



Congregational Timeline *Updated October 2016*

One particular method of congregational study is the *Congregational Timeline*. In January (2012) Pastor Nathan led a broad spectrum of members from Redeemer through a *Congregational Timeline* exercise on two consecutive Sunday mornings during the study hour. An attempt was made to reach all of Redeemer's membership for participation in this exercise. Those invited were Church Council and elders; an announcement was placed in the weekly newsletter, and an event was set up on Facebook as a way to communicate the historical brainstorm. Those in attendance ranged from charter members to those joining our community of faith as recent as one year ago. Once the initial ball got rolling in discussion, it was a learning experience for all as stories, pictures, insights, and historical information was shared about who we are as a church. This backdrop will be hugely beneficial as Redeemer takes steps toward the future. The completed timeline was left up in the Family Life Center for several months so people had opportunity to see and add to the work that had initially been done.

Through our discussion, one highlight is clear, Redeemer is a great church, filled with amazing, Spirit-filled, Word-led, Christ-centered, and God-fearing people! The *Congregational Timeline* should not be seen as an all-encompassing description of Redeemer but rather a "snapshot" in time as remembered by those present. Think of it as a historical brainstorm of key events, individuals, and experiences that have shaped who Redeemer is as a church. Thus, the information below is as accurate and complete as those involved in the brainstorm gave it. Every effort was made to get it done as accurately as possible, but if there is a missing date or information needing correction, let the church office know and we will update the document. For privacy reasons, names of individual members have been removed from the timeline.

Overview

On July 30, 1978, the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran Church held their first service in their newly completed building. In the dedication program for that service, a short history of the congregation was included. In part, it said ...

"As early as 1967, some members of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Rolla, Missouri, felt that a second congregation was needed in the Rolla area.... On June 20, 1974, twenty interest members, along with Pastor Howard Hilsabeck, met to organize."

At this meeting it was decided to pursue actively the establishment of a mission congregation. A working group was formed to plan for starting what came to be known as the Lutheran Mission

of South Rolla and to draft a constitution for the planned new congregation. The short history continues ...

“On New Year’s Day 1975, the Mission held its first church service at Peace Lutheran Church, Elk Prairie. Arrangements were made for all future services to be held at the Rolla Lion’s Den until a house of worship could be erected. There were 53 people at the first regular service held on January 5, 1975, with 49 attending Sunday School and Bible Class. The congregation was served by Pastor Howard Hilsabeck and Pastor Warren Schmidt of Immanuel and pastors of neighboring congregations.

On July 13, 1975, the name Redeemer was chosen for the new Mission. The site for the church was finally purchased in August 1975, after four sites had been seriously considered. On October 5, 1975, Redeemer installed its first pastor, The Rev. Francis M. Lieb.

On January 1, 1976, the congregation could officially accept new members and 59 adults and 27 children transferred to Redeemer from Immanuel and other congregations. Also on January 1, 1976, the first church council was formed when officers were elected.... A Building Committee was elected at the congregational meeting in February, 1976, and plans were initiated for a house of worship. On June 12, 1977, ground breaking held to begin construction of Redeemer’s first church building.”

From its beginning Redeemer considered the Lutheran School to be an important part of its ministry. Since Immanuel Lutheran School was already in existence, a cooperative Lutheran School Association was formed and went into effect on October 2, 1977. The congregation remained a member of this association until 1994 when the voter’s assembly decided to initiate a gradual withdrawal from the association while remaining a supporter of the school.

Redeemer began life as a subsidized mission congregation of the LCMS. This subsidy continued through 1985 but in 1986 the congregation had grown enough to become self-supporting financially. But before that, God had already blessed us with many new members and alterations and additions to the building were needed.

The first alteration to the church building was not one that was planned. In July 1980, the roof of the church was struck by lightning, causing some damage to the paneling inside and a ‘mystery’ leak to appear in the roof. In July 1997, the building was hit again at the same place. This time there was considerable damage to some of the electronic equipment inside the building and some damage to the organ console. On the bright side, the leak seems to have disappeared.

