

The History of Peace Lutheran Church

1883 † Rev. Christian Purzner of Wittenberg, WI, a theological student from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO came to this area on horseback in search of Lutheran families to preach about God's Law and His Gospel of grace.

1884 †



Rev. H. Daib, then a young candidate from the seminary, succeeded Rev. Purzner in Wittenberg. This was the era of "circuit riders" who were missionary pastors that covered a large geographical area. Pastor Daib served 12 communities stretching from Tigerton to Ironwood, Michigan.

Sept 1884 † Pastor Daib helped organize the new congregation in Antigo "Der Deutschen Evangelische-Lutherischen Friedensgemeinde U.A.C." (Unaltered Augsburg Confession) with thirteen charter members in Gustav Ulrich's taylor shop on Sept. 9, 1884. We are now known as Peace Lutheran Church. The founders included: G. Ulrich, H. Boldt, F. Berger, C. Voss, L. Theilmann, C. F. Dallmann, H. Berner, A. Kropf, W. Kupper, Sr., L. Krueger, C. Gaertner, H. Findeisen, and B. Stege. Mr. Ulrich became Peace Lutheran's first President of the Congregation.

At that time church services were held in various public halls including the local skating rink as well as in private homes. All services were in German. For the sum of two dollars Mr. Dallmann rented the second floor of his house to the church for the first winter. The following year Peace Lutheran signed a contract with the Congregational Church for the use of their church building for a rental fee of one dollar per worship service.

1885 † A young Concordia Seminary student, Alfred Grimm, joined Rev. H. Daib as his assistant. While serving Antigo, Grimm also supported the needs of the people living in Polar, Norwood, Elmhurst, and Birnamwood. By this time Peace Lutheran Church had grown to twenty-eight families. Grimm returned to the seminary at Springfield after thirteen months and was succeeded by another theological student; G. Drews.

1886 † The congregation purchased seven lots of the present church property from August Zellmer for \$175.

1887 † Finally Rev. Daib was called as the first resident pastor of Peace Lutheran Congregation in Antigo. With congregational consent he built the parsonage on the church property. Construction on the first church building began in June 1887. Each voting member was expected to personally help with the construction project, to hire a man in his place, or to pay \$1.25. The completed church was dedicated in July under Rev. Daib's pastorate. The building measured 26' X 40' and stood on the present property 150 feet from Lincoln Street.

1888 † Rev. Daib accepted a call to Merrill, WI, a larger field of labor. Upon his departure the parsonage was purchased from him for \$800. The Rev. G. Kuechle succeeded Rev Daib, remaining only six months due to poor health.



The First Peace Lutheran School and Classroom

Sept 1889 † Rev. R. Heike was installed as pastor, remaining for two years. It was during Rev. Heike's pastorate, the parochial school gained momentum while conducting classes in the upper story of the parsonage. An agreement was made in November 1889 to build the first school which would measure 18' X 26'. The school was completed in February of 1890 at a cost of \$231.00.

Nov 1891 †



Rev. Alfred Grimm was installed as Pastor. He served for twenty-eight years as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church.

1894 † The congregation, previously supported, in part by synod, became self-supporting.

1901 † With barely room for standing during Sunday services, the congregation grew to surpass the capacity of the original church building. In December it was resolved to build a new church building. Architect A. F. Gruenhagen of Oshkosh, WI drew up the plans.

The old church would be remodeled into a well-lit school building which would accommodate 80 children.

The new church would include a hall in the lower level and a well-equipped kitchen.

The property west of the church was planted with trees creating a little park and offering a splendid background for the church buildings. It was under these trees that many church picnics, school outings and church band concerts-under the leadership of Mr. William Grimm were enjoyed.



Peace Lutheran Church and Second School (Church remodeled to serve as school)

1902 † The new brick church building was dedicated to the glory of the Triune God. This church was built at a cost of \$5,622.50, and the original furnishings cost \$625.

Some of the original 1902 stained glass windows which were moved to our present church building.



1915 † A new pipe organ was purchased for \$2,600 and on August 1st of that year it was dedicated to the service of God.

1919 † Rev. Grimm resigned his pastorate of Peace Church. Reluctantly the congregation accepted his resignation allowing him the opportunity to enter the publishing business. Rev. Grimm was a writer himself using the pen name "Alfred Ira."

July 1919 † Rev. O. Neumann of Athens, WI was called and installed as pastor following the resignation of Rev. A. Grimm. In addition to the regular German services on Sundays, for the first time an English service was introduced. A large church bell was installed, and still remains on our new campus above the west side of our building.

