

*The Life of  
Our Redeemer  
Lutheran 1941  
Church 1991  
and Its People*



**"Proclaiming Our Redeemer With  
Shouts Of Joy"**

**Isaiah 48:20**

Anniversaries are important for God's people! In fact God Himself commanded that His people, the Children of Israel, would pause every year to remember and celebrate the great deeds He had performed on their behalf -- How He had delivered them from their slavery in Egypt, protected them in the wilderness and finally brought them into the promised land. Each year they were to recall these actions and tell them to their children so they too would know what a great, loving and merciful God they had and how He had blessed them.

## *Preface*

The history you are about to read is written from this same perspective. It is enjoyable and interesting to read about the past fifty years -- you will probably learn things about Our Redeemer Lutheran Church that you didn't know before. We have been blessed with some great leaders who had wisdom and foresight; we have been blessed with faithful, dedicated pastors, teachers and other ministers. Yet our history is not their story, it is His story, God's story: the story of the many ways our glorious Lord has blessed ORLC through people, programs, buildings and ministries. So as you read, give praise and thanks to God because He is the one who gets the credit.

One reason the Lord wanted His people to remember their past was to give them courage and confidence for the future. So as we look at how God has worked in our midst these last 50 years, we can boldly and confidently look ahead, knowing He will be with us and we will continue to be abundantly blessed in the next 50 years,

Sola Deo Gloria -  
To God Alone Be the Glory -

Pastor Houska

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# The Churches

*“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may  
declare the wonderful deeds of him who called  
you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*

*1 Peter 2:9*

CHARTER MEMBERS of OUR REDEEMER  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Dallas, Texas 1941

Mrs. Martin Albert  
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Albert  
Mr. & Mrs. Marvin R. Crumley  
Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Daniel  
Mr. & Mrs. Leif K. Frickstad  
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Frasch  
Mr. & Mrs. B.C. Gersch  
    Bernice Gersch (Melde)  
Mr. & Mrs. Wm. C. Gersch  
W. C. Gersch, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Wesley Hickman  
Mr. Howard R. Johnsen  
Mr. Fred Klenk  
Mr. & Mrs. Elmore M. Klenk  
    D. Margaret Klenk (Peggy Hines)  
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Kramer  
Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd S. Lamb  
    Robert Lamb  
    Janet Lamb  
Mrs. R.E. Lang  
Mrs. W. J. Rellahan  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Paul Ramey  
Mr. & Mrs. Walter J.E. Schiebel  
    William Schiebel  
    Thomas Schiebel  
    Mary Schiebel  
    Richard Schiebel  
Mr. & Mrs. Henry G. Sterner  
Mr. & Mrs. Morris J. Keil  
Mr. Gus Melde  
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth O. Bergstrom  
Mr. & Mrs. H. A. Burandt  
    Wilma Burandt  
    Norman Burandt  
Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd L. Johnson  
    Harold Johnson  
    Dorothy Johnson  
Mr. E. Fred Herschbach  
Mr. John L. Herschbach  
Dr. & Mrs. A. R. Beckman  
    Yvonne Beckman (Obenchain)  
Mr. & Mrs. Albert H. Sterner  
Mrs. F. K. Wilman

In another time and another place, it might have been the courthouse steps, the pot-bellied stove at the corner store, the bandstand in the park or Ma's diner, but what better place for men to get together than Ben Gersch's barbershop? They discussed everything from baseball scores, presidential elections and Hitler to the Depression, but the topic that generated the most interest with a small group of nine men was the possibility of a new Lutheran church in the North Dallas area.

## The First Church

These men talked and talked as they stood on the brink of several explosions: a World War...population in the northern part of the city...a faith that a new Lutheran church could lift high the cross of Jesus.

Their enthusiasm and dedication to the establishment of a church was rewarded when they traded their dream for hope of reality at an organizational meeting at Elmore Klenk's home. The nucleus of this group was drawn from the two closest Missouri Synod Lutheran churches: Zion in downtown Dallas, and Trinity English in South Dallas, so named because its services were in English. At that time Zion still had services in the German language.

