

Wittenberg Evangelical Lutheran Church

The First 100 Years

September 8, 1901 - September 8, 2001

*Wittenberg Evangelical Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 345
Corner of Bank and Oak Streets
Granite Quarry, N.C. 28072*



Sharing God's Love



THE FIRST 100 YEARS

WITTENBERG EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH Granite Quarry, North Carolina

Note: In the following history of Wittenberg Lutheran Church the original accounts as written by its pastors and members are preserved as much as possible. Where necessary, corrections were made, and additional information was provided to relate the congregation's history to that of the larger Granite Quarry community.

In 1900 the Granite Quarry, North Carolina area was growing because of the expanding quarrying industry. Officially organized in 1901, the town (officially named Woodside until 1905) had elected Mr. Jerry L. Shuping as its mayor. Already at that time Lutheranism in Rowan County was more than 150 years old. While there were several older Lutheran churches located some distance from each other, there was an increasing desire for Lutherans in each town to have their own congregation.

The Southern Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Ministers of North Carolina met at Christiana Evangelical Lutheran Church in July 1901. At that convention there appeared Mr. Jerry L. Shuping, a representative of the Lutherans living at Granite Quarry, petitioning the conference to send someone to that place to organize them into a Lutheran congregation.

In response to this call, the conference instructed its president, the Rev. Geo. H. Cox, D. D., to visit Granite Quarry, examine into the conditions and prospects and to exercise his judgment as to the question of organization. Accordingly, he visited the place in the latter part of August 1901, and, after frequent consultations with the brethren, decided to organize. For about two years, the brethren had been conducting a Sunday School in the old school house that stood on the corner of Oak and Peeler Streets. Here, on September 8, 1901, a service was held, a sermon preached from the words "Thy Kingdom Come" (Matt. 6:10), and an organization effected with eight members. The members were: Mr. and Mrs. Jerry L. Shuping, Mr. and Mrs. Eli Kerns, Mr. and Mrs. John H. A. Lyerly, and Mr. and Mrs. Samuel K. Wiley. Later in the year eight more persons moved their memberships. They were: Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Heilig, Mr. and Mrs. Tobias Lyerly, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Safrit, Rosa G. Lyerly, and Anna Hodges Kluttz (wife of John D. Kluttz). The congregation requested and Rev. Cox agreed to continue to supply them with regular monthly services in the afternoon or night until the next meeting of the conference. As the time for the conference meeting in November 1901 approached, the congregation earnestly and unanimously petitioned Rev. Cox to continue to supply them until a new church could be erected and permanent arrangements made; he agreed to that arrangement.

The first council elected at the time of the organization consisted of Tobias Lyerly and Eli





Kerns, elders; and Jerry L. Shuping and Samuel K. Wiley, deacons. The first child of the congregation to be baptized was Rosa Leslie Wiley on October 13, 1901. The first class in confirmation consisted of David Hurley Kerns, Maggie Shuping, Claudus R. Shuping, and Charlie Shuping, who were confirmed on Luther's birthday, November 10, 1901 in the old school house.

On January 12, 1902, the congregation adopted a constitution and took the name of Wittenberg Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. On February 9, 1902 a Ladies Aid Society was organized, composed of all the ladies then belonging to the congregation. Mrs. Margaret Ann Lyerly was made president; Mrs. S. E. Shuping, vice-president; Mrs. Annie Lyerly, secretary; Mrs. L. T. Wiley, assistant secretary; and Mrs. Mary Safrit, treasurer.

The first delegate to represent the congregation at a North Carolina Lutheran Synod was Tobias Lyerly, who attended the 99th convention of the synod at St. James Church, Concord, North Carolina, and presented a copy of the constitution of the congregation. The congregation was received as an integral part of the synod on May 2, 1902.

The first communion service was held on June 29, 1902. The first person confirmed in the new church was Mrs. Mamie G. Kerns, wife of Mr. Ross Kerns, on July 12, 1903. The first child baptized in the new church was Clyde Wilmoth Kerns, son of Ross and Mamie G. Kerns on March 27, 1904.

