

# A HISTORY OF FAITH

1937 – 2012

## The Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Riverside, California



Rev. M.H. Tietjen  
1937-1945

The history of a congregation is really the history of how God works through called servants through Word and Sacrament. Through the pastors and many faithful lay people of Faith Lutheran, the Gospel has been shared and many thousands saved through a ministry of love that has spanned over three quarters of a century at Faith by God's grace. This is the Lord's History at Faith!

In 1937, Rev. M.H. Tietjen and about 16 families left Immanuel Lutheran in Riverside and began holding services in the Arlington district as Faith Lutheran Church. They met in Jenkins Hall, the 2nd floor of a business building at Van Buren and Magnolia. The records in 1938 show 70 baptized and 42 communicant members. Average attendance was only around 25.

Almost a decade after the Great Depression began, Faith was still struggling financially with yearly offerings in 1938 of \$855.26. The Southern California District (now called the Pacific SW District) of the Synod wanted a mission in our area, but was not able to provide a subsidy to Faith. However, in June of 1939, the non-geographical English District adopted and began to subsidize Faith with \$1000 a year.

When the rented hall would no longer hold the growing church, Faith applied for a District loan for missions. As a condition of the loan, Faith incorporated and in 1942 leased a storefront at 9436 Magnolia Ave. In April, 1943, the building was dedicated as a regular church.

In the early 40s, attendance reached a high of 72 and a search for a larger worship center was at the forefront of the church's needs. Faith had just purchased a parsonage for Pastor Tietjen who moved there in early 1944. However, on December 30, 1945, Pastor Tietjen resigned and attendance crashed. Rev. A.C. Young of Corona served as vacancy pastor from January of 1946 until a new pastor could be called.

On March 12, 1946, Rev. A.C. Stahnke accepted the congregation's call to be its second full-time pastor and was installed on May 19, 1946. Under his leadership, the congregation began to slowly grow again.

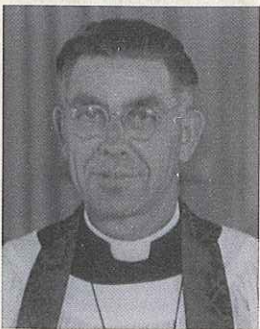
When WWII ended, Camp Anza, an army base bordered by Van Buren, Crest, Arlington, and Philbin streets, was ordered dismantled and sold. Faith wanted to move the base chapel to the Van Buren site, but it was too large to move over the existing streets. Private investors agreed to give the property free to the congregation if they left the chapel there and re-established the congregation at the same location.

Services officially began at the chapel on December 14, 1947. After the camp was sold Faith was able to purchase adjoining land and move into other military buildings, one of which became the parsonage. For the first time Faith Lutheran Church had a fine debt-free facility with, at one time, 15 Sunday school classes, each having its own room!

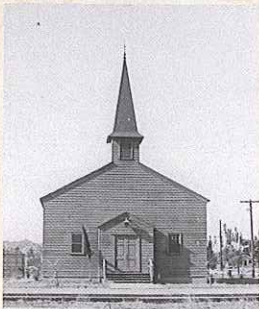
Faith played an important role in the newly renamed "Arlanza" area under the leadership of Pastor Stahnke. Mrs. Stahnke assisted in renaming the street in front of the church to "Chapel St." In 1954 another struggling congregation, Redeemer Lutheran Church, joined and became part of Faith. Around 1955 Faith became self-supporting for the first time. Then in June of 1958, Pastor Stahnke accepted a call to another congregation. Over nearly a year-long vacancy, Rev. Richard C. Schue of Chino came to serve Faith's members.



Storefront Church  
1942-1947



Rev. A.C. Stahnke  
1946-1958



Camp Anza Chapel  
1947-1963



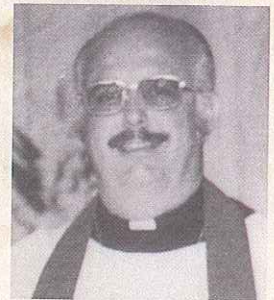
# A HISTORY OF FAITH

Rev. Richard M. Brandt of St. Louis accepted Faith's call on May 4, 1959, and was installed as pastor on July 5th. Under his ministry, Faith celebrated its 25th Anniversary on November 4, 1962. The celebration coincided with the ground-breaking of a new and larger sanctuary! This second church sanctuary at 4785 Jackson St., (the current Fellowship Hall) was dedicated on June 23, 1963. By the late 60s, however, attendance dipped to under 30 per service. With reduced attendance and offerings, the debt repayment was in arrears and Faith faced closing its doors. Pastor Brandt left in June of 1971 with Faith returning to a mission status on subsidy. To cover services for the next few months, Vicar Lawrence Bergman, who had finished his vicarage at Our Savior's in Palm Springs was utilized at Faith from July 4 to August 29, 1971, before returning to Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Ill.