1929 † The greatest blessing to the church property during Rev. Neumann's pastorate was the building of the two-story brick school building. Built during the Great Depression in 1929 for a total cost of \$28,439.22. The congregation made pledges of \$6,998 and the Ladies Aid made a \$3,251 contribution to the project.



Laying of the 1929 School Cornerstone



1937 Upper Grades Classroom

Feb 1938 † Rev. O. Neumann offered his resignation from his pastorate after nineteen years of service.

June 1938 †



The Rev. Arthur Fergin of Ironwood, MI, was installed as pastor by the former pastor, H. Daib with the Rev. C. D. Griese of Polar assisting.



1947 Grade 4, 5, & 6



1949 † As the congregation observed its sixty-fifth anniversary a decision was made to undertake an extensive church property improvement program

The actual work, however, was not begun until about a year later and completed at an approximate cost of \$40,000.00. A major improvement to the church proper was the installation of stained-glass windows. The three windows on the southwest side of the current sanctuary and the round "rose" window above the altar were salvaged from the old church.

In addition to the church improvements, the school also underwent the conversion of the upper level assembly hall into 2 more classrooms, making a total of 4, a school office and library.

1952 † Peace begins to air its worship service on local radio station WATK.

1955 † The Rev. Arthur Fergin accepted a call to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Dishman, WA.

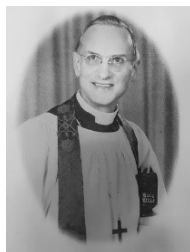
June 1956 †



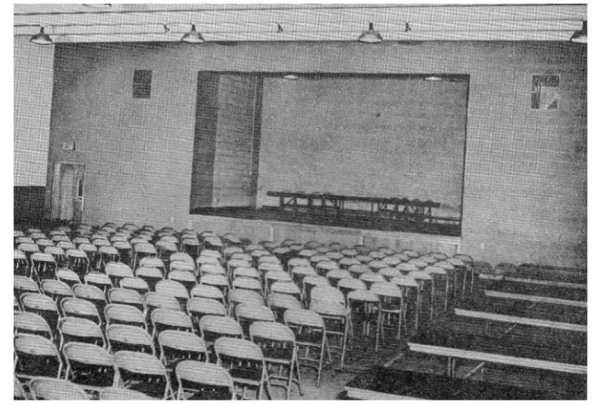
Rev. Robert A. Hobus of Milwaukee was installed. After an energetic two years of faithful service, Pastor Hobus accepted a call to Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, a newly founded mission congregation in Greendale, WI.

1958 † Peace undertook another school expansion program, which involved adding two new classrooms, an office area, and a new school entrance to the existing school building at a cost of \$31,000.00. These classrooms took the place of the existing lower level gym.

Aug 1958 †



Rev. Luther V. Stephan of Arlington Heights, IL, accepted the call to Peace Lutheran and was installed. He served Peace for six years. During his pastorate Peace engaged in another school expansion. The "1961 addition" include a new gym with stage, 2 more classrooms, a kitchen, pastor & principal offices, a new main office, and new restrooms and locker rooms near the gym. The total cost of this project was \$135,000. The congregation members made 8-year pledges to the project.



1961 Addition and new Gym and Stage

May 1962 † Dedication of Peace Lutheran School Addition. School enrollment reached 196.

Mar 1965 †



Rev. Joseph Schultz was installed as Pastor after Pastor Stephan accepted another call the previous year.

1968 † The congregation authorized an expenditure of \$25,000 for the erection of a new parsonage to replace the old structure. Pastor and Mrs. Schultz and their family became the first occupants. As the congregation continued to grow a number of vicars served Peace from the seminaries throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The congregation finally felt the need to call an additional pastor to lead the ministry in this place.

1972 † Rev. Bernie Lutz was the first to serve as associate pastor. He did so for a short time in 1972 as he was recovering from a back injury sustained as missionary in New Guinea. Because of Pastor Lutz's work at Peace some Antigo potato farmers were able to ship seed potatoes to New Guinea to rescue the potato crop there after a hard freeze ruined the crop.

1972 †



Rev. Donald Shoewe joined Peace Lutheran as an associate pastor following Rev Lutz's departure. Rev. Shoewe accepted a call to another parish in 1975.

1976 †



Rev. Robert Stohlman was installed and remained with Peace Lutheran until late 1978, serving with Rev. Schultz.