The lot upon which the first church building was built, on the corner of Main and Church Streets, was purchased from Rufus B. Peeler for the sum of \$50.00 on February 8, 1902, and the erection of the church began on Thanksgiving Day, November 29, 1902. In the following January the unfinished structure was blown down, causing much delay, so that the cornerstone was not laid until Ascension Day, May 2, 1903. The services were conducted by the pastor, assisted by the Rev. J. Q. Wertz, who preached the sermon. The church building was completed in November 1903, and it, together with all its furnishings, cost in cash the sum of \$1,892.98, all of which was paid in full.

The handsome, silver communion set was a present from one who did not wish his name to be known. The first part of the cemetery was donated by Mr. Rufus B. Peeler.

On January 1, 1904, a unanimous call was extended to Mr. Cox to become the permanent pastor of the congregation. Having resigned his work in the Organ pastorate, he accepted the call.

The church was dedicated on December 30, 1906. Rev. N. D. Bodie, president of the Southern Conference of the N. C. Lutheran Synod, conducted the service, assisted by Rev. C. A. Brown. Rev. Prof. H. A. McCollough, principal of the Collegiate Institute at Mt. Pleasant, N. C., delivered the sermon, basing his remarks on I Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." During the dedication service Nehemiah Dunham, Florence Dunham,





and Magdalene Peeler were received by certificate and Mary Edna Smith, Margarette Ann Smith, Elsie Elizabeth Peeler, Mary Cleo Hyacinth Peeler and Sallie Ann Kerns by confirmation.

The first wedding in the new church building was that of Catherine Elizabeth Walter to Henry T. Kimball on September 25, 1905.

At its dedication special recognition was given to those who had contributed much:

1. "In looking back, today, we remember the labor and self-denial that it has also cost, but we know that this church, devoted as it is, to the worship and service of Almighty God, and from which will certainly flow benedictions and blessings, not only to ourselves, but to generations yet unborn, is and will continue to be worth, intrinsically and eternally, more than all the money and labor and self-denial that it has cost."
2. "Mr. John H. A. Lyerly superintended the erection of the building, giving much of his attention and time and labor to the work without remuneration, for which he is due much credit and the unstinted thanks of the whole congregation. It is not saying too much when I assert that, but for his zealous and enthusiastic and untiring superintendence, the work could not have progressed as it did."
3. To the Ladies Aid Society "the congregation is indebted for much of the success that has been attained. When days looked dark and discouraging, and such days often came, the society always stepped to the front and by its energy and enthusiasm brought light out of darkness and hope out of despair."

When the first history was written in about 1908, it included the following statistics. "Since the beginning of the work in September 1901, there have been 35 infants baptized and 14 couples married. There have been no deaths of adults, and only two of infants. As usual in all congregations, there have been numerous changes in the membership. Seventy-six names have been entered upon the roll. Eleven have been removed, leaving 65 names now on the roll, all in good and regular standing."

The members of the Southern Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North Carolina had their first chance to see the new building when they met at Wittenberg on Thursday, November 14, 1907. At that convention a tribute was given in memory of Rev. J. Q. Wertz, who had preached the service at the laying of the corner stone of this church in May 1903.

On October 31, 1908, Rev. Geo H. Cox, D. D., resigned as pastor, to take effect November 22, 1908. His resignation was accepted by the council.

At about the time that Rev. Cox left, the quarrying industry also began a serious decline, because of the failure of several companies and projects in the area. Many craftsmen and laborers were without jobs and left the area, and Granite Quarry nearly became a "ghost town." During and following that time the congregation was served by a number of persons, each of whom served for a relatively short period of time. During the early months of 1909, Rev. C. P. Fisher,





Sr., pastor at Faith, served as supply pastor and conducted several baptisms. He was followed by Brunner E. Petrea, still a seminary student, who supplied during the summer of 1909.