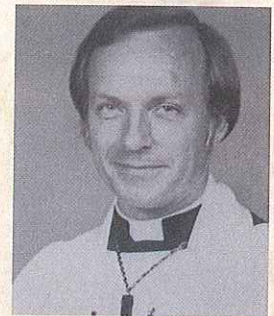
Rev. Richard Brandt  
1959-1971

A mission pastor, Rev. Clarence Kindschy, shared his ministry with Faith and another congregation in San Bernardino from Sept. 1971 until he accepted a call to a congregation in Rialto in Dec. 1972. Then Rev. Glen Rachuy, who worked full-time in the Social Services Department of Riverside General Hospital, served Faith as an interim pastor for the rest of Dec. 1972 until July 1973.



Rev. C.A. Kindschy  
1971-1972

Membership began to increase again by late 1972 under the two vacancy pastors and by 1973, Faith was financially able to call Rev. Frederick J. Huscher of Seattle, Washington. Pastor Huscher accepted Faith's call in July of 1973 and through his powerful sermons, evangelism programs and training of members, the congregation grew dramatically. District subsidies were discontinued and with increased attendance, a second service was started. Overflow seating began to be a problem.



Rev. Fred Huscher  
1973-1981

A building committee was formed and soon a new sanctuary was dedicated in February, 1981. Attendance now averaged over 300 per Sunday. In April, 1981 Pastor Huscher accepted a call to Christ College, Irvine. Rev. Wm. A. Graumann, Pastor Emeritus from Immanuel, Riverside, served as part-time vacancy pastor. The call process this time took 11 months but, at last Rev. Robert Tasler of Oakes, North Dakota, accepted and was installed on March 21, 1982.

Pastor Bob was a tireless servant and worship attendance soon approached 400 per Sunday, an all time high. However, Pastor Bob and his family came from farm country in the northern mid-west. The fast pace of Southern California was a culture shock to the Taslers, and just after a year, Pastor Bob requested a Sabbatical leave. Shortly thereafter, he received a call to serve a dual parish ministry in Utah. Pastor Graumann returned again to fill the vacancy and hold things together.



Rev. Robert Tasler  
1982-1983

Five months later in 1984, the Rev. Lionel Skamser of Storm Lake, Iowa, accepted Faith's call. He was installed on Palm Sunday, April 15, 1984. Under Pastor Skamser, the church grew in ministry and staff, with DCE Tina Masson serving from 1985-86 and four vicars under his guidance: Vicar Neal Blanke and his wife Debbie, originally from nearby Ontario, served from Aug. 17, 1986-Feb. 21, 1987; Vicar Alfonso O. Espinosa from July 15, 1989-Aug. 5, 1990; Vicar Kurt Larson Aug. 1, 1990-Aug. 1, 1991 (who eventually married Pastor Skamser's daughter, Mary); and Vicar Paul S. Burtzlaff from July 28, 1991-July 27, 1992. During those years, the vicars served as the youth pastors and brought many young people into active ministry at Faith, some of whom are now serving in areas of leadership today! Pastor Skamser received a call to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran in Onalaska, Wisconsin, and left in the fall of 1991.



Rev. Lionel Skamser  
1984-1991

Rev. Robert Wobrock, who was a nursing home administrator, was recommended by the Pacific SW District as a part-time interim pastor on Dec. 10, 1991. He served as the supervising pastor for the rest of Vicar Burtzlaff's vicarage and through the rest of 1992. In Jan. of 1993 Rev. Elmer Thyr came to serve as vacancy pastor until Oct. 1993. The church was still in steady decline and the Board of Directors was considering any cutbacks possible. However, 1993 also saw some ministry growth with a new wooden cross dedicated for the back of the fellowship hall and Faith's Social Ministry Food Pantry starting that year, as well. The church went back to one service temporarily until a new pastor arrived.



