lynn, Ed Schmidt, Fred Shemenske, Fred Hinkle, Joe Shimko, and Art Beifus. The parsonage was completed in April 1957 at a cost of \$13,256. On June 30, 1957, Pastor Raabe and his family moved into their new home. The parsonage project was followed by the parsonage garage construction, which was quickly accomplished by volunteers. Ed Schmidt drew up the plans for the garage.

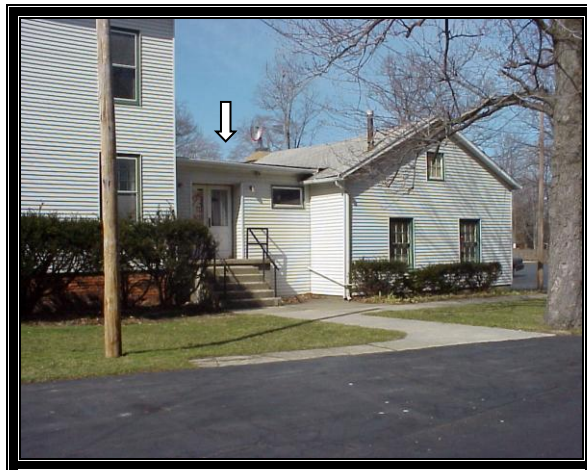


Parsonage built by church members in 1957

During the winter of 1956 – 1957, work continued on the property, which included stump removal and the parking lot being graded and filled.

In August 1957, Faith relinquished their subsidy of \$125 per month from the Missouri Synod and became self-supporting, just 4-1/2 years after our first service. Because of continued growth, it was decided to hold two services on Sunday beginning on October 6, 1957. During 1957, a public address system for the upstairs nursery rooms was installed.

By January 1958, the pressing need for more space was again a major problem as we now had 252 communicant members. The possibility of converting the 3-car garage into Sunday School rooms was investigated. The Women's Guild offered to purchase the material for this project if the men furnished the labor. This was done, and the garage became a Sunday School room at a cost of \$740. In April 1959, the rear porch was enclosed to provide a larger Narthex, and the stairway to the garage was also enclosed. This made it possible for everyone to walk from the church to the Sunday School room without going outside.



**Sunday School room - formerly a garage
Rear porch (arrow) enclosed to connect school with narthex**

In the early months of 1958, and throughout the year, there was considerable discussion about planning for a new church. In February of 1958, Pastor and Mrs. Raabe were blessed with their second child, a son named Mark.

A special Voter's meeting was called on December 15, 1958, and at this time, Pastor Raabe asked for a peaceful dismissal from his pastorate at Faith so that he could accept a Call by the Home Mission Board of Northern Illinois District of Missouri Synod to be Chaplain and Home Missionary-at-Large. Rev. Raabe gave his farewell sermon on January 4, 1959. Pastor Mattson of St. Paul, Painesville agreed to be our temporary pastor during the 3 months that we were without a pastor.

In early April 1959, our new pastor, Rev. Victor Frederking, arrived in Mentor with his wife Anita and two young sons, Robert and Martin. He was raised in Cleveland, but his previous pastorate was in Wood River, Nebraska. Rev. Frederking was installed as our new pastor on April 19, 1959.



After worship service in the Parish Hall - Rev. Frederking in center (1961)

During the summer of 1959, the exterior of the church was painted, with labor and material donated.

In 1959, we had 270 communicant members, with a total of 450 baptized members, and an average Sunday attendance of 227. Sunday School had 201 students, with an average attendance of 172. Vacation Bible School had 150 students with 30 teachers and helpers.

FAITH IN THE 60's

The Building Planning Committee, which was established in February 1959, functioned for five years from 1959 – 1964. The Committee consisted of Chairman Ralph Behnke, George Tasky, Wayland Tenkku, Carl Pratt, Emil Levstik, Mel Prasse, Bob Goodman, Lou Schaeffer, and Bob Nelson. Surveys by The Illuminating Company, East Ohio Gas, and Community Planning Commission anticipated over 200% increase in population in Mentor within 15 years and a 300% increase within 20 years. The Committee extrapolated this percentage increase with our church attendance and concluded it would be appropriate to plan to provide seating for 563 members attending church, with 1000 baptized members by 1975. Based on this anticipated growth, the Committee planned on a Nave with a 400-seat capacity.