In 1941 Dallas was one hundred years old with a population of some 300,000 concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the city. It was surrounded by small communities such as Richardson, Irving, Garland, Plano and others. The Trinity Industrial District was just a gleam in the eyes of the developers, and Love Field was a World War I relic located in the middle of a cow pasture. After December 7, 1941, it would become a hub of military activity housing a section of the Air Transport Command and Our Redeemer eventually would serve men and women stationed there. Freeways, Tollways, Expressways, Malls and Gridlock were foreign words. Lands north of Lovers Lane, except for the one small pocket of Preston Hollow, were either still being planned or supporting crops of six foot sunflowers! Northwest Highway was a two-lane, humpback country road bordered by bar ditches. There was one gasoline station on the corner of Northwest Highway and Douglas, and a drug store near its intersection with Preston Road, which was a part of the old Chisholm Trail. This was the crest of the "high country" in Dallas.

The area chosen for the future new Lutheran church was a field in the "sunflower belt" that would, one day, be called "Preston Center", mecca of North Dallas shopping until the construction of NorthPark, the Galleria and other shopping malls years later.

At this time building restrictions said that no building could be over two stories tall. The gravel road adjacent to the property chosen had no name when Elmore Klenk applied for a building permit, so the City of Dallas asked that this street be named before any construction. What better name than "Luther Lane" as the address for the New Church.

To further the establishment of that church, the nine men who met on Sunday, February 2, 1941, to discuss what had to be done to make their dream come true were Warren Albert, Leif K. Frickstad, Ben C. Gersch, J. Wesley Hickman, Hans and Howard Johnsen, Fred Kramer, Elmore Klenk and Walter J.E. Schiebel.

Hans Johnsen was a Charter member of Trinity Church so he knew the steps to be taken to organize a new church. They then elected Fred Kramer, president; Elmore Klenk, Secretary and Wesley Hickman, Treasurer, as the

pre-organization officers.

These men were so enthusiastic they held weekly meetings to reach their goal as quickly as possible. A letter written to Rev. W.H Bewie of the Texas Mission Board asked him to meet with them, but he declined due to other commitments.

Other dates were proposed, but Bewie could find no free time. He did suggest that approval of this new church be obtained from the three Missouri Synod Lutheran churches in Dallas. Pastor Klindworth of Trinity, Pastor Napier of Grace and Pastor Roberts of Zion all gave support.

By the third meeting on February 16, a letter was sent to Rev. A. T. Tong of the English District outlining the hopes for the new church in Dallas and a site for it was presented. Before the next regular meeting February 23, a special meeting was called to discuss the enthusiastic response from the English District. Talks with Highland Park School District resulted in the use of Armstrong Elementary School on Sundays for Worship and Sunday School. There were already 25 families committed to the still unorganized congregation.



These organizing leaders approved the site location at a cost of \$5,500 and asked for and got Rev. H.A. Burandt, English District Secretary of Missions to meet with them on March 13. He approved of their efforts and suggested a list of candidates to fill the pulpit. A building committee was appointed immediately to find the church a home.



On March 23 a proposed constitution was read and building sketches presented. After only two short months of concentrated, but joyful effort, the dream was about to be reality. The charter members had approved the proposed name, Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the constitution!

The first permanent officers elected were Fred Kramer, president; John Herschbach, vice president; J. P. Ramey, recording secretary; Warren Albert, treasurer; J.W. Hickman, financial secretary; and W.J.E. Schiebel, Sunday School superintendent. Elmore Klenk, Leif Frickstad and H.G. Sterner were named Trustees. Fred Herschbach; B.C. Gersch, Marvin Crumley, Lloyd Daniel and Lloyd Lamb became the first deacons.

The charter from the State of Texas was received on April 9, 1941. The very first church service was held April 27 at Armstrong School with O.H. Horn, a seminary student doing secular work in Dallas, as speaker. Horn ministered to the group at a salary of \$3.00 per Sunday until the arrival of the permanent

pastor, Rev. H.A. Burandt. August Heck, a member of the Dallas Symphony and substitute organist at Trinity, provided piano music for services at \$1.50 per Sunday. The first communion ever held for Our Redeemer congregation was on July 27 using borrowed communion ware from Trinity church.

