

50 YEARS OF
GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH + HOUMA
LOUISIANA



**A brief history of Grace Lutheran Church
1956 to 2007**

A Brief History of Grace Lutheran Church

Houma, La

1956-2007

On September 13, 1956, a group of Lutherans gathered in the Terrebonne Parish Library with the Rev. O. H. Reinboth, the Executive Secretary of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (Southern District), and the Rev. F. Weisenborne of Lafayette, Louisiana. They requested the Southern District to recognize the newly formed church and help the Houma area with the services of a pastor.

On September 17, 1956, the Board of Directors of the Southern District, acting upon the recommendation of the Executive Secretary, requested Rev. Jules Bush of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in New Orleans to help begin worship services in Houma. With 26 souls gathering to worship the Savior, the first worship service in Houma was led by Pastor Bush on October 21, 1956 in the Shady Oaks Recreation Center on Verret Street.



On November 5, 1956 the first business meeting was held in the parish library to further organize the group. Members

present at this meeting and signing a "Scroll" to commemorate the event were:

Mr. & Mrs. Olden Dupre
Mr. & Mrs. J. V. Hawkins, Jr.
Peggy Hawkins (child)
Mrs. Elaine Cofield
Mrs. Hildegarde Gautreaux
Miss Clara S. Haupt
Mr. & Mrs. Harry S. Weigmann
Loren Schenkelburg (child)
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schenkelburg
Mr. & Mrs. Oliver H. Crain, Jr.
Mr. Stanley E. Normington
Mr. F.N. Wyatt

Temporary officers were elected to serve until a charter could be drawn up and a permanent organization established. These first officers were:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Chairman | Mr. J.V. Hawkins, Jr. |
| Secretary | Mr. F.N. Wyatt |
| Treasurer | Mrs. J.V. Hawkins, Jr. |
| Financial Secretary | Mr. Harry S. Weigmann |

The first baptism was performed on February 4, 1957, and the first communion service was held on February 17, 1957. A constitution was adopted on March 11, 1957 and the church was finally given the name of Grace Lutheran Church.

Seeing the needs and enthusiasm of the group in Houma, together with the needs of the Lutherans in the Morgan City area, the Southern District extended a solemn call for a candidate to serve the Houma and Morgan City congregations as a dual parish.

August 25, 1957, the Rev. Richard E. Kuehnert was installed as the first resident Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church. In October of the same year the church was officially received into membership

of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.



Sunday services were held for a while in the music room at Terrebonne High School. Grace Lutheran sponsored the first Easter Sunrise service in the Terrebonne Parish area on April 6, 1958 at the Houma Drive-In Theater. The Service gave the community an opportunity to worship the Risen Christ outdoors on Easter morning. This service continued for many years and was offered to the whole community. In later years, it was held at the Southland Mall, at the old church site on Hollywood Road, and the last years, on the lawn of the Southdown Plantation Museum in Houma.

On November 10, 1957, the first official officers of Grace Lutheran Church were installed. They were:

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| President | Mr. Harry Weigmann |
| Vice President | Mr. O.H. Crain |
| Secretary | Mr. David Counts |
| Treasurer | Mr. Stanley E. Normington |

Those assigned to serve the various boards in the congregation were:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Board of Elders | Harry Weigmann F.N. Wyatt |
| Board of Trustees | Olden Dupre Robert Duhon Robert Schenkelberg |

Board of Education O.H. Crain
 A.A. Warnken
 Gladys Dupre
 Board of Finance Stanley E. Normington
 Harry Weigmann
 J.V. Hawkins Jr.
 Mrs. Harry Weigmann

The congregation continued to grow under Rev. Kuehnert. His enthusiasm and concern was a constant source of inspiration. Pastor Kuehnert served both Morgan City and Houma for two years, and just Houma for an additional three years.

**First Confirmation Class – Terrebonne High School Stadium
 Anita Weigmann, Margaret Granier & J. Gary Fister**



Property was acquired for a church site on Hollywood Road and construction began, with the groundbreaking ceremonies on February 7, 1960, and the new chapel was dedicated on August 14, 1960.



On January 29, 1963, the Rev. J.C. Henning was installed as the second resident pastor of Grace Lutheran Church. Christ Church in Morgan City also installed a pastor and Grace was now an independent subsidized parish. Under Pastor Henning's guidance, the congregation grew and took an active part in the community with a special mission emphasis. After two and a half years of serving Grace, Pastor Henning accepted a call.