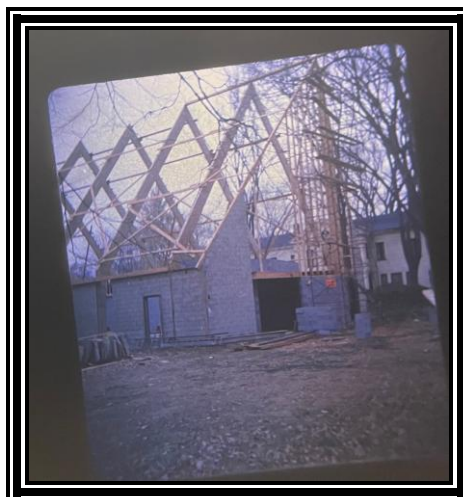
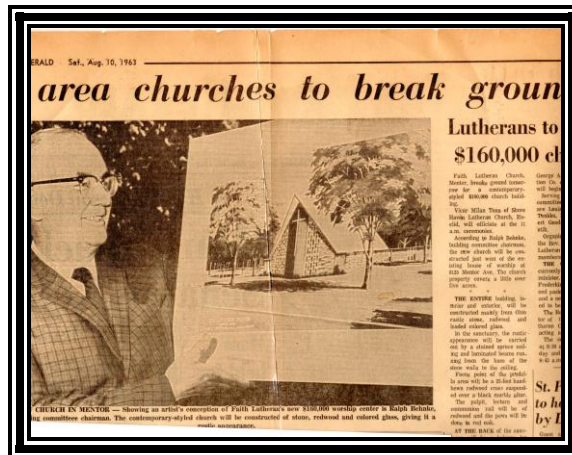
The Committee visited six churches in the Northeast Ohio area to obtain ideas as to what we should plan for and possibly what we should avoid. They interviewed three architects and selected Arne Konturri from Ashtabula because he had experience with church work, designed Zion Lutheran Church in Ashtabula Harbor, and was Lutheran. He also seemed to understand what would be needed and appropriate. The Committee liked his contemporary design.

A congregation dinner, attended by 135 people, was held on November 3, 1960 at the Mentor Plains Methodist Church where the architect presented drawings and preliminary plans for the church. Discussions were held regarding the design and method of finance. The plan was to obtain pledges for \$40,000 over the next three years so that we could have that much money available before construction and obtain a loan for \$120,000 to be paid over 20 years. The next three years were spent collecting the pledges and finalizing details. Several member visitations were conducted to encourage everyone to contribute and maintain interest in the new church building.

In June 1963, Pastor Frederking resigned from the pastorate of Faith. Pastor Frederking pursued a new career in Biblical publishing.

A 1963 Call Letter attachment to pastors stated that Faith had “grown from 70 to 315 communicant members. Our attendance this year ranges from 225 to 250 per Sunday, with a Sunday School of 250. We have a very active participation in Bible Classes with sessions being held Sunday and Thursday mornings and Tuesday evening, with total membership about 145.”

In August 1963, Faith had sufficient funds to begin construction, and with the final approval of the Voter’s Assembly, we proceeded with the construction of the contemporary style church that we have today. The contract for the new building was given to Williams Construction Company. The sanctuary contains a massive oak cross, which dominates the view of the worshipper, and leaded colored glass windows from Germany, and natural stone from Ohio to blend with the natural surroundings and provide a quiet, natural and beautiful place to worship.

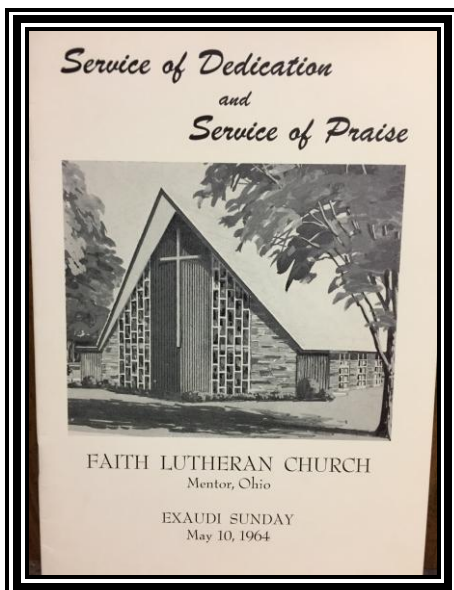


On October 6, 1963, Rev. Richard Drews was installed as pastor coming to us from Maine. He and his wife, Carol, were originally from Akron, Ohio, and they, along with their infant son Ricky, would make Mentor their new home.



Rev. Richard and Carol Drews and family - 1997

On May 10, 1964, Faith formally dedicated our new sanctuary. Rev. Robert Raabe returned to preach at the Service of Dedication. Dr. Ottomar Krueger, then President of the Ohio District, preached at the Service of Praise in the afternoon.



In 1964, Faith's operating budget was \$23,000. The final cost of the new church was \$169,785, which included construction, organ, and furnishings. This required a loan of \$127,256 with payments of \$925 per month for 20 years.