In 1909 the "Rockwell pastorate," consisting of Wittenberg, Christiana and St. James, was formed, and on August 1, 1909. Rev. Josephus A. Linn became its first pastor and served there until 1911. On August 28, 1911, Rev. Robert R. Sowers accepted a call to the Rockwell pastorate. He began serving on October 1, 1911, and he served until December 31, 1913. Although he had no formal college or seminary training, he was recognized as a speaker of rare gifts and as a faithful pastor. On January 1, 1914, Rev. Nathan D. Bodie began serving the Rockwell pastorate, including Wittenberg, and served in this capacity until September 14, 1918.

After some time the Rockwell pastorate was reorganized. Emmanuel, which had previously been joined with Faith Lutheran in a parish, joined with St. James to form the Rockwell Lutheran Parish. In 1919 they called Rev. Charles R. Pless as their pastor. Shortly thereafter Christiana became self-supporting, leaving Wittenberg as a supply church.

Meanwhile, Wittenberg congregation had turned to Rev. Grover O. Ritchie of Faith Lutheran, who on September 15, 1918, began serving as supply pastor by providing two afternoon services per month. He continued to serve in this capacity until he resigned from the Faith pastorate on September 26, 1926.

Meanwhile, the hardships of World War I also affected the Granite Quarry community. In the 1920's the state began using stone for paving roads, and the quarrying industry temporarily revived. However, as quarrying costs became higher, concrete replaced stone as building and paving materials, and the quarrying industry again went into decline. When the Great Depression occurred on top of an already weak quarrying industry, Granite Quarry again struggled to survive.

This economic decline inevitably affected Wittenberg Congregation, and those years were years of much uncertainty for Wittenberg. Between 1927 and 1930 Wittenberg was listed together with Faith in the minutes of the Annual Synod meeting. In 1931 it was listed with the Rockwell parish. In 1932 and 1933 it was not even included in the minutes of the annual synod meeting. Beginning in the minutes of the 1934 synod meeting, Rev. C. P. Fisher, pastor at Trinity, Landis, was listed as the supply pastor for Wittenberg.

However, a history of Wittenberg written in 1936 contains the following statement: "The Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., accepted work as supply pastor for Wittenberg the second Sunday in October 1926 and has served this congregation continually until the present time." Records of financial offerings indicate that two services per month were held; Sunday school was at 2 o'clock and the worship service at 3 o'clock. It is clear that the pastoral leadership that he provided during those difficult years greatly endeared Pastor Fisher to Wittenberg, as indicated in the following account of his ministry to them.

"The Sunday School of Wittenberg, through the suggestion of Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., realizing





the necessity for modern Sunday School rooms, started a building fund on January 8, 1929 with the sum of \$18.42. The second Sunday in each month was designated as 'Building Fund Sunday;' by 1936 the offering by the Sunday School to this fund had increased to \$1,131.12. All along, Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., had been whole-heartedly interested in and enthusiastic about building a new church for Wittenberg."

The Building Committee for the new church consisted of: Mr. John H. A. Lyerly, Chairman; Mr. Rufus B. Peeler, Treasurer; Mr. W. F. Shealy, Secretary; Mr. Jacob E. Fisher, Mr. M. H. Barringer, and Mr. Ross Kerns. In order to decide just what this new church would look like, the first project of the Rufus B. Peeler Sunday School Class was to decide on the plans to build a new church. With Virgil Barringer as chairman, a committee was elected to visit churches to get an idea how to build the new church. All men who were interested went along with the committee. After visiting a number of churches, they chose to pattern the design after Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Richfield. They measured the outside to see how large to build it. Then Reginald Kirchin drew the plans, which is in the shape of the cross.

"As the lot on which the old edifice was located was very limited, and in order that services could be held in the (present) building until completion of the new church, the congregation was very desirous of a new location for the new stone church, with its handsome modern architecture and construction. Upon learning of the congregation's desire and with his own desire at heart, Mr. W. T. Peeler, together with his two daughters, Mrs. Cleo Peeler Smith and Miss Beatrice Peeler, very gladly donated, to the mind of the general public, the most suitable and prettiest lot in the town, situated on the corner of Bank and Oak streets. The ground is a lovely grove of trees and will certainly contribute its part toward the beauty of the new church, furnishing abundant shade and comfort to all."