1978 †



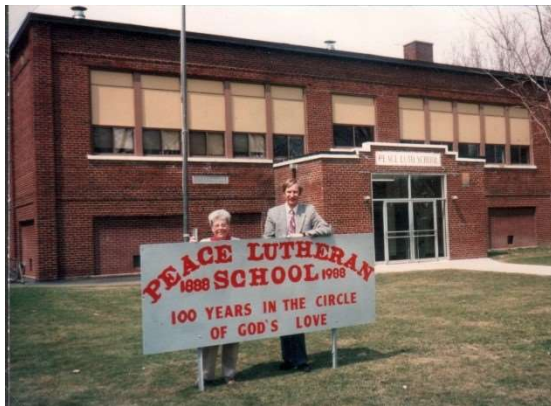
Rev. Randall Neal, who had been serving in Ruston, Louisiana, accepted the Call to serve as Associate Pastor alongside Rev. Schultz. He later became the Coordinating Pastor of Peace after Pastor Schultz left.

Dec 1982 † After 17 years of service Rev. Schultz accepted a call to Fall Creek, WI.

1983 † Rev. Joseph Marsh, who had been serving in York, Nebraska was installed as Associate Pastor. He remained until October 2001.

1984 † The congregation celebrated Peace Lutheran's 100th anniversary with year-long events and reunions. A major expansion project was undertaken in remembrance. The project included pitched roofs, a conference room, rooms for library, music, and additional storage. The project also included painting of the education and office areas in the building.

1988 † Peace Lutheran School celebrated "100 Years in the Circle of God's Love."



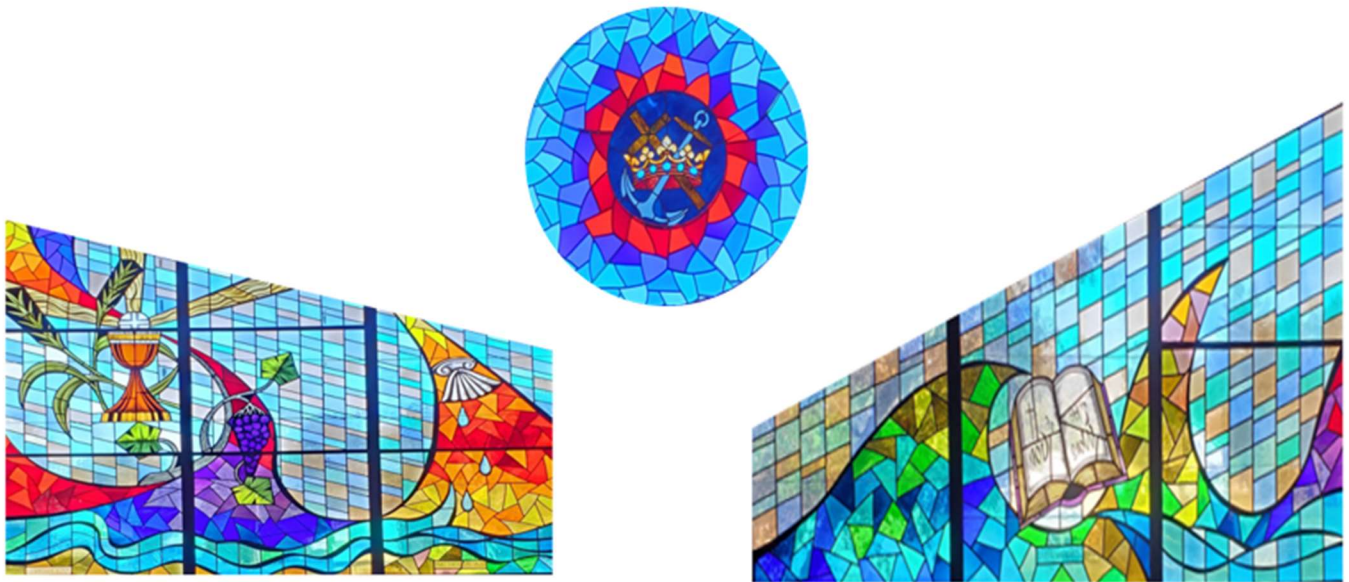
The 100 Year Kick-Off with Principal Dave Selmeyer

1988 † As the congregation grew and the number of families increased Peace called it's first DCE (Director of Christian Education), Bill Grimm. Also serving in that role or one that was similar over the next 20 years would be Jim Freitag, Jerry Hays, Jerry Jiter, and David Reineke.

1989 † A building committee was formed to plan for a new worship center to replace the 1902 church building. The congregation approved a new masterplan for future expansion a year later.

Oct 1991 † Construction began on a new 500 seat worship center and narthex. The new facility would include up to date technology (projector and screen) and the flexibility for various worship styles. A new radio broadcast room, cry room, and restrooms are included in the \$1,200,000 project. New stained glass windows would be included in the new worship space as well as incorporating 4 of the windows from the old church.