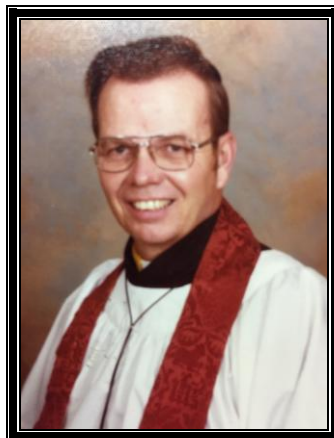
After worshipping in a converted home that comfortably seated 185, moving into a new sanctuary seating 400 persons involved quite a change in the physical surroundings. In the old church, a crowd of 200 packed the room without a single empty seat. Now the same number of people spread out in a larger room made you think that the attendance was slipping! Before, the ladies in the Altar Guild had a small carpet in the Chancel to keep clean and a short altar to take care of. In the new church, they found that the altar was 12 feet long and the carpet in the Chancel area was 6 times as large! Before, with one step, the pastor could reach the lectern from the altar. Now it required a dozen or so steps. Before, the choir was cramped into a corner in the front near the organ. On any Sunday when choir attendance exceeded twelve, the sopranos had to sit in the front row of the congregation. Now in the choir loft they have room to spare, especially with the new risers constructed by Eugene Linkous.



Faith Lutheran Church - 1964

In January 1967, Pastor Drews accepted a call to Faith congregation in San Diego, California. He and his family left our midst in February 1967. During these months of 1967, when for the third time in 8 years we had no permanent spiritual leader, many of us became discouraged and downhearted. But even in this discouragement, the Lord provides a blessing. On the evening before Easter, the Concordia Seminary Chorus, under the direction of Dr. William Heyne, gave a concert in our church that will long be remembered by those who heard it. What a privilege to have them sing for us then and again the next day at our Easter morning festival service.

We were without a pastor until July 1967 when Rev. Howard Davis from Westminister, Massachusetts arrived. He was installed in August 1967. He and his first wife, Rita, were originally from this area and had two children, Marie and Mark.



Rev. Howard Davis

In 1967, a youth group was formed to provide activity for children in the eighth grade and under. The Junior Choir reported a membership of 33.

The Easter worship service of 1968 had the highest attendance in the church's fifteen-year history, over 500. The communicant membership that year was 408. Fifteen ladies were attending a newly formed Bible Study hour on Thursday mornings.

Records show that the average Sunday worship attendance in the 60's ranged from 225 to 270. In 1968, a membership growth analysis was made. It states "Over the years since 1953 it is interesting to note that our membership gains have been mostly from transfers from other congregations (384), secondly, from confirmation of children (169), and 120 have been added by adult confirmation. Only seven have been brought into membership through renewal of faith."

FAITH IN THE 70's

From 1970 to 1972, our church had two vicars -- Vicar Otto Schultz from June 1970 – June 1971, and Vicar John Walters from Sept. 1971 – Sept. 1972. Communicant members now totaled 477.

In September 1971, work started on remodeling and modernizing the Sunday School rooms on the second floor of the Parish Hall.

On August 5, 1972, a surprise banquet was held at Mentor High School to honor Pastor Davis' 10 years in the ministry and five years at Faith. Many members from his first congregation in New England attended.

On May 12, 1974, Pastor Robert Raabe, then at Hudson, Ohio, who was our founding pastor, preached at the 10th anniversary of the dedication of our church building. A buffet luncheon was held in the Parish Hall after the service.

The 1974 confirmation class discovered that our sanctuary was built without a cornerstone. This was rectified on May 18, 1975, "Cornerstone Sunday", when we dedicated a cornerstone which was filled with memorabilia and dated documents.

Sometime between 1972 and 1975, Operation S.O.U.P. (Share with Our Underprivileged People) was launched to provide groceries and a turkey to needy families in the community during Thanksgiving.

By 1976, the communicant membership grew to 509. The average Sunday worship attendance peaked in 1971 at 290 and slowly receded to 220 in 1979. Records show that Sunday School attendance in 1973 was 146 and fell to 122 in 1976.

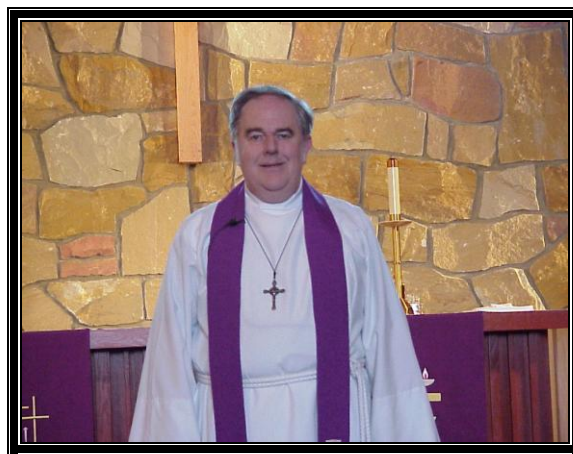
In retrospect, there were a number of factors that entered into our church not growing as anticipated, although the population of the community did increase as predicted. The schism or division, Seminex, that occurred in the Missouri Synod in the late 1960's led to a split. Also, the formation of ELCA in 1988 had a negative impact on church growth. The addition of churches into the community probably had a more direct effect – Good Shepherd Lutheran in Mentor dedicated their building in 1962; Advent Lutheran Church was established in 1965; Pilgrim Lutheran Brethren Church was also established in 1965. Other denominations began to establish new churches in Mentor.