On December 12, 1965, with 92 communicate members, the church installed its third resident pastor, Rev. Rodger H. Grummer.



Also during this time Rev. John Warnken, a member of Grace Lutheran, was ordained at Grace on August 25, 1974.



During his time here at Grace, Pastor Grummer served as President of the Terrebonne Association of Ministers and was the creator and moderator of the TV religious talk show, *Consensus Eleven*. He was also selected to be part of the Southern District's Board of Evangelism.

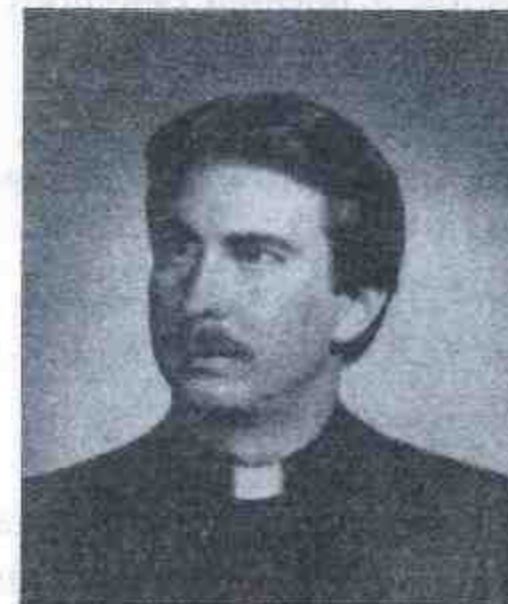
In June of 1977, Pastor Grummer accepted a call to Euless, Texas. At the time of his departure, the congregation had 274 members, 191 of whom were communicants.

In March of 1978, Rev. Dr. Craig W. Rinker was installed as the fourth resident pastor of Grace Lutheran Church. Pastor Rinker was active in the community as well as within the District.



In the early 1980's the State of Louisiana purchased the church property on Hollywood Road to facilitate the extension of Tunnel Boulevard, now Martin Luther King Boulevard. The last service at that location was held on March 20, 1983. The congregation accepted an invitation from St. Matthew Episcopal Church to use their facility for worship on March 27, 1983. Property was purchased on Valhi Boulevard and groundbreaking services were held on October 16, 1983. The new facility was dedicated October 21, 1984.

Grace grew to over 400 members, 270 of whom were communicants. Two members of Grace became pastors during this time. Rev. Richard Roy Armstrong, Jr. was ordained in the Holy Ministry on June 10, 1979 and Rev. Alan Korinek was ordained at Grace on June 14, 1981.



Charter member of Grace, Mr. F.N. Wyatt, graduated from the Lay Ministry program in May of 1984.



1988 The newly constructed classrooms in the rear of the church were dedicated.

1989 Mr. Floyd "Mike" Wyatt was commissioned and installed as a certified Lay Minister at Grace.

1990 The church entered into an agreement with Blockbuster Video, Inc. with an option to sell to them the remaining church property by Shoney's Restaurant.

A study was commissioned as to the feasibility of building a mausoleum and cemetery.

1991 Grace had a mortgage burning ceremony closing the church debt.

1992 On April 12, the new fellowship hall was dedicated to the glory of God.

On August 9, Rev. Rinker gave his last service as Pastor of Grace.

Hurricane Andrew paid a visit to Houma causing some damage to our Church. Members gave aid to victims through the AAL branch in Houma.

1993 On January 3, Rev. Charles C. Minetree was installed as Grace's 5th resident pastor.



1994 The Christian Resource Center was opened.

1995 On July 23rd, Rev. Charles Minetree gave his last sermon at Grace. He took a call to Pennsylvania. Rev. John Ellermann served Grace as interim pastor.