The first planned alteration came in 1983 when an educational wing was added. This alteration was designed and supervised by Becker and Flowers, the architects of the original building. In addition to the new education space in the wing, a new, larger kitchen was included and the space occupied by the original kitchen was converted into an office for the church secretary.

The second planned alteration to the building was started in the fall of 1991 and completed in 1992. This remodeling removed two of the original building’s quirkiest “features.” First the second floor storage area, whose door had no stairway leading to it was incorporated into a division of the rear third of the building into first and second floor sections to gain three more classroom spaces. At the same time the structure in the middle of the building that looked like a balcony, but wasn’t, was converted into a choir and organ loft and a Wickes Pipe Organ was

installed. To complete the alteration, the secretary's office was moved to its present location with the vacated space being remodeled to house the church library. This project was largely done by members of the congregation with Brian Castle coordinating the engineering and planning and Carl Heth supervising the construction phase.

Other improvements to the physical facilities include the paving of the gravel (and mud) surfaced main parking lot (1994), the addition of a sand surface volleyball court (1995), a picnic pavilion (1996), updating the sound system (1999), the building the Family Life Center (2005), a brand new website (2010), and Sanctuary renovation and sound / media / technology update (2015).

The Timeline

1970s *Defining Moments*

- 1975 – Following the first service held at Peace Lutheran on Jan 1, they continued to meet in the Lion's Den for 3 years until the building was built in 1978. The church was originally a mission plant of Immanuel Lutheran (Rolla) under the direction of Pastor Hilsabeck (a pastor of Immanuel). It was also clearly stated that Seminex and the walk-out had nothing to do with the reason for starting the church, it was completely a Spirit of God movement.
- 1975 – Pastor Lieb was installed as Redeemer's first pastor, staying for 12 years (the Board of Missions in St. Louis issued the Divine Call early in 1975; he was installed Oct 5, 1975)
- 1977 – Bethel Bible Program started
- 1977 – Rolla Lutheran School Association started with Immanuel (1977 to Dec 11, 2005)
- 1978 – Original sanctuary was built
- 1970s (late) – A member of Redeemer started a hospital volunteer program prior to 1980 (77-79). The program gained additional community support and became a general volunteer program continuing through today.

1980s *Defining Moments*

- 1980s (early) – The Board of Evangelism formed; an outgrowth of the Board of Missions & Social Ministry
- 1983 – The first Fellowship Hall was built
- 1985 – the Food Pantry was initiated (originally *Food Pantry With Love*) under Pastor Lieb, now operating through G.R.A.C.E., a local community organization
- 1985 – VBS was held for Sheltered Workshop
- 1985 – Redeemer began a presence at the County Fair, providing free ice water to fairgoers; it was typically very hot during fair time
- 1986 – Redeemer becomes financially self-sufficient
- 1987 – Pastor Weinkauff was installed as pastor on Aug 30; the vacancy pastor was Pastor Schnakenburg
- 1980s (late) – Pastoral relationship with Peace Lutheran ends

Community, nation, world events:

- 1981 – President Reagan shot
- 1985 – Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy
- 1987 (March) – Rolla on lock-down because of John Brown; there was National Guard involved, copious roadblocks and car searches, suspect somehow escaped to Oklahoma

1990s *Defining Moments*

- 1990s (early) – The “Blue Hymnal” (LW) as it is affectionately called, was introduced to the church; not with great love, some tension
- 1990s (early) – Church break-in
- 1992 – Balcony and upstairs classrooms were built
- 1992 – A pipe organ was donated by an individual family to the church and placed in the balcony; until then either piano or electric organ was used
- 1994 – It was decided Redeemer would gradually withdraw from Rolla Lutheran School, Redeemer began looking at a tuition assistance program
- 1997 – Pastor Wittmaier installed
- 1997 – The outside pavilion was constructed

