

CELEBRATING PEACE

The first recorded congregational meeting of St. Paul's Evangelical Church was held on March 11, 1892. However, the church must have been meeting for a time, for the minutes state that they would continue to hold worship services in the Congregational Church. Earlier, a traveling missionary, Louis von Rague, from the German Evangelical Synod had visited Duluth seeking to organize a church. We have come full circle having begun our worship in a Congregational Church and now being part of the United Church of Christ, a denomination formed in 1957 from a merger of the Evangelical Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches.

The Rev. John J. Lueder became the first pastor. The minutes, translated from German, speak of a membership of about fifteen, scarcity of money, the use of oil lamps and wood heat. The original church lot on Tenth Ave. East and Third St. was then in the middle of a wilderness, and horse and buggy were used to reach the church building. By the summer of 1873 enough of the building was completed so that the pastor could move into the quarters on the ground level. In these early days a German School was also held in the church building. In 1874 the first of our three bells arrived in the shape of a French cannon captured by the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Emperor Wilhelm I offered the cannon which was displayed for a time before it was melted for the bell.

Early minutes report many changes in leadership, both pastoral and lay. The congregation was a close fellowship with many families remaining members for generations. The Ladies Aid was an active group of women raising the money to keep the church financially sound. For years the Spring Ham and Fall Sauerkraut Dinners were famous in Duluth. Our Fall Harvest Festival continues this tradition.

In 1931 a building fund for a new church was started. Funds grew until April 19, 1959, when ground was broken at the new site and construction started. At that same time, President Eisenhower was asked for an instrument of war to be melted into a second bell. The Biblical quotation, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares..." motivated the request. A bell from the USS *Ascella* was presented to the church on the occasion of the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. The third bell was created with the help of the local American Legion. They and members of the congregation collected scraps of brass and copper to be melted down and cast. All three bells now hang in our tower, symbols of the good news we have to share. On September 16, 1959, the name of the congregation was officially changed to Peace United Church of Christ by vote of the congregation. The name, too, carries forth the message we have been called to live out.

In 1972 Peace United Church of Christ celebrated 100 years of ministry and service. Along with a strong Bible emphasis, community building and the centrality of worship, themes of peace and justice flow throughout our history. All along women's groups have contributed to many community and mission projects raising funds through bazaars, dinners, rummage sales and the making of quilts. The youth groups and Sunday School children have also reached out in fun and mission with work camp trips, UNICEF Carnivals and fundraising for the Heifer Project.

The hymnals in our pews reflect the diversity of our members. The red, yellow and black hymnals represent the need for the traditional as well as contemporary and inclusive language. Our choirs, both children and adult, contribute to our worship. We also use a variety of instruments and other singing groups as we worship together. Our praise team and choir are wonderful. We have been blessed to have many gifted musicians.

Music has been a key to our involvement with other churches in our community. We share in an interfaith Thanksgiving Service. We have joined in service with the Gabriel Project with the churches in our neighborhood, St. Mark AME, Trinity and Gloria Dei Lutheran. Together we share a social worker to meet the immediate needs of our neighbors and members and we work on issues of justice, such as working toward more affordable housing.

Our education program has been grounded in Bible study as we deal with personal and community issues. Wednesday Bible Studies, book clubs, retreats and Sunday Forums are examples of our ongoing commitment to Adult Faith Education. Our children also learn in a wonderful Church School and Music Program that runs both on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. There are youth groups for children grades 5-12. Julie Flotten is our Intergenerational Ministries Director. She plans meaningful and fun activities for all our generations. These have included winter retreats at Wolf Ridge, play days, canoe trips, cross country skiing and Wednesday and Sunday morning times of prayer and reflection.

Themes of community and justice also surface in the use of our building. For years it has been home to a day care center as well as space for A.A. meetings, environmental groups such as the Audubon Society, S.A. and Chum Church.

Our Opening Doors, Building Peace project has been an exciting endeavor to make our space more welcoming to members and neighbors. This project will give us more gathering space near the sanctuary, and more classroom space downstairs. The focus on the doors is our way of saying all are welcome in this place.

Our commitment to shared ministry means the involvement of members in visible and active leadership in all areas of our life together. The congregation and its individual members have also been very involved in the community through Churches United in Ministry (CHUM), Loaves and Fishes, the Damiano Soup Kitchen, our Philippine Partnership and Habitat for Humanity. This past year we completed work on a Habitat home that we sponsored.