The first ground was broken and work began for the new building November 28, 1935, Thanksgiving Day, at which time a very appropriate and effective service was conducted with Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., in charge, and a large delegation of members of the congregation and friends was present to spur the work on its way. The contract to build was given on December 11, 1935 to Samuel K. Wiley, Luther Wiley and Earle Wiley.

The church was built during the depression in what the newspaper described as a "pay as you go plan." Some of the men were out of work, so they gave free labor. Some trimmed the stone, which was a big help to the masons. Others did whatever needed to be done. Those who had jobs or positions gave generously.

It was during the ministry of Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., that fund-raisers began at Wittenberg. When the ladies of the Margaret Ann Lyerly Sunday School Class saw the need for raising money for the new sanctuary, they decided to sponsor two major fall fund-raisers, a bazaar and a dinner. Throughout the rest of the year they prepared for these events. Because Pastor Fisher





thought that these methods of raising money were against sound Lutheran principles of stewardship, he was personally opposed to them and contributed ten dollars directly to the building fund. Nevertheless the ladies continued these fund-raisers, and the "tradition" of fund-raisers was established at Wittenberg.

As the members anticipated the completion of the building, they wrote: "The building will have, in addition to the main auditorium, a number of Sunday School rooms, which will be greatly appreciated by the entire congregation, enabling them to derive more benefit from the teaching of the numerous Sunday School teachers and especially the children, who more than the adults, need their own department, creating for them more interest and encouraging them to become more interested in the work and enticing other children to come with them, thereby, making the church grow. The construction for the building is well under way and the first service is expected to be held in it before so very, very long."

The cornerstone to the new stone church was laid on September 20, 1936. The service was conducted by the pastor, Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., and the main address was delivered by Rev. Jacob L. Morgan, President of United Lutheran Synod of North Carolina. Others taking part were: Rev. G. W. McClanahan, Rev. James E. Walker and Rev. C. N. Yount.

In November 1937, the basement of the church was completed enough to have the first worship service there. Paul Edward Fisher was the first baby to be baptized in the new church basement. The first persons to be confirmed in the basement were Ruth Kerns Trexler Cook, Fannie Crook Lawing, Vernon Benson, C. B. Peeler, Jr., Gilbert Russell, Alton Russell, Wade Peeler and Alan Peeler. They were confirmed on April 10, 1938.

The first Luther League was organized in May 1938, under the direction of the Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., with nearly all the young people joining. Mrs. W. L. Benson, Mrs. C. B. Peeler, Sr., and Mrs. Pearle W. Fisher were elected as advisors.

On June 11, 1938, the old church building was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Herman Peeler.

The first worship service was held in the new sanctuary on the evening of Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1938. At that service the principal address was given by Rev. Jacob L. Morgan, President of the North Carolina Lutheran Synod, in which he commended Wittenberg Congregation for its faithfulness, energy and successful work. Greetings were brought from other churches in the area. Former pastor Rev. Brunner E. Petrea and Mrs. George H. Cox, wife of Wittenberg's first pastor, were recognized. At that time less than \$3,000 of the estimated cost of \$25,000 was owed.

The following Sunday Jerry W. Peeler was the first baby to be baptized in the first regular worship service held in the new sanctuary on November 27, 1938.

The new church was dedicated, debt free, on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1940. The service was led and the sermon was preached by the Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., with the Rev. Jacob





L. Morgan, D. D., President of the Synod, delivering the dedication address. Two new Bibles, donated by Miss Beulah Lyerly, were dedicated at this service also.

At the conclusion of the account of their history in the dedication bulletin was the following: "Giving thanks to God for all things and especially for His blessing of our efforts in constructing this house of worship – we do, on this Thanksgiving Day, 1940 (five years from the time of first ground-breaking) dedicate this new church building (debt free) to His service, praying that it may ever be a blessing to this community and a shining light for Christ, 'The Light of the World'."

The Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., resigned as pastor, effective in December 1940. In giving credit to their "supply pastor" of more than fourteen years, the congregation wrote: "The pastor seeing the congregation through this undertaking and under whose leadership the church was built is Rev. C. P. Fisher, Sr., with his kind, amiable, honest and God-fearing character, together with his spirited interest, and who has given his untiring efforts and time and will always be remembered in the hearts of those who know him and love him as the man who started the fine new modern church that we have. May God bless us and cause his face to shine upon us."

