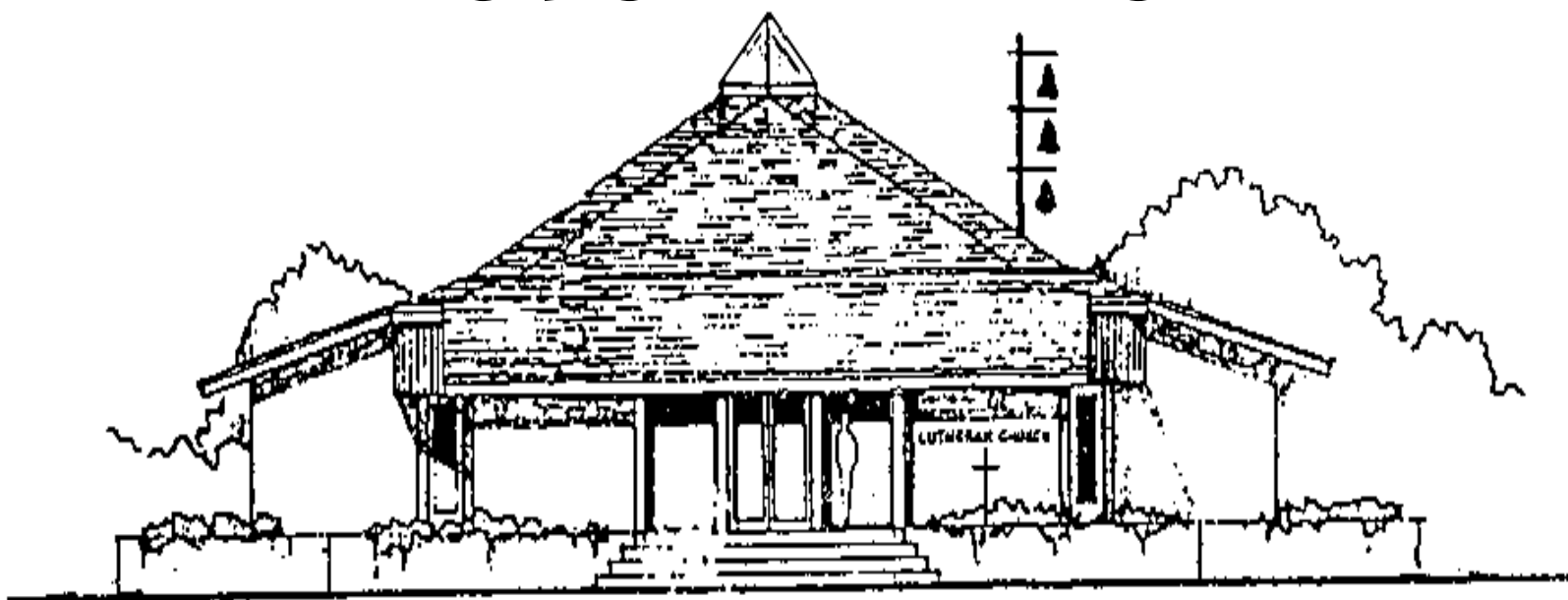


Celebrating 50 Years 1975 to 2025



a Church with a Mission – a Church with a Vision



Faith
Lutheran Church
of Rotonda West

Listening • Caring • Serving

Celebration Banquet

Sunday, March 23, 2025 at 11:30am
Rotonda West Community Center

PROGRAM

Welcome Jeff Kamm

Psalm 118.24: This is the day that the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Greetings and Introductions Pastor Armen

Matthew 4.19: He said to them,
“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Remarks and Memories Jeff Kamm

Blessing of the Meal Pastor Kelly

The Doxology

A walk through our history Larry Bennett

Pastor Carl Kaltreider 1973-1992

Pastor Patricia Large 2005-2012

Pastor Carl Kelly 1993-2003

Pastor Brian Armen 2013-2025

Remarks Pastor Carlos Ham

Dismissal and Benediction Pastor Armen

Not so Trivial Information

In March 1975 the total baptized membership was 58 and the ministry budget was \$19,805

In March 2015 the total baptized membership was 196 and the ministry budget was \$175,953

Our Mission: “We, the Family of Faith, by our Lord’s guidance, will grow our ministries with programs that meet the spiritual needs of our congregation and reach out, with God’s love, to the community. We are a Christ centered church that provides opportunities for worship, service, education, fellowship and family ministries.”