The members bought a cornerstone of Indiana Bedford rock for \$16.50 and it was laid November 30 with Pastor Roberts of Zion, as festival speaker. The church was officially dedicated February 1, 1942, just a year after the nine men dreamed of a new Lutheran church in North Dallas. The Rev. Professor Martin J. Neeb of Austin delivered the dedication sermon.

Even though the church was built during a wartime economy, construction was permitted since the materials had been purchased prior to December 7, "the day of infamy" when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

After approval from the Mission Board, the bid for Architect on the building and parsonage was awarded to Luther Sadler & Associates. Elmore Klenk directed the overall building construction. The building contained some innovations which have continued in successive sanctuaries - the pew kneelers and the cry room. However the only art work remaining from the original church building are the amber windows in the narthex of the present church.

The first service in the new building was held in the Sunday School Auditorium Christmas Eve, 1942.



*By January 16 the congregation was in the church proper and celebrated the first wedding when Bernice Gersch married Gus Melde.*

busses scheduled, one before and after Sunday School and church. Several of the congregation's teenagers met their driving requirements for licenses driving the shuttle. Another shuttle service, inaugurated in May, 1942, went from Love Field to the church to accommodate the military men and women stationed there.

The Sunday School section included five class rooms, an auditorium, kitchen and the Pastor's study. This with the 7-room parsonage was appraised at \$33,000.



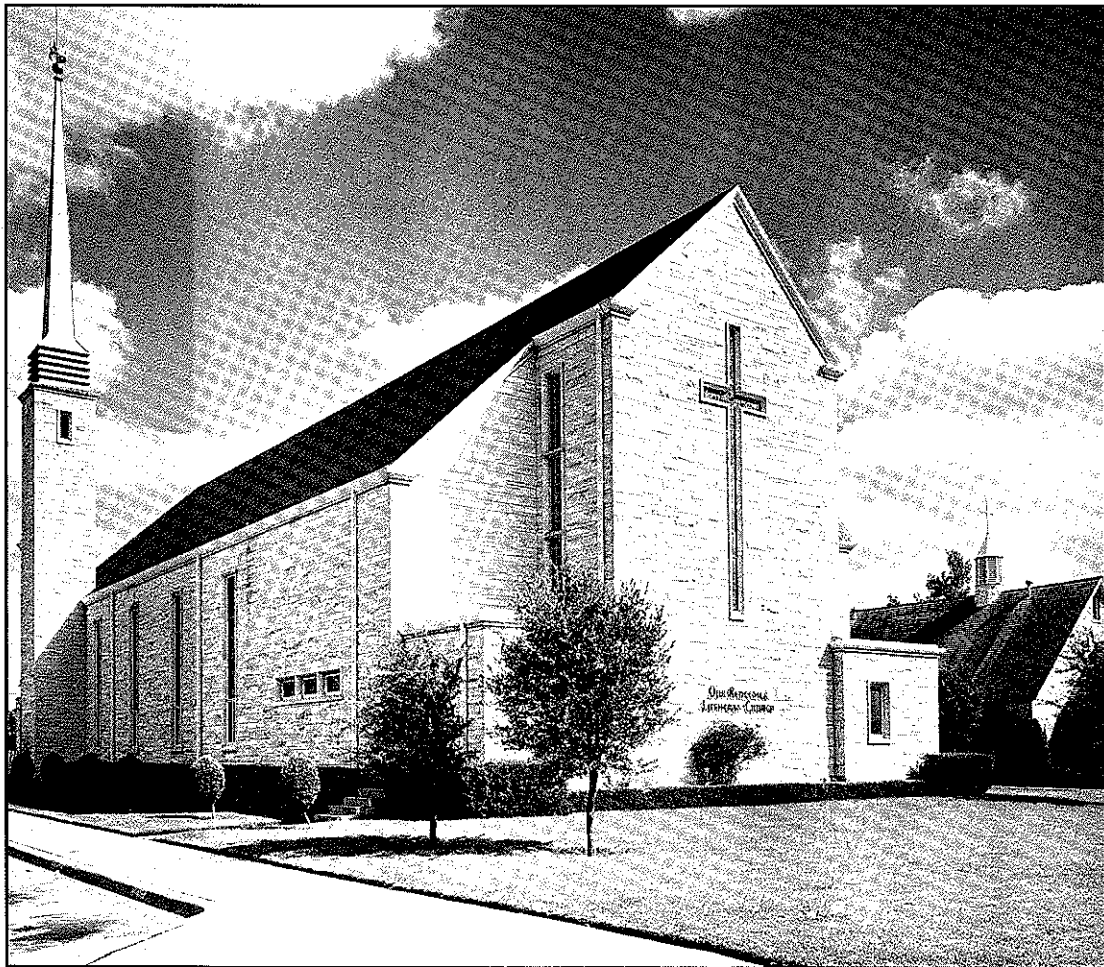
*Blessings poured down abundantly from the Lord: the building site dedication May 4, 1941...Pastor Burandt's acceptance of the call...his installation September 21...and ground breaking in October:*