2000s *Defining Moments*

- 2000 – Fall Fest began, emerging from a *Christmas Bazaar*, designed to be a permanent Outreach fixture for the community
- 2001 – For the first time, youth were sent to the National Youth Gathering (New Orleans); Lay youth leaders led the effort
- 2001/02 – The Endowment Board was formed after a family left an endowment
- 2002 – Live Nativity
- 2004 – Bethel Series offered a second time
- 2004 – For the 2nd time, youth are sent to the National Youth Gathering (Orlando); they haven’t gone since
- 2004 – Family Life Center was built to encourage families to stay and not go to other churches
- 2005 – The name of *Rolla Lutheran School* changed to *Immanuel Lutheran School*
- 2005 – RHAA begins use of the Family Life Center; policies concerning outside group use were developed
- 2005/06 – Youth groups restart under the leadership of a dedicated lay volunteer
- 2005/06 – A Cub Scout pack begins
- 2006 – Youth circuit events begin as well with Redeemer being a key hub to make this happen since Redeemer is one of the few congregations in the area having an active youth program
- 2007 – Redeemer attends a Missouri District workshop focusing on youth and family ministry, which spurred initial critical discussion around future desires and dreams for the church; about 6-7 people attended from Redeemer
- 2008/9 – Purchase of an industrial mower (met initially with some tension), money came from outside the budget

- 2008/9 – Lutheran Hour Support began
- 2009 – Pastor Wittmaier retires (December), Pastor Rhiver was the vacancy pastor
- 2009 – Call process began with strong guidance from President Mirly; surveys and assessments used by the District Office during this time are significant in looking forward

Community, nation, world events:

- 9/11 (2001)
- 2003/04 – James & Gahr Funeral Home was built next door to Redeemer, opening up a relationship with them (i.e. allowed us extended parking)
- 2007 – Phelps County Sesquicentennial
- There is an ongoing cultural shift affecting today's church; this is not a new phenomenon, just one being increasingly felt as the years pass by. A charter member repeated a comment made from a member who has since passed away, "*Normally you're born, baptized, communed, married, and buried in a church – but that's also a privilege.*"

2010s *Defining Moments:*

- 2010 – Pastor Kuhlman installed (Sept)
- 2011 – the “Brown Hymnal”, as it's known at Redeemer (LSB) is introduced; very well received; LW and the Supplement phased out
- 2011 – Children and Family Ministry Task Force brought forth a comprehensive plan surrounding three key targets: bringing in a DCE Intern, facility upgrades, adding a second service with a modern worship feel (Late summer)
- 2011 – The start of a Strategic Ministry Plan process
- 2011 – VBS is offered during the day for the first time in Redeemer's history, the change was very well received by the community and VBS volunteers
- 2011 – New website and Facebook page for the church are launched (Fall)
- 2011 – Pastor Nathan launches a blog (Fall)
- 2011 – Happy Birthday Jesus Party outreach effort; the Living Nativity was combined with this effort; very well received (Dec)
- 2011 – A revised Christmas season schedule was launched ... the Children's Christmas Program is done the week prior to Christmas rather than Christmas Eve and two Christmas Eve Candlelight services are offered (“Family Service” and “Festival of Lessons and Carols”)
- 2012 – Redeemer becomes a public voting location for elections
- 2012 – Director of Christian Education Intern (DCE), Jill Andre, is assigned to serve at Redeemer, focusing on ministry to children and families; her induction is July 2012
- 2012 – A new model of discipleship surrounding three leading words, “*Gather, Grow, Go*” was adopted by Redeemer (May)
- 2012 – A new roof is installed on the church, using funds collected over a three year time period
- 2013 – Easter Sunday (March 31), Redeemer launches a new Sunday morning worship menu which includes Modern Worship
- 2013 – Family Life Center mortgage is paid off, a celebration was held with a mortgage burning party on April 21