In January 1941, the Rev. Miles J. Klutz became supply pastor and served for 11½ years. When he became pastor, there were 116 confirmed members on the roll, and a budget of \$1,393 was adopted for the year 1942. As a gesture of support for our country, on January 7, 1942, it was decided to purchase a Defense Bond (\$18.75) each month.

Under his leadership the following improvements were made: In 1942 shrubbery was placed around the church; in 1944 carpet was placed in the sanctuary; in 1946 an addition to the cemetery was purchased and laid off in plots; in 1946 the candelabra and vases on the altar were dedicated in memory of Thomas Wood. Also in 1946 the altar cross was dedicated in memory of Clarence Fisher. In 1947 a brass railing was attached to the front steps in memory of Mr. W. T. Peeler; in 1948 a deep well was drilled and a water system installed; in 1949 the sanctuary was redecorated.

On November 27, 1949 the Wurlitzer organ and the Service Men's Plaque in the narthex were dedicated in memory of Thomas Wood and Billy Rufus Peeler, who gave their lives in service to their country during World War II, and in honor of all men who served in World War II. On the same day, the baptismal font was dedicated in memory of Billy Rufus Peeler.

The wedding of Miss Virginia Peeler and Mr. Dan Carter on April 25, 1941 was the first in the new church building. The first set of twins to be baptized in the church was Edward Lee Cline, III, and Martha Lee Cline on November 27, 1949.

In 1951 the basement renovation was completed with an assembly room, rest rooms, classrooms, nursery and a modern kitchen.

The congregation celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary at its September 9, 1951, Homecoming Service. Its pastor, Rev. M. J. Klutz, preached the sermon entitled "Christian Pilgrims." Even as it recounted and celebrated many of the additions and improvements listed above, it included a





statement in its anniversary worship bulletin looking toward the future: "In the minds of members of Wittenberg congregation include the paying off the basement indebtedness, securing a parsonage and the erection of an educational building." Beginning that Sunday evening and on the evenings through the following week it held a Preaching Mission with the Rev. Bernard L. Trexler as the preacher. Rev. Trexler had served as an interim pastor while he was a student in 1940.

Rev. Miles J. Kluttz retired in July 1952 because of health reasons. During Pastor Kluttz's tenure 42 children were baptized, 57 young people and adults confirmed, and 34 adults received by letters of transfer – a grand total of 133. Funeral services were conducted for 19 members. Thirty-one young couples were united in holy wedlock. The Rev. Charles A. Phillips became the supply pastor in August 1952 and remained until July 12, 1953.

On June 14, 1953, groundbreaking services were held for the first parsonage, which was directly across the street in front of the church. The lot on which the parsonage was built was donated by Mr. and Mrs. James Kerns. Cauble Brothers Construction Company of Granite Quarry was awarded the contract to build the parsonage.

The constitution of Wittenberg Lutheran Church was revised and adopted on Sunday, July 5, 1953.

On July 19, 1953, Dr. F. L. Conrad, President of the United Lutheran Church in North Carolina, installed the Rev. Martin Luther Yonts as the first full-time pastor of Wittenberg.

On November 6, 1953, Pastor Yonts and his family moved into the new parsonage. A Blessing Service for the parsonage was held on Sunday, November 15, 1953, by Pastor Yonts, and an open house was held that afternoon with the Church Council and their wives assisting the parsonage family.

In the 1954 Annual Report Pastor Yonts reported that Wittenberg had 207 baptized members, 165 of whom were confirmed and 129 of whom had communed in 1953.

On June 18, 1954, our first parish newspaper, *The Wittenberg Witness*, was printed. Pastor Yonts was the editor, and the paper was published by the Peeler-Wood Sunday School Class. Also, in June 1954, a stone bulletin board, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Claude M. Peeler, Sr., was erected on the church lawn. Pastor Yonts resigned, effective September 30, 1956.