Our Focus: LISTENING – CARING – SERVING

Thanks and Appreciation

To the Anniversary Committee: Ruth and Bob Ash, Linda and Larry Bennett, Cyndy Hoops, Kathy Myers, Marcia and Gary Wilkins.

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF 50 YEARS OF FAITH

Faith Lutheran Church began its initial work in June, 1973, with Pastor Carl Kaltreider as Mission Developer. Along with Pastor Kaltreider, a group of thirty-one adults and eight children assisted in the organization of a new congregation. The first service of Faith was on November 11, 1973, with the Reverend Carl Kaltreider officiating. Services were held at the Rotonda West Community Center, and some "special" services in the "A-Frame" in Cape Haze.

Shortly after the first service, the ABC's Superstar competition was held in Rotonda, with Kyle Rote Jr. the winner. Kyle was an All-Pro in the North American Soccer League, and over the next two months he served as lector and preacher at many church services.

In September, 1974, Faith held the first youth retreat at Oscar Scherer State Park with Pastor Kaltreider and five youth attending.

On March 2, 1975 the Formal Service of Organization was held. Bishop Royall Yount officially installed Pastor Carl F. Kaltreider as Pastor. Fifty-eight (58) full-time members and 2 part-time members signed the original Charter of the congregation. At the 30th Anniversary 5 Charter members were still active in the congregation: Loraine Gilcher, Viola Grande, June Melton, Sandy and Keith Rafeld.

With the rapid growth of our congregation, along with the many church and community activities and events such as youth activities, concerts, fellowship get-togethers, it was time to get into a church building of our own. On July 31, 1979, ground was broken on a 3-acre site donated by Deltona Corporation. The church building cost \$225,000, but as things were added, a "special" loan for \$40,000 was taken out with Chase Bank. The building would seat 150 members in the nave and, with slight alterations, be able to seat 175 total. With the overflow capacity in the classrooms and narthex, seating could be expanded to a total of 300.

A special part of the new church building was the "reredos" behind the altar. The sculpture represents the flames of the fire of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The descending dove also represents the Holy Spirit. Combined, the two symbols are a constant reminder of the Holy Spirit in the worship, meditation, and daily functions of the Church. The cross is the focal point of worship, but is not consumed by the flames. The flames do not sit on the altar, but pour out from the altar for the full meaning of the symbols.

In eight short months, with the diligent work of the builders and Faith's own work crew, the first service was held on Palm Sunday, March 31, 1980. The service commenced at the Community Center with a ceremonial departure followed by a procession the new church.

In May 1980, a week of special activities was planned for the dedication of the new building. Events included an art exhibit, an evening of special music, a book review, youth night, and a Saturday dinner theatre. All of the activities were capped by the Dedication Service on May 18, 1980.

Over the decade of the 80's, Faith Lutheran grew larger and faster than anyone had expected. Some of the many reasons for the rapid growth were the activities in the music department, the women's clubs, and youth activities. A significant event was a retreat organized by the youth leaders for the entire Florida Bahamas Synod that was attended by over 1,000 youth.

On Thursday, March 7, 1985, over 100 members of Faith Congregation attended the 10th anniversary celebration of the church. The ceremony was highlighted by the Reverend Donald Himmelman, Assistant to the Bishop, as our guest speaker.

A high point from the decade of the 80's was a meeting of Faith Lutheran (Rotonda), Holy Trinity (Port Charlotte), Christ Lutheran (Englewood),

and Living Waters Lutheran (North Port) to develop a new mission church and congregation in Gulf Cove/ El Jobean. The new church, Hope Lutheran (El Jobean) started in October 1985, with the first service in 1986, and the first service in their new building in March, 1992.

In mid-1990, many negotiations were held with the newly formed ELCA for 5.2 acres adjacent to Faith Lutheran's current property. In December 1990, the purchase was finalized. Shortly after, negotiations were held with Charlotte County and another .9 acres was added to the property.

On February 16th, 1992, Pastor Carl Kaltreider presented a letter to the Congregation informing them of his pending retirement, effective May 24, 1992. One day short of one year since Carl Kaltreider's last service, (May 23, 1993) Pastor Carl Kelly was installed as the second pastor of Faith Lutheran Church. Even though the year seemed long, it was 8-10 months shorter than the Synod guidelines for calling a new Pastor.

