



Prince of Peace

Greensboro

Much has changed since that first service on April 30, 1972. People who were kids then are now grown up. Many people have come and gone. But much remains the same. The same Christ who was worshipped then as Lord of the Church is worshipped today. The same spirit who guided those early fathers and mothers of the church still guides, leads, and inspires us today. This is the story of how the church grew from an empty lot on Curtis Street to what it is today.

Prince of Peace was born in the turbulent years of the 60's. Alarmed by the social unrest that was rampant at that time the LCA began to realize that it had long neglected ministry to Blacks. At its 1968 convention in Atlanta the LCA resolved to begin three new congregations in Black neighborhoods in the South: Atlanta, Columbia, SC and the Warnersville community in Greensboro. Of the three, only Prince of Peace remains a viable congregation today.

The Rev. Dick Rhyne was chosen to be the mission developer for the Warnersville, he, his wife, Mary, and their two daughters Debbie and Lisa, in July 1969 moved into the parsonage which had recently been completed. Pastor Rhyne describes the first year as consisting of three major tasks: becoming part of the community, getting the building built, and establishing the steering committee. Becoming part of the community meant getting to know individuals as well as the institutions of the community and sometimes serving as a liaison between the two. The groundbreaking ceremony for the church building was held Oct. 22, 1969. Mr. Ladson D. Tankersley, an architect from Greenville, SC designed the building which was completed in August 1970. The Steering Committee, the forerunner of the Church Council, first met on April 19, 1970 at the parsonage since the church building was not yet complete. Twenty-four persons were present and items discussed at this first meeting included summer youth program, day care, and a swimming pool for the community center. The name "Prince of Peace" was suggested by Marvin Davis Sr. on April 29th and the mission became formally known as the Prince of Peace Lutheran Center for Service. This title points to Pastor Rhyne's philosophy of ministry. This was to be a ministry in deed rather than a ministry in word; the primary concern of the new "Center for Service" was to meet the

needs of the community rather than to try to impose upon it a style of worship that might be strange or unfamiliar.

Because the community was composed largely of youth, the outreach ministry of the early church was heavily weighted toward youth. The two youth groups YUKS (Youth for Understanding and Knowledge, the junior high group) and YAPS (Youth for Action and Progress, the senior high group) were founded in 1971. Ray Johnson was its first leader. The leadership was later taken over by Hunter Haith an ex-Peace Corps volunteer who had been hired to supervise the summer enrichment program in 1971, and Gene Root, an intern from Hama Seminary. The youth program of the early church was quite active and vigorous, including trips to places like Disney World or Youth Convo in Houston, consciousness raising sessions (“Blacklash”), movies in the church every Saturday morning, dances, sleep ins, and interaction with youth from other Lutheran Churches. One of the big tasks of the youth was the renovation of the “Youth Hut.” The Greensboro Redevelopment Corp. gave a house on Druid Street to Prince of Peace. This was moved to its present location on August 12, 1970, and extensively remodeled and used as a focal point for the youth and scouting programs as well as by various other community groups such as OEO and striking cafeteria workers. Coffee House was also held there every Thursday night. This was also used for emergency housing from early on and later was renamed “Harambee House” which is Swahili for “come together.” In addition to this active youth ministry many exciting things happened in the area of social ministry during Pastor Rhyne’s tenure. A summer enrichment program for 110 children was held, a scout troop formed, and Randleman Park Day Care begun all in the summer of 1970. 1971 saw the beginning of “Talker and You,” a community newspaper edited by Pastor Rhyne, and the first Talent Show held in mid April. Prince of Peace was also active in the Greater Greensboro Lutheran Housing Authority, an outgrowth of GCLC devoted to the building of low rent housing. Joe Walker, a former Marine and community organizer from Asheville, was called to be Lay Associate and arrived March 31, 1972. He was to take on much of the responsibility for outreach and community ministry.