The Rev. Lester O. Roof was installed as Wittenberg's second full-time pastor on December 9, 1956. Again, Dr. F. L. Conrad, President of the Synod, conducted the installation service.

On Sunday, December 14, 1958, the parsonage was dedicated, debt-free. Dr. Ernest L. Misenheimer, assistant to the president of the synod, delivered the sermon and assisted Pastor Roof with the dedication service.

During this period of time different sets of altar paraments, usually consisting of altar superfrontal, pulpit and lectern antependia were donated to the congregation. The donors were:





White paraments (by the Margaret Ann Lyerly Bible Class on December 14, 1958); green paraments and book markers (by Mrs. John H. A. Lyerly in memory of her husband, her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. J. Howard (Dick) Lyerly; T. J. (Dolph) Brown, and her parents Mr. and Mrs. Tobias Lyerly on January 25, 1959); and red paraments (by Mrs. M. H. Barringer in memory of her husband and in honor of her sons, J. A. M. Barringer and Virgil Barringer and in honor of Pastor and Mrs. L. O. Roof on March 31, 1963). A service of blessing was held on May 9, 1965 for a set of altar flower stands donated by Mr. and Mrs. D. S. Bankett of East Spencer in memory of Mrs. Bankett's sister, Mrs. G. A. Foster.

For a number of years the different Lutheran bodies had felt the need of merging to become one Lutheran Church. In June 1962, the United Lutheran Church in American, the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Suomi Synod (Finnish) merged to form the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). The N. C. United Evangelical Lutheran Church held its constitutional convention at St. John's Lutheran Church in Salisbury, North Carolina on September 21, 1962. The newly constituted Lutheran Church in American became a functioning reality in January 1963. The new constitution for Wittenberg Church as a member of the LCA was adopted in late 1966.

At the regular worship service on Sunday, May 23, 1965, three Boy Scouts in our congregation were awarded the *Pro Deo et Patria* award. Receiving the awards were John Marshall Fisher, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Fisher, Sr.; Robert Charles Peeler, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Peeler; and Eric Sifford, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry T. Sifford. Pastor L. O. Roof and Scoutmaster Charles D. Barringer conducted the awards ceremony. [5 boys have earned the Eagle Scout award plus *Pro Deo et Patria*: Mike Lyerly, George David Peeler, Keith Burwell, Eric Sifford, John Marshall Fisher. Addendum]

On February 20, 1966, a ground-breaking service was held for our Educational Building, which added much-needed space for Wittenberg's strong Sunday School program. The sermon was delivered by Dr. Ernest L. Misenheimer, Assistant to the President of the Synod, who assisted Pastor Roof with the service.

In June 1966, the Rev. Lester O. Roof resigned as our pastor because of ill health. He delivered his last sermon on June 26, 1966, after which the congregation honored him with a covered dish dinner in the church basement. A monetary gift was presented to Pastor Roof and his family for their faithful work at Wittenberg.

On July 3, 1966, the Rev. Harold Rhoads became the vice and supply pastor of our congregation. During that summer, renovation work was being done in the sanctuary, and our worship services were held on Sundays in the Sunbeam Lodge Park. Several baptisms were held in a nearby stream. Worship services resumed in the church on Homecoming, September 11, 1966. On the same day because the new education building was 75% complete, a cornerstone





unveiling was held. Dr. Ernest L. Misenheimer, assistant to the president of the N. C. Synod, assisted Pastor Rhoads with the service. On Christmas Day, 1966, the Sunday School Classes met for the first time in the new educational building.

As the new addition was being anticipated and built, Pastor Rhoads wrote in the July 31, 1966, *Witness*: "Homecoming will be held Sept. 11th and an officer of the synod will be the guest speaker. Also the Order for Laying of a Cornerstone will be included in the 11:00 service. This day will mark a turning point of high importance in the life of our congregation. If all the proposed possibilities are carried out, this should mark the beginning of a great new Wittenberg now a building. The pastor is confident that the building program in progress is proof that we are ready to make a greater and more meaningful church. To not make proposals of change and improvements would be to deny the determination of progress which Wittenberg declared when it voted to add the beautiful educational building and remake the whole church plant new and outstanding. The windows of our minds and hearts have been opened. Let's not shut out the refreshing breeze that is coming through. There are six weeks ahead to make the changes. With the agreement and support of all, these can be the most meaningful days in our history. Please pray about this. Please give the suggestions a serious try, and let's enjoy our Christian life together as never before."