FAITH IN THE 80's

In 1980, Faith became a member of Our Shepherd Lutheran School in Painesville, Ohio, and to this day supports the school spiritually and financially.

In September 1984 on "Rainbow Sunday", our members gathered around a campfire on the church grounds and burned the mortgage for the present church building. Another highlight of the service was the dedication of our new altar cloth, Rainbow Parament, which has since been retired. The Rainbow Parament used the four church colors, took over 1,340 hours to complete, and was used only for special services.

With the resignation of Pastor Davis in 1987, the congregation called Pastor Ronald Le Pere, who was serving Concordia Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio. Pastor Le Pere, his wife, Char, two daughters, Ruth and Judy, and two sons, Jon and David, moved to Mentor and was installed at Faith on March 6, 1988.



Rev. Ronald P. Le Pere - 1999

LCMS disbanded the Walther League in the early 70's and the Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF) was formed. Youth from Faith became a part of LYF and attended a National Youth Gathering for the first time in Denver in 1989.

Records show that the average Sunday worship attendance at the end of this time period was around 190.

FAITH IN THE 90's

In 1990, a committee was organized to look into possibly selling the parsonage for \$97,000. Instead, it was decided to renovate the exterior and interior, including the kitchen, storm windows and gutters, and then rent out the house. It took many months and \$10,100 to complete the task.

In 1990, a second Sunday Adult Bible Study was added.

In 1991, the congregation replaced the failing in-ground hot water floor heating system in the church building with forced air heat and air conditioning. During construction, worship service was held in the Parish Hall, bringing back memories from the 50's. The sanctuary and annex roof was also replaced. Total cost for all these improvements was \$112,000. Also in 1991, a new Men's Fellowship Group was organized, and a new church sign was built along Mentor Avenue by our members.

In 1992, the Handbell Choir was restarted by Kevin and Raye Guynn.

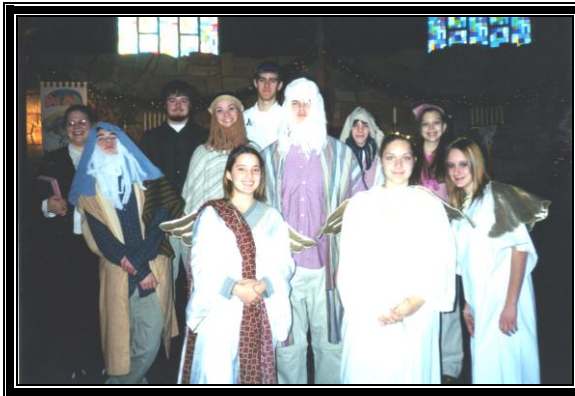
In 1993, Faith celebrated our 40th anniversary. During 1993, a covered walkway between the office annex and Parish Hall was installed at a cost of \$3,300. Fire, smoke and security systems were installed in the sanctuary, office annex, and Parish Hall for \$4,000.

In 1994, the Parish Hall porch columns, supporting the second floor Women's restroom, started to sag and required \$12,700 to repair. That year, Faith began participating in the annual Better in Mentor Days festival by manning a booth at the Civic Center.

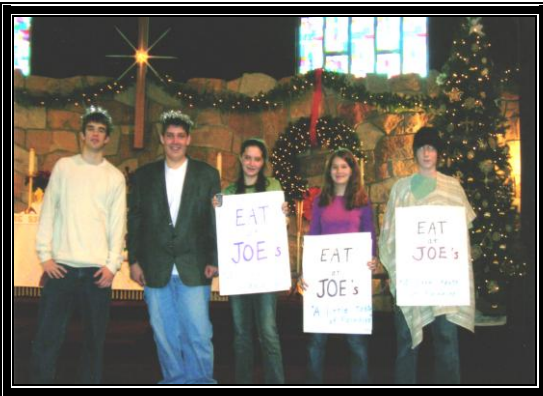
In 1995, Faith organized a team to play in a softball league.

In 1996, Faith celebrated Pastor Le Pere's 25 years in ministry. Also, that year a Junior Youth Group for those in grades 5 – 8 was formed to encourage fellowship and service projects among the younger youth.

In 1996, our Youth started to lead a Christmas worship service.

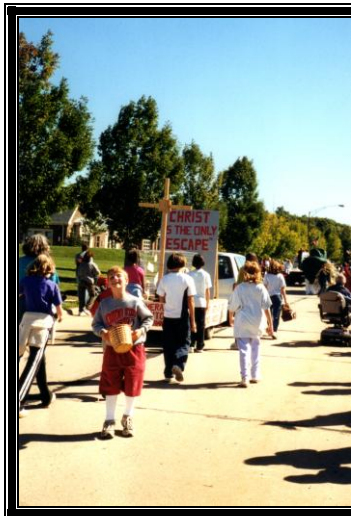


2003 Youth Lead Worship Service



2005 Youth Lead Worship Service

In 1997, Faith was the first church to enter a float in the annual Better in Mentor Days festival.