In many ways Prince of Peace developed in a different way from other traditional missions. Service and outreach preceded growth as a worshipping community. Nevertheless on August 21, 1970 the first worship was held at Prince of Peace at 10:00 am with 49 people present. Early on, much contemporary or experimental liturgy was used, but built around the Celebrate. Worshippers would sing hymns from the Prince of Peace hymnal (the same one we use now minus a few later additions) or the ILCW to the accompaniment of an organ (there was no piano) or sometimes a capella if no organist could be found. Early members like Mike Daye remember that Pastor Rhyne would often ask questions of the youth during the sermon, putting them on the spot about some difficult idea from the lesson. I’m sure everyone paid close attention. At that time communion was celebrated only once a month but the common cup was used from the beginning. The choir, composed mostly of youth, directed by Dolores Smith, first sang Christmas Eve 1972 the songs, “Amazing Grace” and “All About the Blues.” A Confirmation Cup was begun by Pastor Rhyne in the summer of 1972; however, the Christian education program began in earnest with the arrival of Anna Marie Franz in August 1972. Anna Marie was a Lutheran from Connecticut who was originally hired to be a half time secretary. In October of that year she became a full time staff person with

the duties of director of Christian education also added. The Sunday school which did not begin until Pastor Little arrived owes much to her organizational work, for much of the traditional Sunday School material at that time was not suitable for a congregation like Prince of Peace.

Even though the Lutheran Center for Service had not explicitly aimed at forming a congregation, the people of the community were eager to take that step. Constitution and By Laws were drafted in late 1971. The first Church Council was elected on March 26, 1972 consisting of: John Marion, president; Ruth Timmons, vice president; Edna Daye, secretary; and Mary Rhyne, treasurer as well as 15 other members (the Constitution was amended in August 1973, decreasing the size of Council to 9 elected members). Finally on April 30, 1972 at 3:30 pm a memorable service of dedication and organization took place, presided over by Pastor Rhyne, Otis Hairston, Massie Kinard, Frank Perry, our district dean, and President Whittaker. In this service many people were baptized or received by transfer and the Lutheran Center for Service became Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

In October of that same year, 1972, Pastor Rhyne was called to become administrative assistant in the area of outreach ministries to President of Synod, Dr. Whittaker. He continued on in this capacity for the next several years, and then became a staff person for LCUSA in New York. Pastor Rhyne remained active at Prince of Peace, however, until the following spring, so the young church was not without clergy leadership. The call committee, chaired by Hunter Haith, finally settled on Pastor Dick Little of St. David, Kannapolis. Pastor Little was a graduate of Davidson College and Gettysburg Seminary. He had done his internship work with Lutheran Social Services in Washington, DC, and had served in Kannapolis for two years. He arrived in Greensboro in June 1973 with his wife Cheri, herself a graduate of Gettysburg College, and their two year old son Shane. Pastor Little was installed on June 8th. As mentioned earlier, in its formative years the ministry at Prince of Peace had emphasized service and outreach; it was Pastor Little's goal to build a worshipping community centered on Word and Sacrament and to enable members to grow in faith and spirit.

One of the first things Pastor Little did was to initiate weekly Eucharist which began on December 9, 1973. The chancel which had been yellow was painted red, banners and altar cloths were made by Cheri and Amie Haith and the organ traded for a piano (all in January 1974). At the retreat on April 27, 1974 the congregation wrote our present order of worship which contains the essence of Lutheran Worship; confession, word, offering, and Eucharist yet allows for the freedom and diversity characteristic of Prince of Peace. Also in 1974 the first functioning congregational committee, Worship and Music, was formed. The W & M Committee, first chaired by Hunter Haith, was instrumental in planning the special services added during Pastor Little's tenure: Christmas Eve, Easter sunrise, Tenebrae, Ash Wednesday, and Maundy Thursday. The choir in May of 1975 became the Gospel choir and on June 13th participated in a Gospel sing at the church along with five other Gospel choirs. It also sang at Kannapolis, for several synodical events, and for one talent show. It adopted "We Can Make It Together" as its theme song. In March of 1978 it had become apparent to several members of the congregation that we had settled into a spiritual rut and were in need of renewal. The Worship and Music and Evangelism committees met and out of this concern the Prayer Group began on April 3, 1978 and has continued to meet up until the present.