The first baptism was for Warren and Albertine Albert's daughter, Barbara, July 14, 1941. This was followed in January, 1942 when Diane Keil, Cynthia Ramey and Eric Bergstrom were baptized in the building.

At last! - a place of their own for worship and Sunday School; but a new problem developed: Our Redeemer was eight blocks from the end of the bus line, far too far for parishioners and guests to walk. So a shuttle service was organized to the only two



*This original building made of Austin cut-stone had a cathedral ceiling interior, 50-ft.nave seating 210 and chancel with choir pews seating 24. The building was 130 ft. long. All woodwork was finished in walnut including exposed trusses and oak furniture.*



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*The exterior of the new church again was Austin stone with Mexican brick interior. Laminated wood arches supported the roof and formed the side aisles. Corkboard and insulated paneling provided acoustical treatment. The altar was of Macchiavecchia marble, the pulpit and lectern of white oak. The pews were Appalachian oak. The choir pews were recessed in both sides of the chancel, which was faced with rose mosaic tile inset with crosses of gold and multi-colored tiles.*

Over the next 13 years growth was a beacon burning bright for Our Redeemer. All facets of this little jewel of a church reflected God's blessings. The parsonage was dedicated March 22, 1942 and on December 6 the pipe organ was dedicated and Mrs. Ruth Rohloff installed as Minister of Music.

Within just four years the congregation became self-sustaining. The formative years with Synod's help were a thing of the past. During this time ORLC had two deaconesses, Gloria Zupfer and Aileen Rensner; parish worker Soukoup and the first vicar, Harry Hager.

## The Second Church

In January, 1954, the constitution was changed to allow women to attend congregational meetings...to listen and to speak on congregational business, but not to vote. Nineteen years after the first request for a new mission church in Dallas, the congregation joined the Texas District of the Missouri Synod. It was 1960.

With the heavy growth it was evident that the three services on Sunday mornings were not sufficient. The number being served totaled 650 souls - a dramatic increase in 13 years. A new sanctuary was the answer. Then the old one could be used for Sunday School and the growing parish school. Ground breaking for the new church at the existing location was October 10, 1954 and the cornerstone laid April 14, 1955. Bennett & Crittendon were the architects.

Pastor Burandt conducted the rite of dedication October 23, 1955, with Rev. Hugo S. Kleiner, president of the English District, speaker.

The committeemen during the construction period included Warren Albert, Steering; Wesley Hickman and Howard Johnsen, Finance; Gus Melde, Plans and Construction; Elmer Gast, Furnishings and Equipment; and W.J.E.Schiebel, Christian Education and Fellowship.

Rev. Walter H. Meyer, Jr. was installed as the second pastor on Passion Sunday, March 19, 1961. Pastor Burandt spoke and Pastor W. M. Dommer, Circuit Counselor, served as installing officer. Pastor Carl A. Gaertner, First Vice-President of the Texas District, also participated.