1996 A call was placed to Rev. William Childress from Augusta, Kansas.

1997 On February 21, Rev. Childress was installed as Grace's 6th resident pastor.

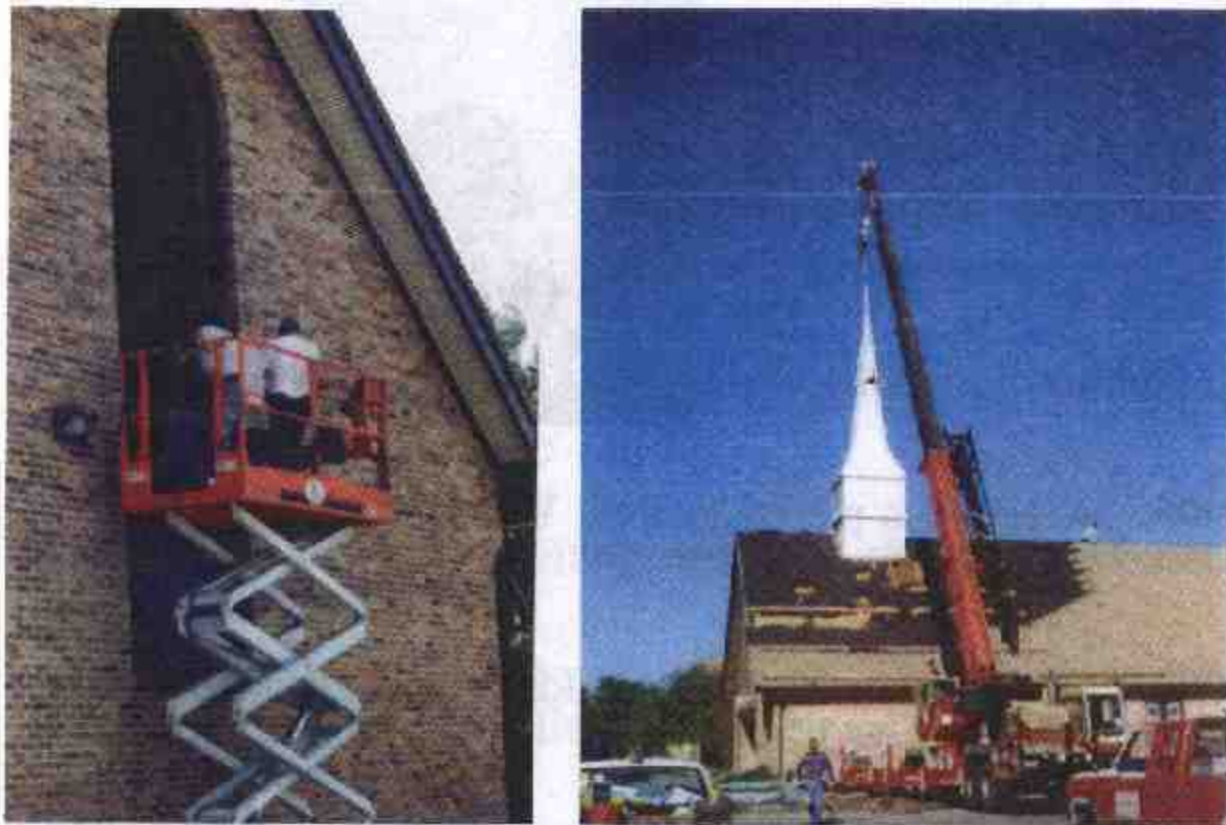


1998 Membership - 264 Baptized and 201 Communicants

1999 Membership - Baptized 249 and 195 Communicants

2000 On March 18, Grace Lutheran Church was struck by a tornado. The Good Shepherd stained glass window, the focal point of our sanctuary, was destroyed. There was extensive damage to the roof and steeple; also the outer wall of the fellowship hall

moved. This required the removal of the wall and rebuilding of it as well as re-bracing of the roof to the existing walls of the fellowship hall.



Grace hosted its first Fall Festival. Proceeds from this festival were to help with the repair of the tornado damage.

Grace lost one of its founding members, Mr. F.N. Wyatt to the Lord's call. He will be remembered and missed.

Mr. Gerald Bergeron acted as lay minister, filling the pulpit in the absence of a full time pastor or an interim Pastor.

End of year membership 219 Baptized and 172 communicants.

2001 Pastor Childress retired - he gave his last service at Grace on January 28, 2001.

Church members voted to sell four (4) acres of land located east of the church and the church debt was paid off with some of the funds from this sale. Replacement of the roof and removal of the steeple were items discussed and voted on in the various voters' meetings.

Member Thomas Hesselgrave built the first raffle item for the Fall Festival, a 6' x 6' cedar child's play house. The recipients of the 2001 Fall Festival proceeds were the Terrebonne Food Bank, YMCA, The Haven Women's Shelter and the LCMS Seminary.

Pastor Kuehnert was instrumental in helping fill the void by serving as interim pastor. He took over the teaching of adult bible study and also inquiry classes. Grace sent out 1000 flyers notifying local residents of the classes and inviting all who would like further understanding of the Lutheran faith to attend.