On March 19, 1967 Pastor Rhoads held a service of dedication for the new Gulbransen Church Model Organ, given in memory of Jacob E. Fisher, Sr., by his family.

On May 28, 1967 the congregation had a dinner in the social room, followed by the dedication of the Education Building. Dr. Ernest L. Misenheimer assisted in this service. Also dedicated at the service was the statuary "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well", which was given by Farmers and Merchants Bank in memory of Mr. Jacob E. Fisher, Sr.

On June 25, 1967, Pastor Harold Rhoads held his last service as vice pastor of our congregation. During the service Mrs. W. L. "Ruth" Benson, Sr., was recognized for 40 years of perfect attendance at Sunday School. Many memorial and honorary gifts were dedicated at this service. Following the service a fellowship dinner was held in honor of Pastor Rhoads.

On July 1, 1967 the Rev. David L. Lohr became the third full-time pastor of Wittenberg. On July 30, 1967, he was installed by Dr. George R. Whittecar, President of the N. C. Synod of the Lutheran Church in America.

An outside bulletin board was given by Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Brown in memory of their parents. New cathedral lights were installed in the sanctuary during the month of September in 1967. On Christmas Eve 1967, the congregation used for the first time the new carpet given by Mrs. Mary Gladys Trexler in memory of her mother, Mrs. Mary Anna Foster Harrison.

On June 2, 1968, new pew kneelers and a communion rail were dedicated. These were given by Mrs. Charlotte Eller, Mrs. Jean McCombs, Mrs. Sally Peeler, J. E. Fisher, Jr., and Paul E.





Fisher in memory of their mother, Mrs. Pearl Walton Fisher.

In September 1968, the first weekday church school was begun at Wittenberg, under the direction of Pastor David L. Lohr. Pastor Lohr resigned, effective on September 12, 1971.

The Rev. Bill B. Mims, Jr. began his ministry at Wittenberg on June 7, 1972. He was installed on June 18, 1972 by the assistant to the president of the N.C. Synod, Dr. Ernest R. Misenheimer. He served until October 20, 1974.

On November 3, 1974, the Rev. Conrad L. Quanstrom became pastor of Wittenberg. Dr. George Whittecar, president of the N.C. Synod, installed Pastor Quanstrom on November 24, 1974.

On April 3, 1975, Wittenberg Church received a check for \$89,575.22 from the estate of H. B. Lyerly. A portion of this gift was used to renovate the ceiling of the sanctuary, to install two speakers for the organ and to repair the chimes. Pastor Quanstrom served until March 31, 1978. Rev. J. Legrande Mayer served as interim pastor from April through August of 1978.

In September 1978 the Rev. John Woodard became pastor of Wittenberg Congregation. In May 1979, the congregation purchased new Lutheran Book of Worship Hymnals.

Wittenberg Lutheran Church helped sponsor a Laotian family to come to America in March 1980.

In April 1982 the sanctuary windows were covered with Plexiglass for protection. Wittenberg Lutheran Church joined 10 other Lutheran Churches in East Rowan to help sponsor the Annual East Rowan Reformation Service, the first of which was held in October 1982.

In April 1983 new choir robes were purchased at the cost of \$800. In December 1983 Wittenberg raised \$8,118 to meet our goal for the Lenoir Rhyne Forward Together campaign. The congregation voted to rent the parsonage and give the pastor a housing allowance in December 1983.

In September 1984, the previous pastors' pictures were added to the fellowship hall.

Between Sunday School and the church service in March, 1987, the Wittenberg Young Disciples buried a Time Capsule in the south side of the Sanctuary. It is to be opened in September 2012. In June 1987, our goal was met and exceeded for the Lutheran Homes Campaign of the N. C. Synod. (\$10,700) In December 1987, Wittenberg raised \$7,056 and met our goal for the N. C. Synod Campaign and Conference Ministries Campaign.