The decade of the 90's rushed by with many activities. The women of Faith continued to gather together and fellowship in a variety of ways. They met for general meetings with special programs and guests to enrich and strengthen their faith and their organization. Each year they had an annual Blanket Sunday, conducted a Thanksgiving Offering service in November, and supported various community programs such as Englewood Helping Hands, DASH, and the Mary House. They also had three different circles that the women of the church could join. Two of them met bi-monthly and did projects for local organizations as well as national or global organizations (Lutheran World Relief made health and sewing kits). One of the circles met monthly for Bible study.

The youth group was actively involved in a variety of events and projects. Pastor and Joan Kelly, along with another couple, were leaders. Besides their bi-monthly meetings, they participated in a clown ministry and a puppet ministry, played the choir chimes, did service projects for the community, went Christmas caroling, and attended some Bible camps and the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans. One notable event for

Pastor and Joan Kelly and four youth members was a trip to Guyana. In 1995 they took musical instruments to a mission church and spent a week helping at a youth camp and retreat.

Sunday School was also active, meeting on Sundays between church services. The number and ages of the youth varied from year to year. The education committee organized Vacation Bible School in the summer. Sometimes the VBS was held at night and sometimes during the day.

In 1999, a pre-owned modular unit was purchased and used primarily by the youth for Sunday School classes. The two-room modular opened the way for renovation of the church kitchen area, and the nursery was moved to the opposite side of the church.

The youth of the congregation varied in ages. At times they took part in not only youth activities and Sunday school but also confirmation classes. In 2000, 6 youth were confirmed. After that, there were only 2 youth of confirmation age, so we combined our confirmation class with Christ Lutheran of Englewood, meeting every Wednesday night. Adult Bible study classes, taught by Pastor or a lay person, were held Wednesday and Sunday mornings.

In 1998 our congregation became involved in an education-oriented outreach program called S.T.A.I.R. (Start the Adventure in Reading), which lasted for 10 years. For 7 of those years, twelve second grade students from Vineland Elementary School were transported to the church twice a week to work on their reading skills. Church members or people from the community served as tutors, teaching students one-to-one for 1-1/2 hours per session. This continued until the program was moved to Vineland Elementary due to transportation issues. The tutors continued to help struggling second graders there twice a week. The church's van provided transportation for the students who needed it.

The music department at Faith was also growing and enhancing the music ministry in the 90's. Choir chimes and a baby grand piano were donated to the church. A guitar and a keyboard were added to the worship service next, and 150 copies of The Other Song Book were purchased for worship. These tools greatly enhanced our Sunday worship services.

Special concerts were also performed at the church. In 1995, the cantata "Joseph the Carpenter" was presented by the choir. We hosted a Timothy Mark concert in 2001, as well as the Waldorf College Choir. At one of our Lenten services on Wednesday nights, we added a new worship experience: a contemporary liturgy called "Come and Be Fed," which utilized our new instruments.

Fellowship events on Sunday morning and during the week varied and members were encouraged to invite friends and snowbirds. A men's fellowship group was formed in 1995, meeting the third Monday of each month for Bible study. Coffee hours were held twice a month on Sunday mornings. During Lent, we had Soup and Sandwich suppers before worship.

A golf tournament called "The Almost Open" continued to be an annual event in the winter along with the C.R.O.P. Walk, a community project that raised money for those in need. Special events, like a Christmas boat cruise to see lights and trips to baseball games were also organized.

In 2000, we celebrated our church's anniversary all year long. Each month we held a special event. In 2001 Pastor and Joan Kelly went on a 6-week sabbatical where they followed the footsteps of Paul from Philippi through Thessalonica, to Athens and Corinth and then Ephesus. After they returned from their trip they shared their experiences with the congregation during potluck Sunday evenings from September through December.

In 2000, our congregation began a building fund, and a strategic planning committee was formed. After the initial meeting, we had a congregational

pancake breakfast as a kick-off event to mark the beginning of a plan for expansion of our church. However, the economy side-tracked the plans. Later, a new double-wide modular was donated and, after much conflict with the county over sewer hook-ups, was ready for use as a Fellowship Hall and Sunday School/ confirmation classrooms. In 2010, we were able to dedicate the modular and begin using it.