1997

Better in Mentor Days Float Entries



1998

During 1998, the congregation adopted a missionary family, the McWilliams family, in Guatemala. That same year, Tina Ziemnick was called and installed as Faith's Director of Christian Education. The Choir Room in the office annex was converted to her office. Tina left Faith in March 2002 and later served in the LCMS Mission office in St. Louis, Missouri.



Ms. Tina Ziemnick, DCE - 1999

In 1998, the Parish Hall roof was repaired for \$7,500.

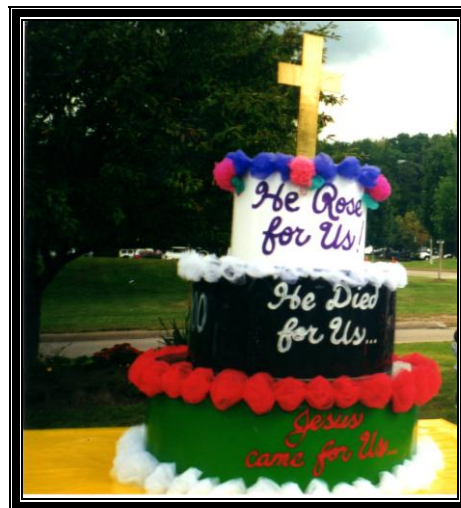
In 1999, Faith members created the church's first website. The singing group "Lost & Found" held a concert in December, and an evening Men's Bible Study group was restarted.

During the 1990's the average Sunday worship attendance continued to slip, averaging 147 in 1999.

FAITH IN THE 2000's

In 2000, there was much discussion to remove a few of the pews at the back of the sanctuary to provide a larger area for fellowship after worship services. The idea did not come to fruition.

Once again, in 2000, Faith entered another float in the Better in Mentor Day's Parade.



Better in Mentor Days - 2000

Also in 2000, Faith launched its annual “Walk and Sup” on Good Friday. After a meager meal in the Parish Hall, members processed along Mentor Avenue from Great Lakes Mall to the church, following a cross bearer, as they reflected on Christ’s final hours on the cross.



2001 - Good Friday - The Walk

In 2001, Faith celebrated Rev. Ronald Le Pere’s 30th anniversary in the ministry. The event had a Hawaiian theme and was held in our Parish Hall. That year, the parking lot was repaired and resurfaced at a cost of \$26,100. Also, all pews were removed, five at a time, to be repaired, stained and re-laminated at a cost of \$25,198.

Our Youth Group has always been active.



April 2001 - Youth Work Project

In 2003, Faith celebrated its 50th anniversary with several big events. Rev. Richard Drews returned as our guest preacher during worship service. We had an old-fashioned picnic, as well as a big celebration dinner at Hellriegel's Inn where Rev. Tom Ahlersmeyer was our speaker.



June 2003 - 50th Anniversary Picnic

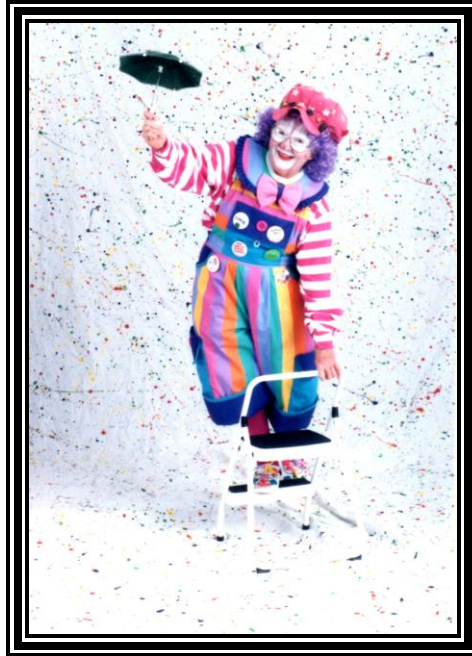
In June 2003, we also entered a float in the Better in Mentor Days Parade and manned a booth.



2003 Better in Mentor Days

In 2005, a Sunday evening Contemporary worship service was added with an average attendance of 49 during the first three months. Our "Sounds of Faith" Praise Team from Contemporary worship performed in the Better in Mentor Days Festival.

Also in 2005, in honor of Winnie Widgren, a long-time servant, Sunday School teacher, and clown at Faith, the Winnie Widgren Scholarship was launched to provide students of all ages up to \$5,000 each year to pursue further education. Through 2025, \$492,000 in scholarships have been awarded to our students.



Winnie Widgren

In 2005, our adopted missionary family, the McWilliams, returned home, and subsequently Faith adopted the Ivan and Jennifer Rasch family as our new missionary family. Over the years, both missionary families visited us and presented their work for Christ.

There were many years where Faith members would get together and have a church family picnic filled with fun, fellowship, and food.



The Sunday School Opening Room, previously called the Sunday School nursery and now called the Gathering Room, had its roof replaced, along with the Parish Hall steps along the exit driveway.