Despite the major changes in our worship life, our social ministry did not fall by the wayside during Pastor Little's tenure. Joe Walker was officially installed as Lay Associate on September 16, 1973, and took the lead in ministry to the community. One of his major accomplishments during his stay was the construction of the pool at Warnersville Center. A survey of the community had been done in January 1973 and the pool was completed in August of 1974. Joe was also instrumental in advocating for a prenatal and health clinic in Warnersville which opened in June 1977. Other accomplishments of Joe would be too numerous to list but include: advocacy for a community multi purpose center which was never built, running for city council in July 1975, a community survey in March 1977, taking a leadership role in Warnersville Concerned Citizens, chairing the Synod's Committee on Justice and Social Change, and organizing for Wilmington, Ten. Neither was he inactive in the life on the congregation, serving as lay assistant, preaching, teaching Sunday school, initiating the "House of Prayer," and being active in prayer group and adult church school. Some of the social ministries begun under Pastor Rhyne were redirected. "Talker and You" after two issues was discontinued, but in its place a congregational newsletter first appeared in August of 1973 in keeping with Pastor Little's greater emphasis on building up congregational solidarity. Summer enrichment programs were continued through 1976, lead by intern Bob Moore and then Joe, but then disappeared. The scout troop disbanded in June of 1976, due to loss of its leader. Randleman Park Day Care closed in February 1978 because its funds had been cut off, but Project REACH took its place in July of that year. There were also new areas of social ministry during Pastor Little's tutoring program in December 1974 lead by intern Bob Moore, ministry to Laotian refugees, and a summer bowling league. Moreover, many trips, talent shows, and emergency housing. Finally the special internship program begun in 1977 with Dennis Boulton from Southern Seminary and continued by Reb. Shultz-Ackerson has provided a new opportunity for contact with Native Americans.

The five years Pastor Little was here also saw some major changes in the Youth program. In September 1973 Pastor Little started the YIP (Youth in Progress) group for the elementary age group. Joe and Hunter continued to supervise the YAP and YUK groups until Hunter resigned in November 1973. In May 1975 the YAPS and YUKS combined to form YCAP's (Youth Combined for Action and Progress), led by Joe. Some of the highlights of youth ministry from 1973-1978 would include: a trip to Koinonea farm, a Christian commune in GA in August 1974 lead by Rob Moore, a Christmas Eve service acted out by youth, painting the "Wall of Expression" on Harambee House in June 1976, and exchange with the youth group from Liverpool PA in the summer of 1978, as well as many dances, talent shows, beach trips, convos, and summer programs. One new aspect of "Youth" ministry during those years was the formation of Young Adults in August 1974 for aging youth. It has continued to function sporadically up until the present. The demise of the YCAP group in 1979 came as a result of the fact that the "original" youth of Prince of Peace had come of age and their places were being taken by a much younger age (YIPS and below).

Christian Education began in earnest in April 1974 with the start of the Sunday school. The Sunday school owes much to its first superintendent, Anna Marie Franz, who planned, coordinates, and recruited its teachers and students. She left in July 1975 to return to her native Connecticut, but her place was taken by Bill Mills and then by Cheryl

Troutman. High School age and adult classes were tried at various times but never caught on well until late. With the influx of small children, however, the preschool class has been successful. Confirmation classes were held while Pastor Little was here but there never was great interest until they were revived by Pastor Miller several years later. After several unsuccessful attempts at adult education, a consistent program was begun in November 1977 with the study of "King David, his life and times." These classes took the form of 4-6 week mini-courses held in people's homes on Thursday evenings. The congregation took an interest in Word and Witness and Pastor Little attended a workshop in the summer of 1978 but was unable to bring it to fruition.

In September 1978 Pastor Little was called to fill the post Pastor Rhyne had just vacated, administrative assistant to the new president of Synod, Dr. Ernest Meisenheimer. He and his family left in November of that year and Joe left in January 1979 to begin a ministry in Tuskegee, Alabama. He became mission developer of a church there and became the first layperson to be ordained as a minister. The departure of Pastor Little and Joe left the congregation in a state of shock. From its beginning, Prince of Peace had been blessed with an abundance of staff people. This was one of the things that enabled it to carry on such an active social ministry, however, it also fostered a dependency among the members, making it difficult to pick up that ministry after Pastor Little and Joe left. We did "make it together" with a little help from Peg and Reg Schultz-Ackerson, interns from Pacific Lutheran Seminary in Berkley, and in so doing the congregation learned a new style of responsibility and leadership.