In September of 2003, Pastor Kelly retired. It took 2 years for our congregation to call our next pastor to shepherd us. Pastor Patricia Large became our new minister on May 29, 2005, and continued in the position until she retired in October 2012.

During her time as pastor, programs were added and special events continued, though some church activities were altered due to the changing dynamics of the congregation. Sunday School classes were held until the youth were of confirmation age, then Confirmation classes began, meeting on Thursday nights instead of Sunday. Adult Bible studies were also held during the year.

Starting in 2009, Faith began participating in area parades -- Halloween Parade, Labor Day Parade, and Christmas Parade -- as an avenue of visibility for our church. The youth participated in these events, helping at the booths or riding on the floats.

In 2010 we celebrated our church's 35th anniversary. Following a special church service, we held a dinner under a huge white tent on the church property, followed by a program after the meal to complete the celebration.

In 2011 we began holding "Friendship Dinners" during the winter months as a way for members to meet in small groups, in homes, and get to know each other better. A hostess planned the menu and everyone attending provided food for the meal. Everyone seemed to enjoy these evenings of fellowship.

"Remembering the Promise," a contemporary guitar service, was added to Sunday worship when a month had 5 Sundays. Our congregation also supported a young man from our church, Alex Hoops, as he completed his studies in seminary and received his first call.

In 2012, when Pastor Large retired, Rev. Lavern Franzen stepped in as interim Pastor while we began a search for our new Pastor. He served for a year, while the congregation worked through the process of calling a full-time leader.

The Rev. Dr. Brian Armen assumed leadership of the congregation on November 1, 2013, serving until his retirement on May 1, 2025. Programs continued and changed according to the needs of the congregation, the community, and the challenges of the Covid pandemic.

During 2015, a special congregation focus on "Our Life Together" was held. It started with weekly home small group meetings and ended with a special worship service and fellowship time to share discussions. Our focus of "Listening, Caring, and Serving" was the result of that event. A second result was a bi-monthly Bible-book study formed under the leadership of retired Pastor Autumn Hardenstine, and meeting in her house. The study continued after she moved, and now meets at the church. It is led by group members. A Stephen Ministry team was formed as well as a Eucharistic Ministry team to bring support, encouragement and communion to members of our community.

A big challenge during Pastor Armen's tenure was the COVID-19 pandemic, starting in March of 2020. At first all gatherings were discouraged, then social distancing and masking were necessary. It also provided a time of new opportunities. Since meeting together was not possible, it was necessary to provide video worship times. This led to the purchase of two cameras and the regular video-taping and live streaming of worship services. An outdoors worship service was offered for better

safety and social distancing. This service was so well received that it became the norm for the 8:30 am service during season.

The men of the church met regularly for breakfast and prayer on the first Tuesday of each month. Instead of circle meetings, the ladies started having monthly luncheons at local restaurants.

In 2015 the “Lutheran Chicks” were born, a group started by four women who saw a need for a fellowship time for women. They met on Tuesday mornings to make greeting cards for congregation member on the prayer list, but the focus enlarged over time to include sending a monthly card to shut-ins. Many other activities were soon included, such as loom knitting hats and making new Chrismons for Faith's Christmas tree. The Chicks also started a “Love and Serve” ministry to the local homeless “campers.” This ministry included packing and delivering weekly lunches to Indian Mound Park where the homeless gathered, making crocheted mats from plastic grocery bags, and providing laundry packets and toiletries.

The men's work crew gathered every Tuesday morning to do gardening, painting, and repairs to maintain Faith's physical property. The men also served by assisting members with “handyman” tasks as needed. Hurricane Ian in 2022, and Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024, proved to be especially challenging as significant damage to the external church property was sustained.

In March of 2025 the 50th Anniversary celebration was held. Memorial bricks to honor the four Pastors serving Faith were placed in the Memorial Garden on March 2nd. A special worship service was held on Sunday, March 23rd, with Pastor Carlos Hamm, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelistic Mission, preaching. Former Pastor Carl Kelly also in attended. The service is being followed by a Celebration Banquet at the Rotonda West Community Center. Celebrating our past, we look to the future and continue to heed Jesus’ invitation to be “fishers of men” (people)’

This space intentionally left blank to record the future ministry of our congregation.....

God's Work – Our Hands