The property on the north side of the church was purchased from the estate of Mr. Arnold Walton for the price of \$33,000 in February 1988. Mr. James Kerns remembered his church in his will with a gift of \$100,000 in June 1988. A new Zimmer pipe organ was purchased at a cost of \$50,360. It was dedicated on May 8, 1988. Along with the organ, new carpet was purchased for the sanctuary and put in at that time.

When Rev. John Woodard accepted another call in March 1996, he had served Wittenberg





Congregation seventeen and one-half years, longer than any other pastor. His pastorate saw the congregation achieve an internal stability and continuity, as it developed the capacity for caring ministry to its own members. During the last years of his ministry the congregation realized that in order to grow it would have to develop an enhanced ability to reach out and invite others to join. To facilitate that development Rev. Woodard and a core group of members began exploring the Callahan approach to outreach ministry.

From May 1996 until June 1997 Rev. Floyd Bost served as interim pastor at Wittenberg. He was much-loved as he brought his good humor and relaxed manner of ministry to the congregation, as it grieved the departure of Rev. Woodard. As the congregation assessed its needs and strengths and determined where its ministry might go, it decided that its future should include an increased emphasis on inviting others to join its ministry.

In May 1997 Wittenberg extended a call to a clergy couple, Rev. Linda and Rev. Robert Voelker; they accepted the call with a ministry charge to continue the implementation of outreach ministry modeled on the Callahan concept and to introduce a greater variety of worship opportunities. The variety of worship was first expanded by the purchase of the *With One Voice* hymnals and the introduction of one of its orders of worship in the fall of 1997. Early in 1998 the Congregation Council decided to add an early informal service beginning in June 1998 in order to further enhance the congregation's outreach to unchurched persons. The 8:30 AM service in the Fellowship Hall encouraged a "come as you are" dress code and was preceded by a gathering time that included light food and drink. At about the same time fully printed worship bulletins were introduced for use in both the early informal and late traditional services. With the passage of time membership began to grow through the addition of these expanded worship opportunities.

In late 1998 the congregation purchased the Hill house and lot located at 118 N. Oak Street. As it determined how it would use this property in its ministry, the congregation also organized and started a Mother's Morning Out program, which began operation in September 1999. After further investigations indicated that there was a need in the community for more preschool facilities, the congregation decided to renovate the Hill house and develop the lot for use as a preschool. After much donated work, supplies and money Wittenberg Preschool began operation in September 2000 with an enrollment of thirty three- and four-year old students. Enrollment for September 2001 indicates that the preschool is filled to its capacity of thirty-two students. The congregation is also attempting to purchase the Cooper property at 122 N. Oak Street, which lies immediately adjacent to Wittenberg Preschool; we hope to use this property to further expand Wittenberg's ministry.

In late 1999 Wittenberg Congregation received a bequest of nearly \$75,000 from Mr. Virgil Josey; although Mr. Josey was not a member of Wittenberg for most of his life, he decided to give the congregation the residual of his estate to be used for educational purposes, because he





believed that the congregation would use the money wisely in accordance with his wishes. With the increased number of children in the congregation, the Congregation Council in 2000 identified as its top priority the hiring of a Youth Minister to provide leadership for youth activities and programs. As the congregation approached its 100th anniversary celebration in September 2001, it began raising money to begin hiring a Youth Minister. An unexpected surprise occurred when an applicant for the Adult Choir Director position also expressed an interest in the part-time Youth Minister position. After further discussions Mr. Jim Simonds was hired to fill both positions, beginning on August 1, 2001.

Throughout its first one hundred years of ministry, Wittenberg Evangelical Lutheran Church has had many committed members and dedicated pastors to provide leadership and faithful work to carry out its ministries. God has blessed the congregation richly and has brought many blessings to our community and our world through our congregation's ministries. Wittenberg Congregation has indeed been blessed to be a blessing. We pray that in its next century of ministry it will be as resourceful as it has in the past; it is our hope that an awareness of its history will help us continue to share God's love with our community and our world.