*Barbara Yates' wedding was another 'first' at ORLC, as she was one of the hearing impaired served at ORLC.*

In this growing congregation the seams of the church always needed to be let out to make more room, but all the reserves had been used. Pastor Burandt had moved to a new home so the existing parsonage could be used for Sunday School and meeting rooms.

## The Third Church

There was much heartbreak and concern involved in the prospect of moving to a new location. But ORLC was in a definite commercial location, Preston Center. To continue and to enlarge the mission of the parish school, the church would have to build up, not out. But this concept left no space available for an athletic field. The City fathers had their own ideas: no structure in Preston Center could be over two stories tall, be over-burdened with sanitation and fire hazards and parking too limited.

The surrounding property had gone commercial to the north and to the east. Nothing was available in the other directions either. (Eventually the original site would be occupied by an 8-story office building!)

If growth were stopped, Christian parochial education would cease at grade level 5...Sunday School would continue in less than satisfactory space and no fellowship hall would be able to accommodate large gatherings, bazaars or meetings.

Finally on April 15, 1965, the voters decided that a move should be made to the 10-acre site at the corner of Boedeker and Park Lane that had been purchased September 6, 1963.

The participants included Pastor Meyer, Pastor Emeritus Burandt, Pastor to the Deaf William E. Duey, School Principal Mildred Marohn, Jerry Bartos. The original site on Luther Lane was sold for \$307,500 - a value increase of \$302,000 in 24 years! So Palm Sunday, April 3, 1966, the last service at that location was held and the Acts of Deconsecration performed.

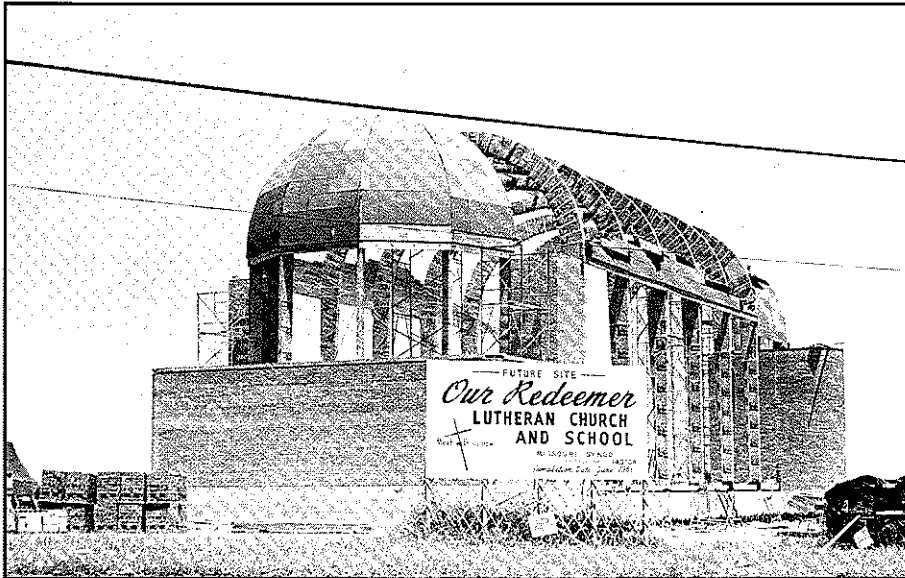


Site dedication and ground breaking for the John of Beverly Deaf Chapel, a Fellowship Hall, classrooms for the school and administrative facilities for the church staff were held on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1966.



Ground breaking for the new sanctuary was held on a bitterly cold and windy Christmas Day, 1966 with Pastor Burandt, Pastor Mattil and Jerry Bartos, congregational President turning the symbolic first shovels of dirt.

Pastor Meyer served from 1961, until Easter, April 10, 1966, and was granted release to another position. Rev. F. A. Mattil would not be installed until August 21, 1966. The dilemma was what to do with a 600-plus member congregation which had no building for services and no pastor. Solution? Recall Pastor Burandt to actively minister again and to use the chapel of Hillcrest Brewer Mortuary (now Sparkman-Hillcrest) as a temporary house of worship.