In 2006, the “Sounds of Faith” ensemble from the Contemporary service sang on Mentor’s Civic Center Stage during the Better in Mentor Days Festival.



Faith's Praise Team - Better in Mentor Days

On October 22, 2006, we celebrated Pastor Le Pere’s 35th Ordination anniversary with a reception held at Cappelli’s.



Pastor Le Pere at his 35th Ordination anniversary reception

In 2007, a new professional sound system was installed in the sanctuary at a cost of \$22,885.

In 2008, a new electric organ was dedicated; new furnaces, and air conditioning were installed in the sanctuary and Parish Hall, now called Fellowship Hall. Ceiling fans were also installed in the sanctuary. Total cost of these projects was \$145,296, which was funded by a Capital Improvement loan.

In 2009, a new church website was launched.

During this time period, the average Sunday worship attendance had a high of 141 in 2000 and ended 2009 at 120.

FAITH IN 2010's

In 2010, Kevin Guynn, a long time Faith parishioner with wife, Raye, two daughters, Emily and Sarah, and son, Michael, entered the four-year Specific Ministry Program, with Pastor Le Pere serving as his mentor. Kevin assumed the role of vicar at Faith with the goal of becoming Faith's pastor after completing the first two years of the four-year program.



Rev. Kevin Guynn - 2012

In 2012, Godspell, the musical, was performed in our sanctuary. It was directed by our own Bob Godfrey and included actors from our congregation.

In October 2012, Vicar Kevin Guynn received a Call to be Faith's pastor. He was ordained and installed at Faith on November 11, 2012. Pastor Le Pere accepted the Call to be Faith's part-time Associate Pastor.



Pastor Le Pere and Pastor Guynn - 2012

In 2013, the Fusion Team took the lead in updating the Nursery Room in the office annex, and converting the Crying Room into a Meditation Room in the Narthex. Sunday morning worship services were reduced from two to one to allow for a more uplifting worship experience and better fellowship. Helping Hands Ministry was launched to provide an opportunity for church members to give of their time and talent to tackle important projects on their own or with others. A pavilion was built in the back lot for social functions.



Faith's Pavilion - 2013

During 2013, the Rasch missionary family moved back to the US, and we adopted David and Joyce Erber as our new missionary family in Africa. At the end of 2013, the 2008 Capital Improvement loan was paid off, and Faith was once again debt free.

After 43 years in the ministry, Pastor Le Pere retired at the end of 2014 with the title Pastor Emeritus.



Pastor Le Pere - 2014

In 2016, the Choir Loft windows were redesigned and replaced due to years of water leaks. The center portion of the windows were replaced with a wood and plaster structure to reduce construction cost and heat lost. Total cost of the project was \$128,000, which required a loan.



Exterior after Choir Loft windows redesigned

Also in 2016, a professionally designed website was launched.

In 2017, Faith rented a movie theater to show the new Martin Luther movie, and we also launched the Stephen's Ministry program, which equips congregation members to provide one-to-one Christian care to people who are hurting.

In October 2017, twenty-nine men attended the first men's retreat at Stony Glen Camp in Madison, Ohio. The keynote speaker was Dr. Joel Biermann from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

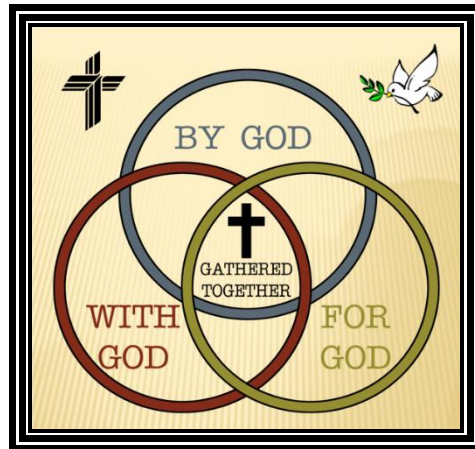
On August 13, 2018, Faith Lutheran Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church each separately approved a plan to merge into a single congregation located at Faith. On September 9, 2018, Pastor Guynn was affirmed as pastor of Good Shepherd and began serving both congregations as a dual parish pastor.



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - Established 1962

In 2018, the Evangelism Board initiated the “Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, and Hallelujahs” (HHH) outreach to provide meals for the homeless in neighboring Painesville while sharing God’s message of salvation. That same year, the Operation Soup program distributed Thanksgiving food baskets to 18 families, and a Men’s Retreat was held at Stony Glen Camp.

In 2019, Good Shepherd held its final worship service on April 21. The first consolidated worship service at Faith took place on April 28, followed by a celebration dinner attended by former Good Shepherd ministers Rev. David Wood and Rev. Paul Fitzpatrick. The merger infused new life into the unified congregation, resulting in growth in membership, worship attendance, and financial stability.



Several facility improvements were completed during the year, including the construction of a new 16’ x 24’ shed adjacent to the pavilion, installation of an outdoor electronic sign to announce the church’s presence, addition of a handicap chairlift in Fellowship Hall, replacement of the Gathering Room roof, resealing of the parking lot, and installation of new carpeting in the Narthex and office wing.