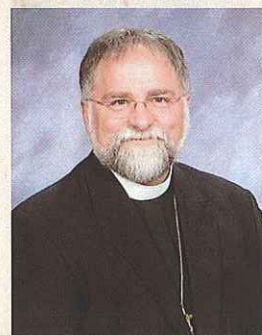
# A HISTORY OF FAITH



Rev. Dr. Roy Schoppa  
1993-1998



Rev. Gerald Garrett  
1999-2000



Rev. Mark Kleckner  
2000-2004



Rev. Dr. Paul Meyer  
2004-2007



Pastor Lowell and  
Kay Siebrass

Then on Sept. 14, 1993, Faith called the Rev. Dr. Roy M. Schoppa, from Immanuel Lutheran in Redondo Beach, CA. He was installed on Nov. 7, 1993. Pastor Schoppa dealt with ministry fallout after Pastor Skamser, but was undeterred. With attendance after the vacancy dropping to 150 people, Pastor Schoppa began to look into new avenues for growth. The call committee had asked him if he were familiar with praise style contemporary worship and soon Pastor Schoppa organized a "fact finding" committee to attend one such service at a Lutheran church in Brea. By Easter of 1994 a third praise service was added to the previous two traditional and blended services. This new service was added at 9:30 AM and soon became the largest attended. The total for the three services was over 200 again.

During his ministry, Pastor Schoppa introduced the Scrip program; outreach events like Faith in the Park, a once a month Sunday evening in the summer with singing, live entertainment, vocalists, and musicians in the amphitheater; and the chili cook-off each September. One of the best memories for many was the successful VBS ministry in the summers, with 100-150 children and over 20 baptisms each year average at the VBS closing services from 1994-98, with a high of 29 on Aug. 4, 1994 (out of 51 baptisms that year!) according to church records. Just after Christmas in Dec. 1998, Pastor Schoppa was released from Faith.

Immediately, Faith found help in the transition with the District encouraging an Intentional Interim pastor to evaluate the congregation and prepare it for calling. This was a new ministry from the synod which strove to help churches retain pastors. Rev. Gene Paulus came to help with the call process for a month before the installation of Rev. Gerald G. Garrett on Feb. 7, 1999. His 20 month interim ministry sought to raise up leaders, address issues, and challenge the congregation to look at its resources before a new pastor was called.

On July 23, 2000, the voter's assembly called Rev. Mark D. Kleckner of Edgerton, Ohio. He was a second career pastor, having worked as a lawyer before going to seminary. He accepted the call and was installed on Oct. 15, 2000. With much work, Pastor Kleckner and his 2 young children, Noah and Kyria and wife Kimberly, began getting use to parish life in California. They were a musical family and enriched the worship with their gifts. There were still three services at this time but when attendance fell to 160, Faith went to one service at 9:30 AM for the summer of 2001 and remained with one until the fall of 2002 when the church returned to two services at 8 and 10:30 AM. Pastor Kleckner's style reflected his legal training. He was well suited for his time at Faith, bringing some order to the flock, and seeing the influx into Faith of over 16 members from a nearby ELCA congregation, Lutheran Church of the Cross, by the time it was closed in 2003. Then, just after three and half years, Pastor Kleckner accepted a call to Zion in Brainerd, Minnesota, and preached his final sermon on May 2, 2004.

Once again, Faith found itself without a full-time pastor. During that summer Faith asked Rev. Lowell Siebrass, Emeritus Senior Pastor of Immanuel, Riverside (1968-2003), as well as Elder Tim Yearyearn, to fill the pulpit while the church sought an Interim Pastor. In July 2004, Faith entered into another Intentional Interim pastoral agreement with Rev. Dr. Paul W. Meyer, the retired Senior Pastor of Salem Lutheran in Orange, CA (1982-2001). He was not full time, but his years of experience as a professor of Political Science (Concordia, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1965-78, and at Concordia, Irvine, 1978-82) and pastor were put to use at Faith for two and half years, as Pastor Meyer started the Deacon program to train lay people in Word and Sacrament ministry and identified leaders in the church. During that time, the church kept on with many of the events others had started, yet it was harder to build attendance with Pastor Meyer's part-time schedule. The call process for the next pastor took a back-burner with the long-term vacancy. Pastor Meyer sought to begin a preschool at Faith, but red-tape slowed down the process. When worship attendance ran under 100 a Sunday for the two services, Pastor Meyer combined them into one. On January 27, 2007, Pastor Meyer was called home to heaven.