Replacement of the existing roof, air conditioning and heating units in the sanctuary and lighting in the parking area were completed under the direction of Dale Boger and Andy Kraus.

In general, the congregation pulled together to share with the community and with each other in the absence of a full time pastor.

2002 Rev. Kelly Bedard was installed as Grace's 7th resident pastor on September 15, 2002. He and his family transferred in from Eugene, Oregon. Julie Bedard became the church organist and music director, after the departure of Ruth Mullenburg.



2003 An outreach program was started in the Patterson and Lockport areas through weekly Bible study groups led by Pastor Bedard. Ongoing plans for organizing a sister congregation in the Thibodaux area were also started.

In addition, Pastor and elder, Lloyd Chiasson, initiated a weekly Bible study for the students at Nicholls State University.

2003 GLC's Early Childhood Center opened for business in August under the direction of Julie Bedard. While the center started by offering classes for 3 and 4 year-olds, it has grown to include 2 year-old students as well, providing them with basic Christian education through the educational programs provided.

GLC Patio, a Friday night social "coffee night" was started. Gradually, this effort grew to "Music with a Message", held once a month, with a variety of Christian musicians performing as witnesses for Christ.

In addition, a Wednesday night weekly potluck followed by a Prayer & Praise service was started and continues even today.

2005 The first graduation class from GLC's Early Childhood Center was held in May.



Rev. Mark J. Borchert was ordained on July 10th and installed as Grace's first assistant pastor. He came to Houma from Iowa. He took over the campus ministry at NSU and was the youth coordinator for the congregation.



Hurricanes Katrina & Rita caused considerable damage to lower Terrebonne Parish. GLC was designated a distribution center for the outpouring of love received from fellow Lutherans all over the country. An outgrowth of this relief effort was Bayou Grace, a community based outreach program, now based in Chauvin, La, focused at first on hurricane relief, but also on coastal restoration and the construction or renovation of homes damaged or destroyed by the storms. Volunteers from various locations around the country provide the manpower/physical labor for these projects.

Pastor Borchert visited other Lutheran churches in the Southern District area to assist them in hurricane relief efforts.

2006 Rev. Mark Borchert resigned his position at Grace. His last service was held on April 16, 2006.

2007 Rev. Bedard resigned his position on January 31, 2007. At this time there were 328 baptized and 232 communicant members at GLC.

Rev. Richard Rudnik was installed as Grace's 8th resident pastor on June 24, 2007.



GLC's held its 8th Fall Festival this year on October 27th. Over the past seven years the following organizations have been the beneficiaries of the net proceeds of this annual event:

- Bethlehem Children's Home
- The Lutheran Church Seminary
- Terrebonne Food Bank
- Bayou Cane Adult Education Center
- The Bunk House
- St. Vincent de Paul Tri-Parish Community Pharmacy
- Project Learn
- The Haven Women's Shelter
- YMCA

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A very special THANK YOU goes out to Gladys Dupre and Charlene Shroyer for spending countless hours browsing through our various historical picture albums and scrapbooks for selections to use in this pictorial and written history booklet.

Your 50th Anniversary Committee

- Gladys Dupre – Charter Member
- Charlene Shroyer – Charter Member
- Bonnie L. Dupre, Chairperson & Charter Member
- Connie Oswalt
- Glenn Meyer
- Lola & Jerry Ledet
- Dr. Ray Cinnater
- Cindy Bush
- Lynda Kelley
- Donna Boger



In Memoriam

Rev. Richard E. Kuehnert



Ordained, August 25, 1957
Served Grace Houma, 1957 – 1962
Entered Heaven on May 14, 2007

Rev. Richard Kuehnert, the first resident pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in Houma, LA, was called home earlier this year. This 50th Anniversary history booklet is dedicated to his memory and in thankfulness for all the gifts of time, talent and treasure he provided to this congregation over the years. We are saddened by our loss, but it is heaven's gain. He missed celebrating his 50th year in the ministry by just a few months, so we wish to celebrate his life today.

Miss Clara Haupt



Ms. Haupt was our volunteer organist for many, many years, as well as a very active member of the Ladies' Mission Guild. Her relentless dedication and devotion to her Savior and to Grace is not forgotten.

Mr. Mike Wyatt (Picture in history section)

Mr. Mike served as our one and only Lay Minister. He is sadly missed by his family, including his church family, and will always be remembered for his commitment to his Savior and to Grace and its members.

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Special Thanks to all who contributed to the success of our year-long 50th Anniversary Celebration

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