Also in 2019, Faith established a \$120,000 Unification Fund, from funds remaining after the sale of Good Shepherd’s property, remaining to support future community outreach initiatives. The Evangelism Board’s “Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, and Hallelujahs” (HHH) project served meals to 40 homeless individuals in Painesville while sharing God’s message of salvation. Alcoholics Anonymous began using Fellowship Hall for meetings, and a Men’s Retreat was held at Stony Glen Camp. In addition, Faith partnered with an Eagle Scout to design and construct a frisbee disc golf course on church property for both community members and congregants to enjoy.

By the end of 2019, average Sunday worship attendance had reached 107.

FAITH IN 2020's

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption, requiring Faith to adapt nearly every aspect of congregational life, including Divine Worship, Holy Communion, Sunday School, Bible studies, and meetings. Divine Worship was held in the parking lot, broadcast over FM radio, and streamed on YouTube. Members received Holy Communion by driving under the main entrance portico while remaining in their vehicles. Council meetings and Bible studies transitioned to Zoom. Amid this challenging and stressful period, Faith launched the Our Shepherd Lutheran School (OSLS) Christmas Gift Project, providing \$100 Christmas gifts to 25 OSLS students and their families.



In 2021, the effects of COVID-19 continued to impact Divine Worship, studies, and meetings. As the year progressed, however, the congregation gradually moved toward a new sense of normalcy. Divine Worship returned to the Sanctuary, with Traditional Worship offered at 9:30 a.m. and Blended Worship at 11:15 a.m. Sunday School and Bible Study resumed between services. Many members chose to continue worshiping from the parking lot via FM radio or from home through YouTube. For a period of time, in-person worshipers were required to wear masks, and the Sanctuary was disinfected following each service.

Other significant developments in 2021 included revisions to Faith's Constitution, a transition from Excel spreadsheets to Shepherd's Staff financial software, installation of two 75-inch monitors in the Sanctuary, and the continuation of the OSLS Christmas Gift Project, again providing \$100 gifts to 25 students and families.

In 2022, Faith's Sanctuary underwent a major renovation that required close coordination among all boards and committees. All furnishings and items in the Sanctuary and adjacent rooms, including the pews, were moved to facilitate the work. The original asbestos floor tiles were abated, and the concrete floor was prepared for the installation of new tile. During the installation process, members assisted by moving pews from one side of the Sanctuary to the other. The altar area was expanded, and the rooms behind the altar were re-tiled. Eight pews were permanently removed to create space for fellowship and Bible study, and carpeting was installed in both the center and side aisles.



Throughout the two-month construction period, worship services were held in Fellowship Hall—the same space where the congregation first gathered for worship on December 20, 1953.



1950's



2022

Also in 2022, the Visioning Committee was established to define Faith's Mission Statement and identify the four foundational pillars supporting it. The Youth Group attended the National Youth Gathering in Houston, a Men's Retreat was held at Stony Glen Camp, and the "Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, and Hallelujahs" (HHH) outreach continued to serve the homeless in Painesville while sharing God's message of salvation. Due to declining attendance, the 11:15 a.m. Sunday blended worship service was discontinued.

In 2023, the Visioning Committee developed Faith's Mission Statement: *"We are a caring Christian family sharing the love of Christ in service to our community and each other."*

Also in 2023, Faith became debt-free after repaying its construction loans to LCEF. The congregation hosted its first community outreach dinner, attended by 52 participants, established an outdoor Food Pantry box, and sent a group to the *Doxology: The Encore* seminar in Dayton. Additional activities included a Men's Retreat at Stony Glen Camp, hosted Sub Zero Mission's "Stuff the Bus" initiative to provide winter clothing for the homeless, and once again offering \$100 Christmas gifts to 25 Our Shepherd Lutheran School (OSLS) students and their families.

In 2024, the congregation formally affirmed the Visioning Committee's four foundational pillars supporting Faith's Mission Statement:

Love – To truly love our neighbors and members of our congregation by intentionally targeting the needs of specific groups, such as the elderly, widowed, and young mothers.

Sharing – Faith will build up the spiritual growth of its members and in turn use these blessings God has given each of us to share Christ's Love with others.

Receiving – Every member of Faith Lutheran Church will be fulfilled by 1 or more activities or events offered at FLC.

Serving – To truly serve the congregation and the surrounding community with programs where all are welcome.

During 2024, Faith hosted a community outreach dinner with 25 attendees, held a Men's Retreat at Stony Glen Camp, and sponsored a Seminary Workshop focused on faith formation. Members again attended *Doxology: The Encore*, and an automated external defibrillator (AED) was installed, with members receiving CPR and AED training from the Mentor Fire Department. Faith also continued to host Sub Zero Mission's "Stuff the Bus" winter clothing drive and provided \$100 Christmas gifts to 25 OSLS students and their families. In addition, the church parking lot was

resealed. Also in 2024, Faith hosted *Tetelestai*, an Easter Passion play, drawing a total of 471 attendees across three performances.