*The present sanctuary and adjacent buildings were designed by architect Eugene Wukasch of Austin, Texas, to provide seating for 580, with the addition of transepts. It also should include two nurseries, choir robing rooms, Sunday School rooms and a Sunday School office. Administrative offices were included in construction of the Deaf Chapel attached to the Sanctuary.*

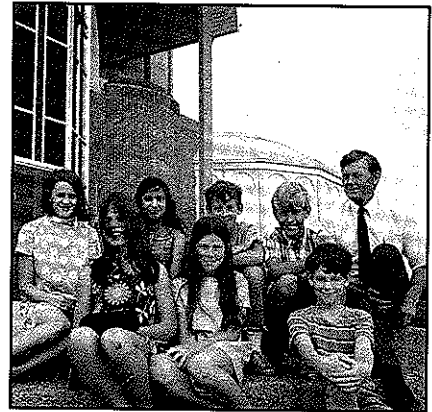
The year 1966 was a momentous and busy one for ORLC:

April 3	Decision made to sell and vacate original property on Palm Sunday
April 10	Last sermon of second pastor, Rev. Meyer
June 19	Last worship service at Hillcrest-Brewer Mortuary
June 26	Dedication of School rooms, youth room and Fellowship Hall at new Park Lane & Boedeker location
Summer	Norman Clasen named School Principal
June 26	Ordination of first ministerial graduate, James Gast
August 21	Installation of third pastor, Rev. Mattil
November 20	John of Beverly Chapel for the Deaf dedicated
December 25	Ground breaking for the new church

In the first ten years after the move ORLC experienced tremendous growth, not only in church membership but in school enrollment. The country was at peace with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

At this time it was decided by Federal law that there should be complete integration of public schools. Other laws enacted mandated that pupils be bussed to attain an acceptable racial mix. Some parents felt that forced integration was detrimental to the academic process, so they enrolled their children in private schools - the best being a parochial or parish school.

*This caused an increased enrollment in the ORLC school, and not just from ORLC members, but from adjacent areas to the church and school. This presented a real mission opportunity to offer children not affiliated with a church a Christian education. No child has ever been refused admittance to the school, and a multi-racial balance has been maintained.*



On July 18, 1976, ORLC installed the first Assistant Pastor, Rev. Mark Stenbeck. Rev. Carl Heckmann, president of the Texas District, was speaker for the occasion. Then on September 12 that year ORLC began to hold two Sunday worship services at 8 and 10:30 A.M.

Later, due to both social and economic conditions, there was a flight to suburbia. The children of the congregation became adults and the homes of families became the homes of grandparents, reducing family memberships from several to one or two. The new families moved to suburban areas creating new Lutheran churches that would serve the growing needs of an ever-growing population. In this 50 year span the small towns surrounding Dallas became part of the "Metroplex" with boundary lines marked only by township signs. Wide open spaces were no more and the aggregate population was well over a million people. This left ORLC supporting the mission of the parish school with from 30% to 40% of its annual budget, and created a shortfall for other ministries and needs.

Early in 1989 there was sadness and joy when Pastor Mattil asked for early retirement due to ill health and joy when his problem was thought treatable. During his tenure the church celebrated his 25 years in the ministry. His retirement dinner was held June 18, 1989.

Shortly ORLC voters approved a new constitution; the major change being the schedule of voter meetings and the creation of several new boards.

On August 4, 1991, Rev. Jason Rensner was installed as Associate Pastor, and Walter C. Shiffer as Minister of Education. The calling of a Minister of Music continued.



*Dr. Carl Gaertner became interim pastor until the installation of Rev. Charles L. Houska October 8, 1989. Two former members of ORLC who had been ordained here served as Lectors, Rev. John Lindner and Rev. Carl Fickenscher. Dr. Gaertner was Liturgist and Rev. Thomas A. Sorenson, Circuit Counselor and pastor of Holy Cross, installing officer. The preacher was Rev. David Joeckel, vice-president of the Texas District.*