- 2013 – Redeemer sent a group of 6 youth and 2 adults to the LCMS National Youth Gathering in San Antonio (held every 3 years)
- 2013 – A pilot group of Mentorship Training is launched (Fall) as part of Pastor Kuhlman’s Doctor of Ministry project; Mentorship is a highly relational mentoring style of evangelism that seeks to engage the pre-Christian / de-churched / un-churched
- 2014 – A refreshed website is launched to include the ability of adding sermon video
- 2015 – Renovation of Sanctuary (Jan-Apr): Removal of all wood paneling, upgrade sound and lighting, install projection and video recording equipment, ground-floor media and sound booth, painting the walls white, and open up the front walls of the Sanctuary to give it a more open feel.
- 2015 – A service of dedication and potluck celebration for the newly renovated Sanctuary was held at 12:30pm on April 19, 2015.
- 2015 – A 40th Anniversary Celebration was held on May 3, 2015; including a whole hog roast, church picture, the return of Redeemer’s past pastors: Francis Lieb (keynote speaker), Gerald Wittmaier, and Nathan Kuhlman; including Pastor Hilsabeck as the pastor who had the vision for Redeemer. Due to scheduling conflicts, Pastor Randy Weinkauff was unable to attend.
- 2015 – Redeemer joins the Rolla Chamber of Commerce (April).
- 2016 – Redeemer sends the largest group in its history the LCMS National Youth Gathering in New Orleans, LA; sending 9 youth and 3 adults (held every 3 years).
- 2016 – Council established a Vision Committee to create a 3-5 year plan (June-Sept). Partnering with Stuart Brasse from the District office, a plan was created and submitted to Council and Voter’s for consideration. The plan focusses on 3 main goals: [1] “Growing U” comprehensive discipleship ministry, [2] Campus Improvement Plan (with a focus on first impressions), and [3] Care Ministry.

Community, nation, world events:

- 2011 – Rolla Sesquicentennial
- 2011 – Shooter drives through town (with an Ak-47), ending up on the college campus; Rolla goes on lock-down
- 2011 – The first mosque is built in Rolla

Personal stories of how the church impacted their family:

- Some 30 years ago, a member from Redeemer was shot in the attempted murder of someone else. The fact that he lived through it was miraculous. Redeemer helped him and his parents in many ways, including doing farm chores and cooking meals, to help them get through this difficult time.
- A member’s farm was destroyed by a tornado. Redeemer members did a lot to help them clean up and move to another farm.
- What brought one family to Redeemer (as told by them), “*Mom won a Bible through a raffle at the 4th of July Carnival. Pastor Lieb came to our house to give her the Bible and talked with her. Next thing we knew, we were here.*”
- 2011 – Seth Morris’ 4-wheeler accident (Fall).

- 2011 – Pastor Nathan attended the funeral of a member’s mom in St Louis; they expressed how this was a huge personal blessing to them.

Other comments of note:

- One individual commented that there has never been any apparent friction between Redeemer and Immanuel through the years. The relationship between the churches has been healthy.
- Redeemer was created as an opportunity to extend the Lutheran Church, not as any doctrinal discrepancy from Immanuel. This was about the time of all the tension in St. Louis at the seminary (i.e. the walk-out at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis).
- Pastoral Timeline:
 - Rev. Francis Lieb (1975-1987)
 - Rev. Randy Weinkauff (1987-1995)
 - Rev. Gerald Wittmaier (1997-2009)
 - Rev. Nathan Kuhlman (2010-present)
- Hymnal Timeline:
 - Red Hymnal adopted (TLH) ~ 1975
 - Blue Hymnal introduced (LW) ~ 1990
 - Green Hymnal Supplement introduced ~ ?
 - Brown Hymnal introduced (LSB) ~ 2011
- Had fair booths and parade float entries under Pastor Lieb in community events.
- The Live Nativity began under Pastor Wittmaier (around 2002).
- Burglary incidents through the years have prompted additional security measures – starting as early as Pastor Weinkauff, computer equipment was stolen around 2004 and vandalism occurred to the church wall at a later date. In 2011, a church down the street was severely damaged by arson.
- Jack Haas was the Director of Discipleship from about 1993 to 1997; a paid position of about \$600 per month which was probably donated back to the church.
- Finch & line of estate – parking lot is a city street easement which could be reclaimed sometime in our future (the location between the church and the funeral home).
- Earlier on in Redeemer’s history, Redeemer and Immanuel youth met together (bi-monthly basis?) for approximately a year.
- A charter member (in his early 90s) commented in regards to the change process Redeemer is currently facing, *“There are some changes that are just necessary, and in the process you’re going to lose some. We’ve just got to accept that and move on.”*

**“Redeemer ... a place to GATHER, GROW, & GO
in your relationship with Jesus Christ!”**