This congregation continues to discuss and work on issues of justice and peace. We gather together to worship our God and proclaim the faith that unites us. As our Mission statement proclaims,

“Our vision is to be an open and accessible community, growing in Christian faith and healing love, committed to issues of peace and justice.”

May there be many more years of “Peace.”

THROUGH THE YEARS at ST. PAUL'S / PEACE CHURCH

- 1872** - With the help of Louis von Rague, a missionary from the German Evangelical Union of St. Louis, St. Paul's Evangelical Church was organized.
- 1873** - The church building was erected at 10th Avenue East and 3rd Street.
- 1874** - A cannon captured during the Franco-Prussian War was presented to St. Paul's by Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany to be cast into a bell.
- 1874-1882** - The church was without a pastor much of the time because of difficult financial times in Duluth. The city lost 50% of its population.
- 1890** - Members living in Hermantown organized their own church with the pastor of St. Paul's leading worship each Sunday afternoon.
- 1893** - A pipe organ was installed at a cost of \$335.
- 1914-1917** - The congregation refused the request of community leaders that the church bell be melted and made into ammunition to be used in World War I.
- 1921** - Women and confirmed youth were given the vote in congregational matters.
- 1922** - A famous German soprano was featured at the church's 50th anniversary.
- 1928** - English was used in worship for the first time.
- 1934** - The Evangelical and Reformed denominations merged.
- 1941** - During the next few years, 49 young men and 1 young woman were called or volunteered for the armed services. All returned home at the end of World War II.
- 1947** - 75th Anniversary - The decision was made to build a new church.
- 1954** - A site was selected and purchased.
- 1957** - The Evangelical and Reformed and the Congregational Christian denominations merged to become the United Church of Christ.
- 1959** - Ground was broken for the new church.
- St. Paul's was renamed Peace Church.
- The second bell arrived via the newly-opened St. Lawrence Seaway.
- 1960** - The first worship service in the new church was held June 5.
- 1962** - A third bell was dedicated.
- 1965** - The Christian Education wing was added.
- 1973** - Peace, with other churches of the area, formed Churches United In Ministry (CHUM).
- 1980** - We burned the mortgage!
- 1986** - The congregation voted to become a "Just Peace Church."
- 1990** - The "Building Peace" building program began.
- A shared ministry concept was accepted by the congregation.
- 1991** - May 19, the congregation voted to call the Reverend Kathryn Nelson to be our new minister. August 1, Rev. Kathy Nelson began as Pastor of Peace Church.

1997 - We celebrate 125 years of witnessing and ministry in the community and look forward to many more years of sharing our love with each other and the world.

1999 - We added a full-time Children, Youth & Intergenerational Ministries Director.

2000 - We celebrated the millennium with the addition of an elevator to make us handicap accessible.

2005 – Opening Doors-Building Peace Project – We are expanding our space to make room for our growing congregation to gather and learn. The new doors provide an easy entrance and proclaim that all people are welcome here. As part of the project we sponsored a Habitat for Humanity home.

2006 – A dedication service for the first phase of the building project – new entrance, office and classroom spaces – was held.
-The 1959 Cornerstone was opened and additional items from the current age were placed in the time capsule.

2008 -The newly remodeled sanctuary space is dedicated as Phase Two of “Opening Doors, Building Peace.”

2011 – The new chapel, youth room, classroom and history rooms are dedicated.
We added a full-time Associate Pastor position.

2012 - We celebrated 140th Anniversary
- Paul VanAntwerp Ordination

2013 - Fellowship Hall is remodeled

2015 - Ordinations of Terese Tomanek and Tom Liddle

2017 – September 24 voted to become Immigrant Welcoming and Sanctuary Congregation

2018 – Became Immigrant Welcoming Church

2018 – Remodeled lower level spaces to accommodate those needing sanctuary.

2020 – Covid-19 pandemic/shutdown; church worship services moved to live stream.

2021-January – Pastor Kathy Nelson’s retirement

2021- 2023 – Interim period (Rev. Greg Briggs, Rev. Jim Mitulski, Rev. Budd Friend-Jones, Rev. Charlotte Frantz)

2021 – Ordination of Jan Murphy

2022 – Celebrated 150th Anniversary

2023 - Ordination of Nathan Holst

2023 – Voted to approve “Stepping on Up” initiative: converting Daycare Space to provide housing for homeless young adults.