It is my feeling that what held Prince of Peace together during 1979 was our weekly meeting over word and sacrament. We were able to celebrate the Eucharist every week thanks to Pastor Henry Sink who presided. That year saw extraordinary growth in lay ministry with lay preachers preaching nearly two out of three Sundays and a more active role for lay assistants. All of the special services previously begun were continued. The Sunday school did well under the capable leadership of Cheryl Troutman. Three sessions of adult church school on Mark, Matthew, and John were held. A retreat at Lutherridge dealing with how to cope with change was also very successful. A large and active YIP group was led by intern Peg. The YCAPs however, became defunct for reasons previously cited as did the adult choir for a while. Attesting to the vitality of the church during that period, no less than six new members were added.

This stressful but exciting period of vacancy came to an end in August of 1979 when the call committee, chaired by Hunter Haith, extended a call to Pastor Earlene Miller. Pastor Miller did undergraduate work at Roosevelt University in Chicago, attended seminary at LSTC, doing her internship in an urban Detroit congregation, and became the first ordained Black woman in the LCA. Prior to her arrival John Myers and the property committee labored long and hard to renovate the parsonage. In the two and half years Pastor Miller has been in our midst, the work begun by the Spirit at Prince of Peace has been continued. During her first year here she was assisted by Jim Roepke, an intern from LSTC and in 1980-1981 by Sister Carol Burke, a deaconess student from Southern Seminary. (This year we have no intern) Mr. Ron Wilkins also served as Ventures in Vocation worker in 1980.

In the area of social ministry a summer bowling league was organized in 1980 in conjunction with Greensboro Association of Retarded Citizens. Several covered dish dinners were held during the Christmas seasons of 1979 and 1980 for the Warnersville

senior citizens. But the church and its Pastor received its biggest challenge when two Haitian refugees, St. Pierre and Abel Vilnor arrived on May 13, 1981. Pastor and Annie Watkins, the chairperson of the social ministry committee, spent many long hours dealing with the problems faced by these two young men who neither spoke nor understood English.

In the area of worship new hymns have been added to our hymnal to enhance our worship together, and a Youth Choir has been organized by Amy Haith, so that now either the youth or adult choir sings every Sunday. During Holy Week in 1980 and 1981 special services were held every night of the week to make this holy season even more special. The Easter breakfast was revived in 1982. The Sunday school has continued to make great strides under the leadership of Mary Auble. An adult Sunday school was begun on September 7, 1980, with a study of the Augsburg Confession. This took the place of the Thursday evening classes. Prayer group has continued to meet every other Thursday but now meets at the church. Consistent confirmation classes are held every Saturday.

The youth group has also been active under the leadership of Sister Carol Burke and Cheryl Troutman. A single group has taken the place of the YIPS and YCAPS of former days. The youth regularly participate in special Youth Sundays and have enhanced our worship through banners and art work. In July 1981 a youth group from Pennsylvania paid us a visit. To grace the occasion Sister Burke put on a very unique "Clown Service". Sister Carol also led a Vacation Bible School at church in the summer of 1981.

Throughout these years our congregation has continued to grow together. Retreats at Ashburn Acres in May of 1980 and at Camp Caraway in May of 1981 served to enhance our closeness as did an EMV in the spring of 1981 (a previous one had been held in the late summer of 1980). During 1982, our tenth anniversary year, the people of Prince of Peace have worked together to make our anniversary celebration a meaningful time. It was this year that we also took the big step of starting to purchase the parsonage. Throughout these past ten years there have been many good times, times when we felt the overwhelming presence of the Spirit, times when love and fellowship seem to overflow. There have also been bad times, times of frustration and disappointment. We are all both Saints and Sinners and Prince of Peace however great it may seem at times has many faults (which I will not list here). But whether in good times or in ill, the Holy Spirit has lead and will continue to lead us, for Christ is not finished with us yet. We still have a mission to fulfill has his proxy in the world.

These short pages are far too brief a space for all that has happened in ten years. There are many events and people I have had to pass by in the interest of brevity. I hope this will serve, however, as a beginning of the process of taking stock on this occasion of our tenth anniversary of what we have been and an opportunity to think about where we are going.