**The Cross, Anchor, & Crown Window from the old church is above the altar.
The new stained glass windows show the means of grace:
Sacraments of Communion & Baptism (left) and the Word of God (right)**

Feb 1993 † The new worship center and narthex are dedicated on Valentines Day.

1999 † The congregation voted to move forward with "Phase II" of the master building plan. This project included the conversion of the previous gym to a large fellowship hall; addition of a full-sized gym, commercial-grade kitchen, computer lab, library, music and youth rooms; and an enlarged narthex. Three homes along Deeglise Street were also purchased. The total project cost was \$3,000,000.

Feb 2001 † Formal dedication services were held for a 33,000 square foot Phase II building expansion. Later this year Pastor Marsh resigned his Call from Peace.



Feb 2003 †



Rev. Scott Kruse accepted the Call to serve as Associate Pastor with Rev. Randall Neal serving as Coordinating Pastor. Pastor Kruse oversaw the expansion of Peace's youth ministry program with the help of dedicated volunteers.

2004 †

Rev. Randall Neal accepted a Call to Minnesota after serving 26 years at Peace. Peace begins a 3 year debt reduction campaign "Forward With Christ." \$700,000 is paid down on existing debt through the course of the campaign.

Aug 2006 †



Rev. David Karolus accepted the Call to serve as Coordinating Pastor. His title is later changed to Lead Pastor.

2007 †

Peace adopts its 7 core values: Biblical Authority, Christ-Centered, Christian Education, Relationships, Outreach, Organization, and Quality and a revised mission statement: "As disciples of Jesus Christ our purpose is to strengthen each other in Him so that we share His love and Good News with everyone."

2009 †

This year was cause for excitement as Peace Lutheran celebrated its 125th anniversary. The year long celebration included special services featuring former pastors Rev. Joseph Schultz and Rev. Randall Neal as well as Rev. Don Fondow, son of Peace and MN North District President. The year was capped off with a special banquet highlighted by Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary St. Louis. This year also marked the retirement of Dave Selmeyer after 36 years as teacher and principal at Peace. Mr. Selmeyer was known for his steady and faithful leadership throughout his tenure at Peace.



2013 †

A new vision statement is adopted by the congregation: "Peace will nurture and educate families in our community, beginning with children, so that they live abundant lives in Christ." A 3 year debt reduction campaign begins entitled GIFT "Growing In Faith Together." An exploratory committee is formed to look into the possibility of starting a childcare.

August 2014 †

The Peace Lutheran education ministry was expanded with the addition of a Christian Childcare Learning Center. Annette Miller was Called to lead the new ministry. God blessed the fruits of this faithful effort to serve the childcare needs of our community. With the addition of our childcare ministry which includes before and after school care, school enrollment once again began to increase after several decades of decline.



Childcare Director Annette Miller is ready to cut the ribbon at the opening of the Peace Childcare Learning Center.

2017 ✝ Peace Lutheran School becomes part of the Wisconsin Parental Choice program. In October Peace hosts the Antigo Circuit "Reformation Fest" celebrating the 500th Anniversary of Reformation.



Nov 2019 ✝ Due to the rapidly expanding childcare, and demand for infant care in the community, Peace launches the Building Families in Christ ministry investment campaign. Over \$2,300,000 is committed to the expansion project.

June 2020 ✝ At a special voters meeting the congregation approves the \$4,300,000 ministry expansion which will provide space for the growing childcare ministry, allow for the school to return to single grade classrooms and provide a new, secure entrance and main office area for all of Peace's ministries.



2021 ✝ The dedication service for the new addition was held on Sunday, October 31, 2021. The 16,300 sq. ft. building expansion provided 5 new childcare rooms, expanding the childcare ministry to include infants and toddlers for the first time. The project also provided new 4K & 5K school rooms, and a new main entrance on Lincoln St. to the main office and administrative offices. Ms. Jenny Weyker is hired as our new Childcare Director.



2023 ✝ Following 9 years of participation in the seminary's vicar training program, Peace voters Call Jarod Fenske from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis as Associate Pastor. The Peace voters also Call Mr. Paul Thompson from Concordia Lutheran School in Peoria, IL to become our new School Principal.



On July 8, 2023 Pastor Jarod Fenske and Principal Paul Thompson were installed.

2024 ✝ Peace Lutheran Ministries celebrates 140 years of ministry as a congregation, 135 years of school ministry, and 10 years of childcare ministry October 5th and 6th with special services and activities. Thanks be to God and His many blessings! "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." *Hebrews 13:8*