# A HISTORY OF FAITH

Now Faith did not have the luxury of waiting to call. Filling in occasionally until the next pastor were Rev. Siebrass again (who had joined Faith after his retirement from Immanuel) and Rev. Allen Deinert. After interviewing several pastors and issuing a call that was returned, the call committee recommended Rev. Paul G. Wenz for the call in the summer of 2007, and the Voter's issued a call on August 15th. Because Pastor Wenz had received calls from two churches in that same week, it was not until October 28th that he accepted the call to Faith and was installed on Nov. 10, 2007.

As a single father of three young daughters, it was a big change, especially coming from St. John's in Orange, a church of 4500 members. However, Pastor Wenz took on the challenges ahead of him and sought to get the attendance back up from below 100 and add a service again. The economic recession stalled the preschool and Pastor Wenz focused on rebuilding the membership.

God works in extraordinary ways and Pastor Wenz' engagement and subsequent marriage to Kedma Campuzano on May 9, 2008, was no exception. Soon Pastor Paul, Kedma and their five children, were using their gifts together in ministry, as the church added a second service again. Using her gifts of singing and music, Kedma volunteered as the Praise Service Worship Leader in the fall of 2008 and as choir director during Easter and Christmas. Faith has watched the attendance grow over the past 4 years to over 160 per Sunday.

During Pastor Wenz' time at Faith, another church at which he had served a vacancy, Grace Lutheran in Corona, closed because of the economic downturn and in Aug. of 2010, over 40 members came and joined Faith. Teaching the members to grow in their faith and live out their callings has been one of Pastor Wenz' goals. Having been an adjunct professor of theology at Concordia University, Irvine, since 2002, he has continued to use his gift of teaching there and at Faith in numerous Bible studies and, especially, in restarting the Deacon training program in the summer of 2012.

Other recent milestones of Faith have been hiring college student and member, Chris Bodiford as a part-time youth worker for the Jr. and Sr. High School youth in July of 2011 through Dec. 2012; the "Paid in Full" campaign, which paid off almost \$100,000 of debt in a year and a half (over and above regular offerings!) and ended with the retirement of the church mortgage, celebrated on Aug. 28, 2011; and the hosting of an Indonesian LCMS Mission congregation at Faith since Jan. of 2012. Also, after 6 years of inability to start the preschool, the Board of Directors decided to go in a different direction and open the facilities to Alligiant Christian School, a home school network with 150 students, beginning in the fall of 2012.

In terms of raising up future pastors, Faith has been blessed with the ordination of three sons of the congregation over the years. On June 10, 2001, Paul Richard Biber was ordained at Faith after graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. More recently, Anthony "Paul" Yearyean and his father Timothy N. Yearyean, both entered the ministry after graduating from Concordia, St. Louis. Paul, who had grown up at Faith, was ordained on July 12, 2009, at Trinity Lutheran, his first church in Deer Creek, Minn. Tim, who had begun as an elder and trained to be a deacon under Pastor Meyer, was ordained at Faith on June 9, 2012, before leaving for Grace Lutheran in Hibbing, Minn.

At Faith, we thank the Lord for 75 years of His faithfulness to His people through many generations. The story of salvation being written here has not yet been concluded. So we, in faith, ask the Lord for as many more years of Kingdom building as He wills. To God alone be the glory! Amen.

*(For 1937-87, the 50th anniversary history was used, shortened, and amended using church records. For 1987 to the present, Pastor Wenz compiled a history based on interviews with church members and past workers, church records and his own knowledge of Faith.)*

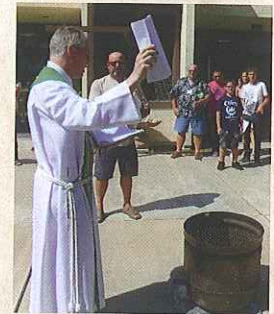
*Thanks to the 75th Anniversary Committee: Yoko Boucher, Katherine Cross, Ruby Doucette, David Juengal, Peg Sturtevant and Verna Vogt*



Rev. Paul Wenz  
2007-Present



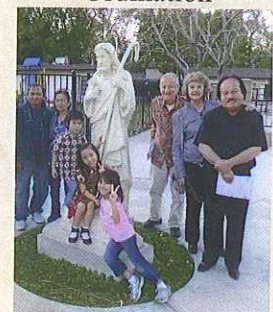
Rev. Paul & Kedma  
Wenz



Paid in Full  
Campaign



Tim Yearyean  
Ordination



Indonesian Lutheran  
Mission Church