In 2025, the Youth Group attended the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans, and men participated in a Men's Retreat at Stony Glen Camp focused on stewardship. Members attended a Doxology seminar, and Faith implemented weekly Holy Communion. The congregation also hosted Sub Zero Mission's "Stuff the Bus" winter clothing drive for the homeless and sponsored Doxology's *In His Image* workshop.

That year, Faith received a letter from the Younker Trust confirming that the Marlin and Lynda Younker Lutheran Scholarship Fund will continue to award \$25,000 annually to Faith's Winnie Widgren Scholarship Program for the next 100 years.

Sunday School resumed with five students, and the congregation supported Hannah's Home for single pregnant young women. Faith provided \$100 Christmas gifts to 30 Our Shepherd Lutheran School (OSLS) students and their families and continued to host four community dinners throughout the year. In addition, missionaries David and Joyce Erber returned to the United States, and the congregation adopted the Mock Family as its new missionary partners, serving in the Czech Republic.



Significant facility improvements were completed in 2025, including a major renovation of Fellowship Hall with new floor tile, carpeting, interior painting, and a metal roof, as well as repairs to the basement cement floor. That year, Pastor Guynn announced his intention to retire at the end of 2026, and a Call Committee was formed to Call Faith's seventh pastor in its seventy-three-year history.

Faith concluded 2025 with an average Sunday worship attendance of 78, a baptized membership of 170, and a communicant membership of 158

Today

God has blessed our congregation with a rich heritage, giving Faith a mission and a purpose --

“That all members be joined together in a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.” As members of His body, they seek to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus: to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world (Matt. 28:18-20); to be His witnesses where they live and work (Act 1:8); and to build up one another in faith and service within the congregation and within the community as they reach out to their neighbors (Eph. 4:11-12).

Together, we have taken a walk through Faith’s rich history – what about our future? What do the next 50 years hold for Faith?

Centered on God, guided by the Holy Spirit, and directed by the Great Commission, we move forward one day at a time, following Christ.

IMPORTANT NAMES FROM FAITH'S HISTORY

Charter Members

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Philip Beebe | Mrs. Herbert Niemeyer |
| Mrs. Philip Beebe | Dorothy Niemeyer (Kroeggel) |
| Arnold Bornemann | Henry Dreger |
| Martha Shelko | Ernestine Gates |
| Richard Hervey | Robert Wills |
| June Hervey Quiggle | Mrs. Robert Wills |
| Irving Ingram | Ernest Vash |
| Harold Loomis | Mrs. Ernest Vash |
| Mabel Loomis | Ernest Zdunek |
| Jacqueline Loomis | Mrs. Ernest Zdunek |
| Fred Shemenske | Mrs. Joseph Jaklic |
| Mrs. Fred Shemenske | Marilyn Nurmi |
| Charles Schmenske | Katherine Nurmi Evans |
| Carol Schmenske | E. B. Ausnehmer |
| Mrs. Walter Goetsch | Mrs. E. B. Ausnehmer |
| Jean Goetsch Phillips | Eugene Hyppa |
| Julius Dombey | Mrs. Jacob Rauth |
| Mrs. Julius Dombey | Mrs. Edward Muster |
| John Alesi | Raymond Walker |
| Mrs. John Alesi | Mrs. Raymond Walker |
| Walter Kratzer | Saundra Walker Manninen |
| Mrs. Walter Kratzer Grossman | Martin Schuster |
| Fred Kratzer | Mrs. Martin Schuster |
| Ralph Behnke | Mrs. Dolph Williams |
| Charles Wentling | John Hakola |
| Mrs. Charles (Betty) Wentling | Mrs. John Hakola |
| Claude Ramkey | Leonard Anderson |
| Mrs. Claude (Lila) Ramkey | Mrs. Leonard (Gertrude) Anderson |
| Joseph Shimko | Orville Wiltshire |
| Mrs. Joseph (Betty) Shimko | Mrs. Orville Wiltshire |
| Grant Kirchhoff | Mrs. Robert L. Bushnell |
| Bruce Kirchhoff | Mrs. Robert A. Bushnell Holmes |
| Everett McRoberts | Lester Boudinot |
| Mrs. Everett McRoberts | Mrs. Lester (Greta) Boudinot |
| Mrs. Vernard Garvin | Mrs. J. O. Schake |
| Herbert Niemeyer | Mrs. Clarence Swope |

Pastors who served as Shepherds at Faith

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Rev. Robert Raabe | 1952 – 1959 |
| Rev. Victor Frederking | 1959 – 1963 |
| Rev. Richard Drews | 1963 – 1967 |
| Rev. Howard Davis | 1967 – 1987 |
| Rev. Ronald Le Pere | 1988 – 2014 |
| Rev. Kevin Guynn | 2012 – Present |